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International Research
and Training Centre
for Rural Education



Guidance for Students

Online Education During COVID-19 Pandemic



Supported by Chinese NatCom for UNESCO



Guidance for Students

Online Education During COVID_19 Pandemic

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Guidance for Students

Online Education During COVID–19 Pandemic

Center for Higher Education Research, Southern University of Science
and Technology

International Centre for Higher Education Innovation under the auspices
of UNESCO

May 31, 2020

Preface

As previously reported on the UN News website, the COVID–19 pandemic had forced school closures in 194 countries, affecting at least 1.59 billion students and 63 million primary and secondary teachers. According to UNESCO’s more updated data, as of May 30, 2020, the nation–wide school closures alone enforced in 150 countries had already kept more than 1.19 billion students out of schools, accounting for 68% of the world’s total enrolled learners. Though the world has achieved some improvement in flattening the curve of the pandemic, its sweeping impact shows no sign of abating. Schools are still closed, and students are not returning to their classrooms yet. Alternatively, online education has become a solution to secure uninterrupted schooling.

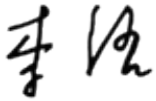
In countries and regions where there is no access barrier to the Internet, the benefit of online education is obvious. It enables schools to deliver courses online so that teachers can offer instructions, share learning resources, give quizzes, and even organize thesis oral defenses. The stay–at–home learning and working modes have increased the time shared between parents and their children, making parents’ active engagement in supporting children’s online learning experiences and communities’ involvement in creating a favorable learning environment possible.

To maximize the value of online education during the pandemic, the Online Education during the COVID–19 Pandemic –Guidance for Students has been developed by UNESCO ICHEI, Southern University of Science and Technology, the UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education (UNESCO IITE), and the UNESCO International Research and Training Centre for Rural Education (UNESCO INRULED) with the support from the National Commission of China for UNESCO. The members of the editorial panel are from Chinese higher education institutions, including Southern University of Science and Technology, Beijing Normal University, South China Normal University, and Foshan University, Guangdong Center for Educational Technology, without whom it would not be possible to accomplish this guide within such a short time.



Preface

We hope that this online education guide series can serve as a navigator for the people who might be interested or engaged in online education practice in the post-pandemic era. We also hope that the crisis would be overcome soon and that schools would be reopened so that students and teachers could continue their learning and teaching in a healthy and comfortable environment. We are looking forward to a better future for all humankind!



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CONTENTS

An Introduction to Online Learning 01

- Advantages of Online Learning 02
- Disadvantages of Online Learning 03

Pre-class Study and Note-taking 10

- Prepare for classes 12
- Prepare for courses following the teaching plans 12
- Address the questions 12

After-class Review and Assignments 23

- Organize your notes 24
- Complete assignments 24
- Keep learning logs 24

FAQs 30

- What should I do if I do not have access to a computer or the Internet? 30
- What should I do if I do not know how to use the online learning platforms? 30
- What should I do if I am late for my online class? 31
- What should I do if I cannot hear my teacher clearly because of poor network connection? 31
- What should I do if I have trouble concentrating during online courses? 32
- What should I do if I don't receive any feedback from my teacher after I have left a message on the platform? 32

Get Started with Online Learning 04

- Stay focused 05
- Set up learning gadgets 06
- Get ready with the e-learning platforms 07
- Prepare learning supplies 08
- Make study plans 09

In-class Activity and Interaction 15

- Log in to the platforms in advance 16
- Listen attentively in class 16
- Participate in collaborative group discussions 19
- Make reports and presentation 22

e-learning Solutions 25

- DingTalk 26
- ZOOM 27
- Blackboard 28
- Google Classroom 29



| About Online Learning

Online Learning

Online learning, also called e-learning or distance learning, is a way to allow students to take online courses on various online platforms and to access a wide array of digital learning tools and resources. Amid the COVID-19 outbreak, online education is seeing a surge in popularity due to world-wide campus closure. In many countries, students from kindergartens all the way up to colleges and universities are turning to e-learning. In this context, we see deficiencies and challenges but also strengths and opportunities in the rise of online learning.

01

Advantages of
Online Learning

02

Disadvantages
of Online
Learning

01. Advantages of Online Learning

Free of Time and Space Restraints

You can access online learning at any time using proper devices wherever you are.

Massive, High-quality and Free-of-charge Learning Resources Only a Click Away

Online learning platforms offer massive, high-quality learning resources free of charge.

Efficient, In-depth Interactions at Any Time

Online learning platforms have a wide offering of features to support teacher-student interactions, including chat rooms, live webcast rooms, and interactive windows. Interactions can take place at any time you want.



