

Tracking Your Videoconference

While using a digital tool like Skype to host a videoconference is exciting in-and-of itself, it is important to remember that videoconferences aren't about using neat tools. Instead, they are about using neat tools to learn something valuable or to gather new ideas about the topics that we're studying in class! Use the following handout to guide your thinking before, during and after your upcoming videoconference in order to be sure that connecting with digital guests is a meaningful learning experience that we can be proud of.

Before Your Conference:

Good thinkers always enter conversations with an idea of what it is they expect to learn. Use the following questions to prepare your thinking before your videoconference even begins.

List everything that you already know about your digital guest(s)—their age, their background of experiences with our topic of study, conditions in their state or country, ideas that they have already shared about our topic of study, etc.

Based on what you know about your digital guest(s), how do you think they are likely to feel about our topic of study? What about their experiences—age, conditions in their state or country, ideas already shared—is likely to shape their opinions on our topic of study?

Do you think you are likely to agree with your digital guest(s) during your videoconference? What thoughts, ideas and opinions are you likely to share?

Are you expecting there to be any sources of disagreement between your thinking and the thinking of your digital guest(s) on the topic we are studying? What are they? Why are you likely to disagree?

What points do you really want to get across in the course of your digital conversation? What ideas connected to our topic of study are the most important for participants to wrestle with?

During Your Conference:

Good thinkers are always working mentally during the course of a conversation: Looking for new ideas, challenging inaccurate statements, finding areas for agreement, making new discoveries. Use the following questions to guide your thinking during the course of your videoconference.

What comments have your digital guest(s) made that resonate with your own thinking about our topic of study? What is it about these comments that “ring true” for you?

Can you extend on the thoughts that you and your digital guest(s) share in common? Do you have any additional facts or opinions that connect to the key ideas that you agree on? How can you add new ideas to threads of conversation that have already started?

Have your digital guest(s) made any comments that you don't agree with? What are they? Why don't you agree with them? Can you provide any facts or opinions to challenge the thinking shared by your digital guest(s)?

What important ideas haven't been raised in your videoconference yet? Would raising these ideas add to the current conversation or would they end up interrupting the good thinking that is already happening?

After Your Conference:

The potential for learning from a videoconference doesn't end as soon as you disconnect from the internet. In fact, some of the best learning happens only after you have the chance to sit and think for awhile. Use the questions below to debrief after your videoconference is over.

How has your thinking about the topic that we are studying in class changed now that you've had the chance to speak to your digital guest(s)?

Are there any new ideas that you're dying to explore? Do you doubt any ideas that you once believed were true? Are there any ideas that you are more convinced than ever are important for understanding the issue that we've been studying?

Was there anything that surprised you during your conversation with your digital guest(s)? What caught you off guard or left you wondering—either about the topic that we've been studying or the people that you were speaking to?

How would you explain any of the similarities between your thinking and the thinking of your digital guest(s)? After all, they're from a different part of the world. Why would they think the same way that you do about the topic that we've been studying?

How would you explain any of the differences between your thinking and the thinking of your digital guest(s)? What is it about their circumstances or experiences that led them to draw different conclusions about our topic of study than you?

Who would you like to speak to next about the topic that we've been studying? Why would this be an interesting person/group to speak to? What questions would you try to answer in that conversation?