

## Using Skype for Classroom Videoconferences

### A Preparation Checklist for Teachers

Skype (<http://www.skype.com>) has rapidly become one of the easiest ways to allow students to interact with the world beyond their classroom walls. With a bit of digital moxie, any teacher can facilitate real-time connections between classes on different continents and/or bring recognized experts into their rooms.

While Skype is a free tool that is easy to use, this preparation checklist will help you to structure successful experiences for your students:

<b>Technical and Procedural Preparations</b>		
<b>Question to Consider:</b> <i>(The following questions will help you to determine whether or not you are prepared to facilitate Skype conversations in your classroom.)</i>	<b>Your Answer:</b>	<b>Actions to Take:</b> <i>(Consider including the names and contact information of anyone that can help you with completing this action step. Also, include the date for when this action will be completed.)</i>
1. Have you checked with your school or district's technology services specialists to ensure that your school's internet connection can successfully handle the demands of a synchronous videoconference?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
2. If you are planning on bringing a digital guest speaker into your classroom, have you checked with your principal and followed your school or district's policies for using guest speakers in lessons?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
3. Have you created a Skype user account?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
4. Have you downloaded the Skype application to the computer that you plan to use for videoconferencing?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
5. Have you installed a webcam on the computer that you plan to use for videoconferencing and then tested your webcam for audio and video quality?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
6. Have you tested your webcam for both audio and video quality?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
7. Have you added your digital guests to your Skype contact list <b>and</b> run a short test call with them to ensure that your Skype connection will be clean?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
8. If you are planning on presentation to your entire class, have you reserved a data projector so that your students will be able to easily see your digital guests?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
9. If you are planning on allowing groups of students to conference with peers or experts, have you found a quiet location with an internet connection for Skype conversations to take place?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
10. Are you planning on recording this videoconference? If so, have you sought guidance and support from your school or district's technology services experts?	<input type="checkbox"/>	

## ***Pedagogical Preparations***

<b><i>Question to Consider:</i></b> <i>(The following questions will help you to determine whether or not you are prepared to facilitate Skype conversations in your classroom.)</i>	<b><i>Your Answer:</i></b>	<b><i>Actions to Take:</i></b> <i>(Consider including the names and contact information of anyone that can help you with completing this action step. Also, include the date for when this action will be completed.)</i>
1. Have you checked with your school or district's technology services specialists to see if they have any specific policies or procedures regarding student participation in videoconferences?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
2. If your students are working in small groups to conference with peers or experts, have you introduced them to the Skype application?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
3. If your students are working in small groups to conference with peers or experts, do your students have enough technical skill to deal with potential digital disasters—webcams dying, connections dropping, audio feeds failing?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
4. If your students are working in small groups to conference with peers or experts, have you worked out a schedule for individual conferences?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
5. Have you modeled the steps involved in using Skype for videoconferencing—and in troubleshooting digital disasters—for students?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
6. Have you considered training a small cadre of student technology leaders to facilitate Skype videoconferences for their peers?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
7. Do your students have enough background knowledge on the topic of your videoconference to be effective participants?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
8. Are the purpose and the desired outcome of your videoconference clear to your students?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
9. Have you created handouts to structure student thinking before, during and after your classroom video conference?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
10. Have you developed a plan for allowing students to debrief and to process what they have learned once your videoconference has ended?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
11. Will your students share their new learnings with the digital peers or guest experts that they were videoconferencing with?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
12. Do your students have the kinds of discussion skills necessary to participate in collaborative conversations?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
13. Have you given students the opportunity to practice engaging in collaborative conversations with one another?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
14. Have your students worked through a series of role plays that present a range of conversation scenarios—disagreements, passive participants, off-task behavior, inaccurate statements?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	