02. Disadvantages of Online Learning

Lack of Concentration

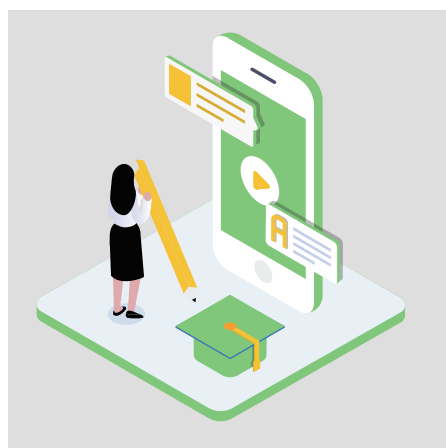
It is hard to stay focused all the time during online classes due to long screen time and lack of direct eye contact with the teacher.

Anxiety

When learning is interrupted due to poor network connection or lack of digital knowledge about the platforms, you may get anxious.

Higher Requirements on Self-regulation and Self-Management

In the absence of teachers' real-time oversight, some students may find it hard to follow the schedules to complete the assigned tasks and pay attention in class. It poses higher requirements for self-regulation and self-management capability to be engaged in online learning.



In view of these, the Disadvantages of Online Learning (“this guide”) is compiled to help students better their online learning experience. It serves to provide the necessary guidance to prepare you for this novel mode of learning.



| Get Started with Online Learning

“As an ancient Chinese saying goes, sharp tools make good work.”

Before you start with online learning, preparation is essential to optimize the experience. To prepare yourself for online learning, you need the “online” readiness of your mindset, environment, gadgets, platforms, tools, and study plans.

01

Stay Focused

02

Set Up Learning Gadgets

03

Get Ready with e-Learning Platforms

04

Prepare Learning Supplies

05

Make Study Plans

01. Stay focused

Sometimes it is challenging to stay focused when taking online courses. We have several tips for you to boost learning productivity, i.e., to remain positive, have a routine, dress properly, create a productive study space at home, minimize distraction, balance your time, and protect your eyes.



Stay Positive

Get yourself mentally ready for online learning and embrace it. You will come to enjoy online learning over time.

Minimize Distraction

Get your learning supplies ready for each class and keep distractions out of your sight as much as possible, such as snacks.

Dress Properly

Change out of your pajamas for the class and when necessary wear your school uniforms to be reminded that you are in class.

Create a Productive Study Space

Find a noise-free, well-lit area with minimum distraction at home, separated from the living area, for your online learning activity.

Have a Routine

Follow a consistent routine as you were in school.

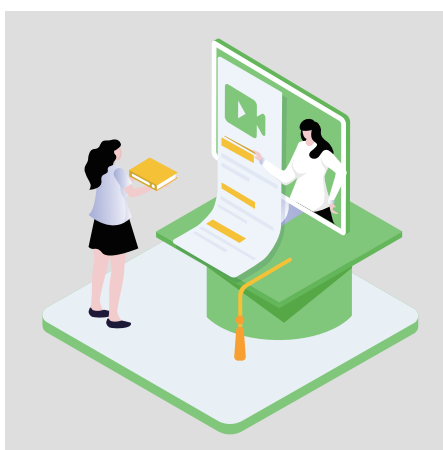
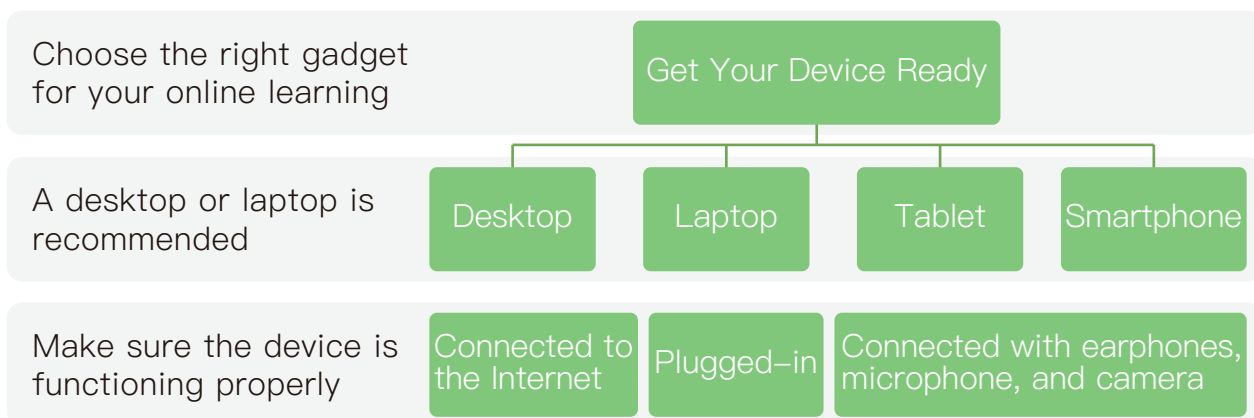
Balance Your Time and Protect Your Eyes

Try to reduce screen time when you are not taking online courses. Switch your device to the airplane mode or ask a parent to keep your device.



