

Use or Non-Use of Video in Virtual Teaching & Learning Environments

While Towson University faculty may choose whether to require students to use video cameras during live instruction, please consider the pros and cons of requiring students to turn on their camera.

Pros:

- Video creates a sense of connection and accountability to the class.
- Video fosters community and enhances presence.
- Video requires a level of engagement and trust.
- Video simulates in-person instruction. Students have to show their faces in class.
- Video makes it easy to identify students by name especially in large-enrollment classes.

Cons:

- Digital equity gap (e.g., bandwidth, internet access, and no camera on older laptops)
- Invasion of privacy. Students can see other students' faces all the time.
- Self-consciousness of students.
- Stimulation of staring into faces at close range can be exhausting, physically and mentally.
- Video overshooting - students do not want to show their surroundings.
- Concerns about FERPA-protected information.

Additional Sensitive Considerations:

- Some observant students' religious traditions or norms may dictate that they are not to be depicted by video or photograph. Allow students to choose to turn the video function off. Faculty are expected to make reasonable accommodations for religious observances as required by both [Towson University](#) and [USM policy](#).
- Some students who are impoverished, homeless, or have housing insecurity issues may be uncomfortable showing their living situation.
- Some students may be endangered by what video shows including: students who have been abused, living with individuals who are undocumented, children (especially foster children), or with others who engage in illicit activities.

Hints if cameras are required:

- Camera usage should not be the only method for determining the level of student participation.
- Establish expectations for *if* or *when* to turn on cameras early in the semester and explain the rationale.
- Set norms for "real time" synchronous meetings and the use of video camera.
- Encourage the use of backgrounds, if they are not visually distracting.
- Meet 1-on-1 with students who are not using video to understand their context and provide assistance as appropriate (e.g., access to camera) via virtual office hours with students.
- In larger classes, some faculty allow students to turn their cameras off during lectures.

Resource:

Barrett-Fox, R. (2020). [A Reminder of Who is Hurt by Insisting that Students Share Images of Their Personal Lives](#). Oregon State University, Center for Teaching & Learning.