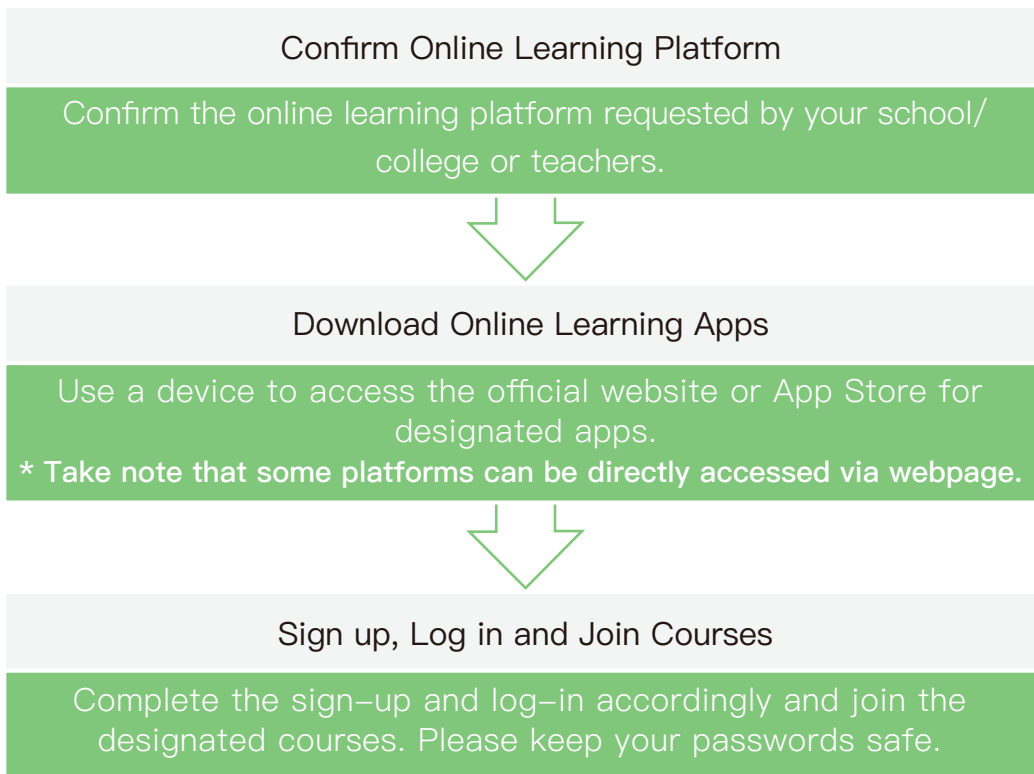
02. Set up learning gadgets

To access online courses, you need to have a device that can be connected to the Internet, which can be a desktop computer, a laptop, a tablet, or a smartphone. If a TV set is used, make sure your device is well connected, and the right channel is located.



03. Get ready with the e-learning platforms

Depending on the online learning platform requested by your school/college or teachers, you need to take action accordingly. For example, some platforms need to be downloaded and installed, such as DingTalk and Zoom, while others can be accessed from webpages, such as Blackboard and Google Classroom. If more than one platform is involved, be sure to get all the required ones ready. You should complete the sign-up beforehand and keep the passwords safe. After login, join the class as assigned. If anything is unclear, ask your parent or teachers for help.



04. Prepare learning supplies

On top of the previous steps, ensure you have proper learning supplies. We have prepared a list for your reference. Just make sure that you develop your own checklist and get everything you need ready before class.

Supplies	Online Learning Platform
<ul style="list-style-type: none">☑ Textbooks (teaching material)☑ Notebook (mandatory, better to prepare one for each subject)☑ Stationary (e.g., pens and erasers)☑ Workbook (where applicable)☑ Homework book (where applicable)☑ Exercise book (where applicable)☑ Calculation book (where applicable)☑ Drawing tool (where applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">☑ Sign in to the online learning platform☑ Click course links☑ Prepare your personal or team presentation materials (where applicable)☑ Close irrelevant web pages☑ Close irrelevant applications☑ Put on headphones and microphone (if needed)



05. Make study plans

You should know your course schedule well, and base on that, make daily study plans to make the best of your study hours. A good study plan should be scheduled to include steps such as pre-class preparation, online learning, pre-class study, assignments, and teacher's Q&As. If possible, it is advised to print your study plans and put it next to your desk, where you can see it. We also strongly recommend that you set clock alarms for morning wake-up and mid-day break.

Day X Study Plan

☑	**-**	Get up
<hr/>		
☑	**-**	Breakfast
<hr/>		
☑	**-**	Class prep
<hr/>		
☑	**-**	Online class
<hr/>		
☑	**-**	Lunch
<hr/>		
☑	**-**	Noon break
<hr/>		
☑	**-**	Online class
<hr/>		
☑	**-**	Dinner
<hr/>		
☑	**-**	Assignments
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☑	**-**	Pre-class study
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☑	**-**	Teacher Q&As
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☑	**-**	Sleep

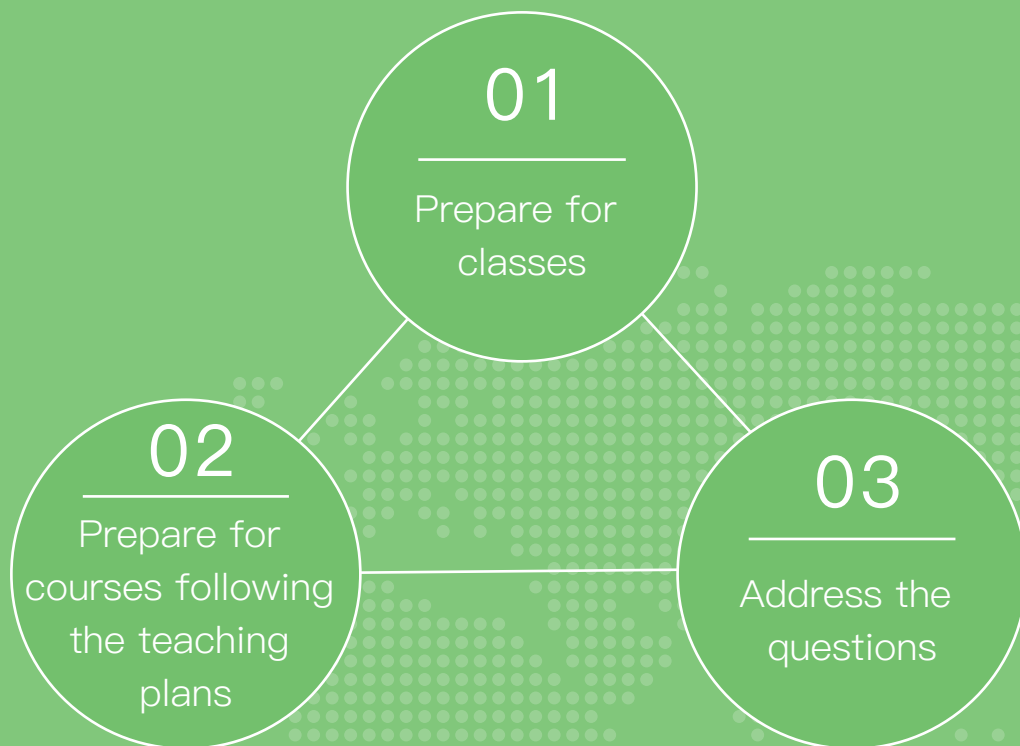




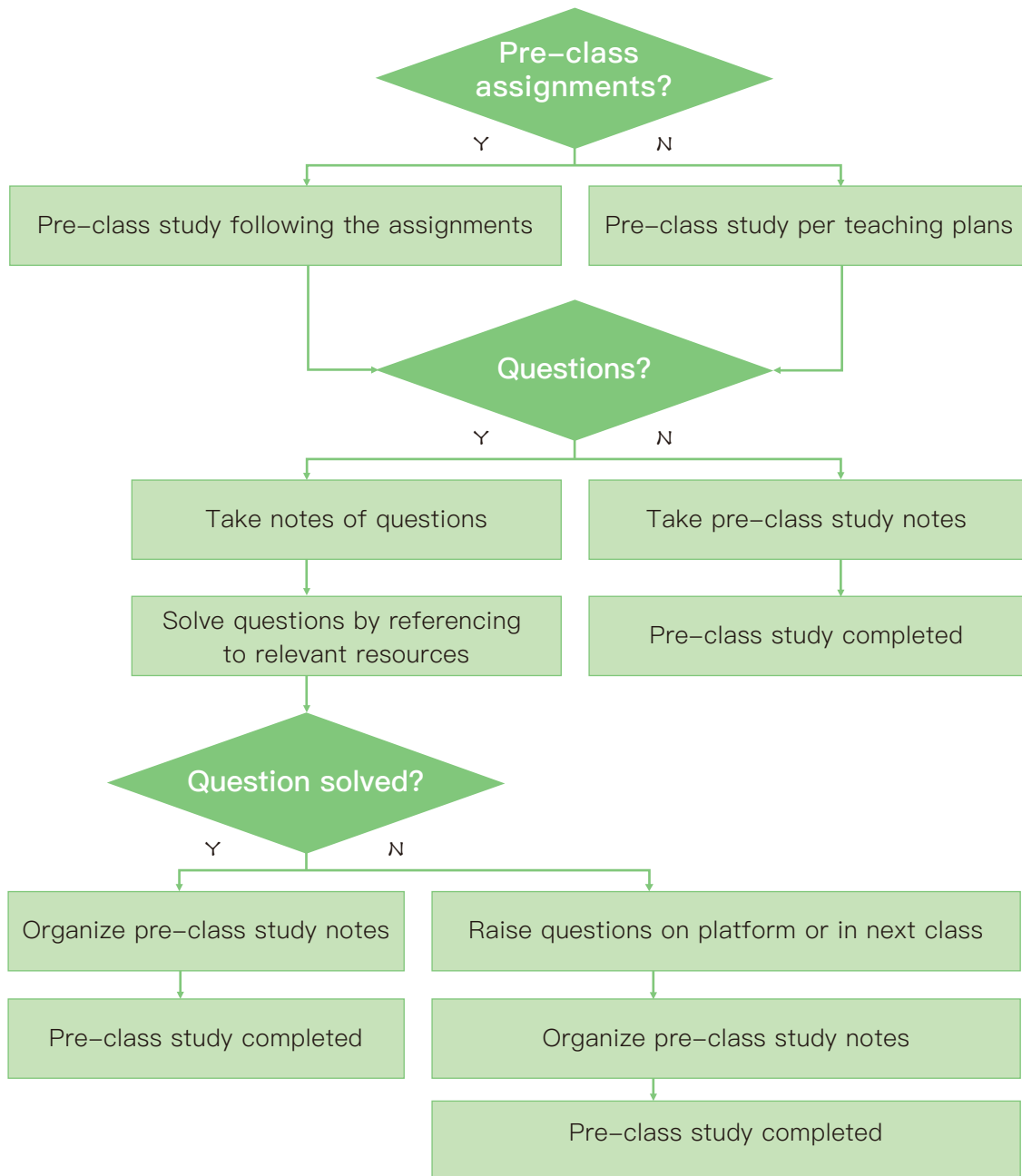
| Pre-class Study and Note-taking

“Preparedness ensures success and unpreparedness spells failure.”

In the case of online learning, the pre-class study is essential. It helps you improve learning efficiency as it prepares you for the upcoming classes, where you will have developed a preliminary understanding of the key points and challenging concepts to be covered.



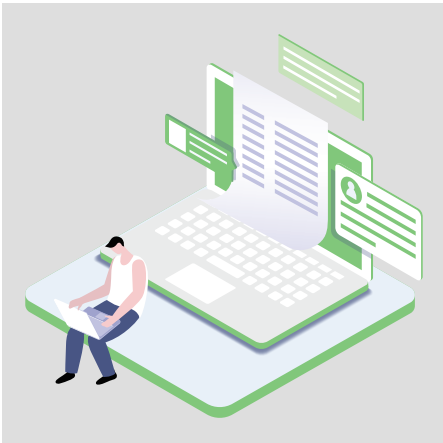
How to carry out pre-lesson preparation ?





01. Prepare for classes

When your teachers have given micro–courses or reading materials for your preclass study, follow their instructions to complete the preclass assignments, and take notes to highlight the key points and concepts that you find challenging.



02. Prepare for courses following the teaching plans

If you don't have any pre–class assignments, it is also helpful to preview the sessions according to the teaching plans to get an idea of the content and note down the key points, challenging concepts, and questions you may have.

03. Address the questions

When you encounter any question that you cannot understand during the preclass study, be sure to note them down properly. There are resources available for you to refer to if you plan to solve them on your own, such as textbooks (teaching materials) and online resources. You can also leave the questions on the online learning platform (if pre–set by teachers) or raise them in the next class for answers from your teachers or fellow classmates.



If there is any question you cannot figure out on your own, you can try searching online first. Our recommendation includes search engines, MOOCs, and other academic resources. See the details below.

Self-regulated Learning Platforms	
Platforms	Scope of Service
Byju's: https://byjus.com/ (India)	Personalized and efficient study plans for K12 students
Discovery Education: (USA) https://www.discoveryeducation.com/	Free learning resources for students on varied grades, including COVID-19-related courses
Khan Academy: https://www.khanacademy.org/ (USA)	Free online courses
KitKit School: http://kitkitschool.com/ (USA)	Tablet-based learning kits covering comprehensive courses from kindergarten to early grades in primary school
LabXchange: https://www.labxchange.org/ (USA)	Online biology laboratory
OneCourse: (UK) https://onebillion.org/onecourse/app/	Application for reading, writing and math teaching for children
Quizlet: https://quizlet.com/zh-cn (USA)	Learning across subjects
YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/ (USA)	Educational videos and learning materials



Search Engines

Baidu: <https://www.baidu.com> (China)

Google: <https://www.google.com> (USA)

Yahoo: <https://www.yahoo.com/> (USA)

Bing: <https://cn.bing.com/>; <https://global.bing.com> (USA)

MOOCs

Alison: <https://alison.com/> (Ireland)

Coursera: <https://www.coursera.org/> (USA)

University of the People: <https://www.uopeople.edu/> (USA)

Icourses: <http://www.icourses.cn> (China)

Future Learn: <https://www.futurelearn.com/> (UK)

Canvas: <https://www.canvas.net/> (USA)

Mobile Reading Apps

Platform	Scope of Service
African Storybook: https://www.africanstorybook.org/ (India)	Collection of African storybooks
Global Digital Library: https://www.digitallibrary.io/ (USA)	Collection of storybooks and other reading materials
StoryWeaver: https://storyweaver.org.in/ (India)	Collection of children storybooks in multiple languages
Worldreader: https://www.worldreader.org/ (USA)	e-books

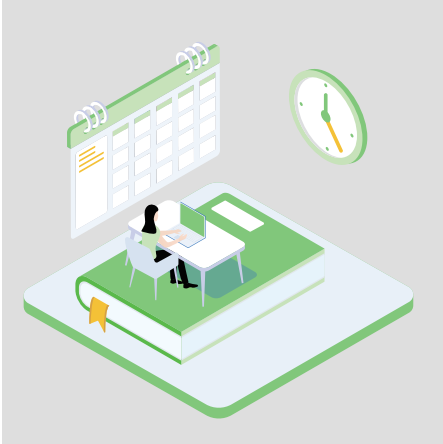


In-class Activity and Interaction

“Only when you see the mountain or ocean in person can you feel your passion and admiration for its magnificence.”

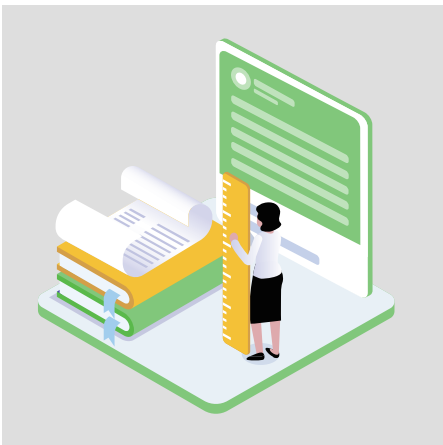
Compared to the conventional face-to-face classroom teaching, it is challenging for students to stay focused and have interactions with the teacher and other students amid online classes.





01. Log in to the platforms in advance

Please join the class via the link given to you or log in to the platform at least 10 minutes before the class starts. Check your attendance in as per your teacher's request and get ready for the class.



02. Listen attentively in class

Now online courses are typically delivered in the modes of live video webcasting, video conferencing, recorded videos, and MOOCs. When attending a class, you need to stay focused, listen attentively, take notes, and answer the teacher's questions. If you have questions, raise them via the mic-linking feature in class or take notes to seek answers after class. The following table gives the expected student activities in different teaching scenarios.



Teaching Scenarios	Expected of Students
<p style="text-align: center;">Live Video Class</p> <p>Live video class features tutorial instructions and Q&A sessions hosted by the teacher. Students can interact with the teacher and other classmates through mic-linking or text messaging features.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Listen attentively during class. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Take notes. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Answer teacher's questions. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Raise hand to pose questions in class through the mic-linking feature. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Interact with others via text messaging on the platform. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Watch playback if necessary.
<p style="text-align: center;">Video Conference Class</p> <p>Video conference class supports various class activities such as tutorial instructions, Q&As, and group presentation. Students can share their screens with others and initiate real-time interactions during the class.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mute your device and listen attentively during the class. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Take notes. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Answer teacher's questions. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unmute your device to raise questions and interact directly with the teacher. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Watch playback if necessary.
<p style="text-align: center;">Recorded Video Class</p> <p>Pre-recorded video is played during scheduled hours of the classes by teachers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Listen attentively during class. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Take notes. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Note down questions, if any. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Organize your notes and seek teacher's help via online learning platform or instant messaging applications. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Watch the video repeatedly if necessary.
<p style="text-align: center;">MOOCs</p> <p>MOOCs offer a full set of course resources, including PowerPoint slides, quizzes, assignments, exams, and discussions. Students can arrange their learning activities according to a flexible schedule.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Log in to the MOOC platform and join the course. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complete learning tasks (course videos, discussion, session-based tests, and exams). <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Take notes when watching videos. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Note down questions, if any. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Organize your notes and seek teacher's help via online learning platform or instant messaging applications. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Watch the video repeatedly if necessary.

How to take notes ?

See here for tips on how to take notes



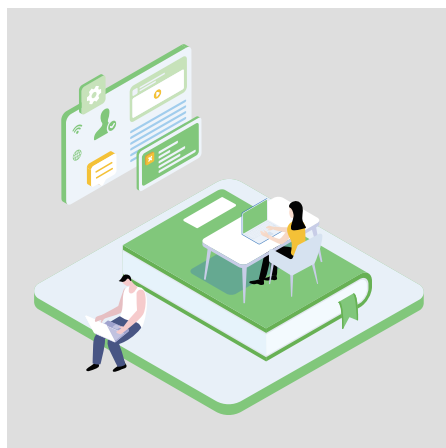
Focus on listening rather than taking everything down



Don't waste time noting down details already in textbooks or PowerPoint slides

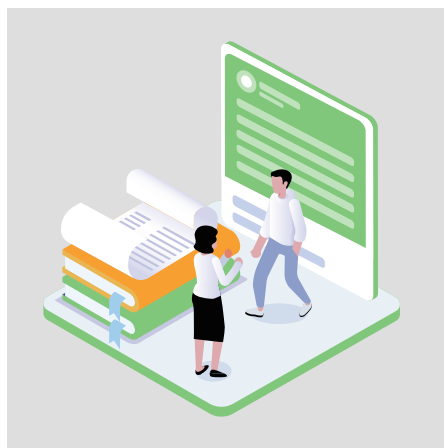
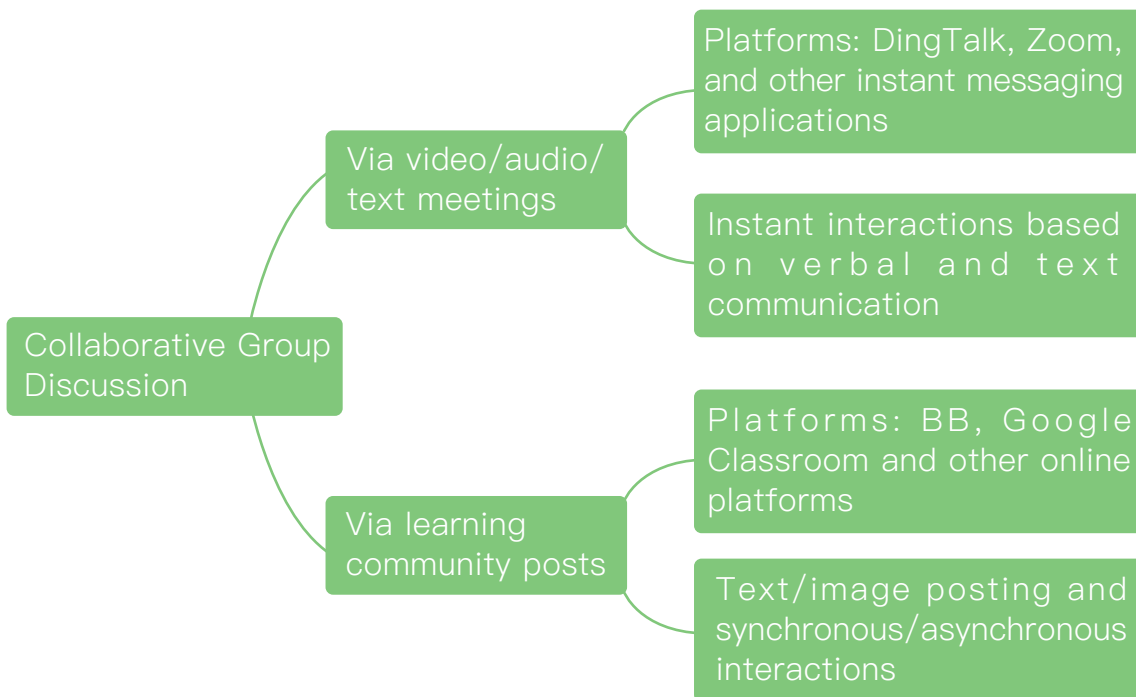


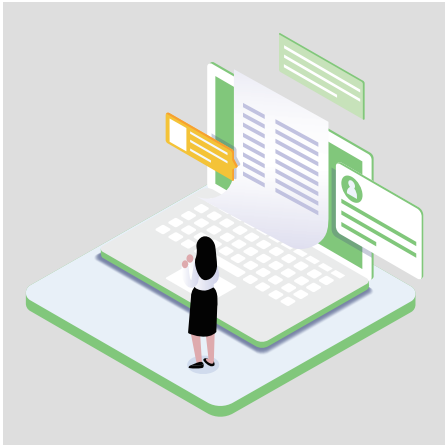
Focus on how a problem is analyzed and solved by your teacher rather than just copying from PowerPoint slides



03. Participate in collaborative group discussions

Collaborative group discussion is an important class activity for all students. When you are the team leader, be sure to involve all team members in the discussion and designate a scribe to keep a note. Collaborative group discussion is typically organized in two ways (see details below).





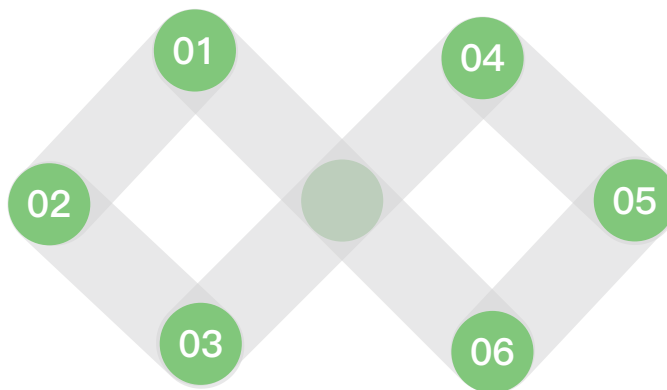
For each team project, you should understand the team’s tasks and your role in the project, contribute duly to the team’s work, participate in peer reviews, and finalize the work with the team. See the process below.

Understand team’s task and your role in the project

Rectify your work according to team’s comments

Present your views clearly

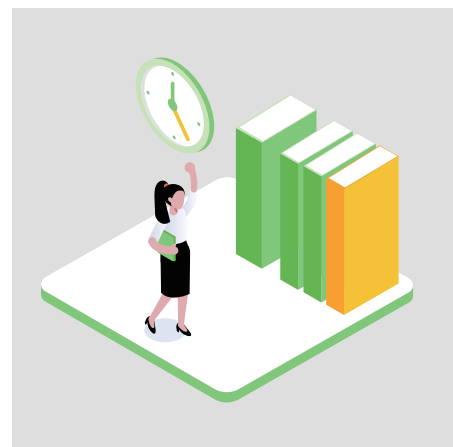
Finetune your team’s work after review and update



Listen to other member’s ideas and raise reasonable disagreement

Finalize the team research essay, presentation slides, etc.

There are tools and gadgets available to facilitate team communication and e-learning content generation when creating deliverables.



Tools for Team Projects

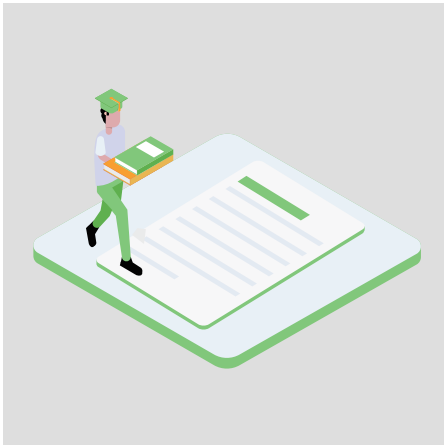
Collaborative Doc Creation and Editing	Visualization Tools	Personal Knowledge Management Tool
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> DingTalk Docs <input type="checkbox"/> Tencent Docs <input type="checkbox"/> Shimo Docs <input type="checkbox"/> Jinshan Docs <input type="checkbox"/> Google Docs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Mind map <input type="checkbox"/> Tree diagram <input type="checkbox"/> Flow chart <input type="checkbox"/> KWLH chart 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Evernote <input type="checkbox"/> OneNote <input type="checkbox"/> Youdao Note <input type="checkbox"/> WizNote

Tools for e-Learning Content Creation

Tools	Scope of Service
Thinglink: https://www.thinglink.com/ (USA)	Tool for creating interactive images and videos
Buncee: https://app.edu.buncee.com/ (USA)	Web tool for educators, students, and administrators to create and share engaging multimedia presentations
EdPuzzle: https://edpuzzle.com/ (USA)	Video course creation software
Kaltura: https://corp.kaltura.com/ (Israel)	Video management and creation tool
Nearpod: https://nearpod.com/ (USA)	Interactive course creation software
Pear Deck: (Germany) https://www.peardeck.com/googleslides	Teaching content design software
Squigl: https://squigit.com/ (USA)	Content creation platform



04. Make reports and presentation



Team projects can be delivered as PowerPoint slides, research essays, experimental reports, image collection, videos, or oral presentations. Sometimes it can be done by drawing such as posters. In that case, you can take a picture of the drawing and share it with other groups and the teachers by uploading it to the online learning platform.

Before presentation

- Prepare presentation materials
- Assign roles and responsibilities among team members

During presentation

- Presenter gives clear presentation of the project achievement
- Others listen and provide supplementary input where necessary

After presentation

- Receive comments from other teams and the teacher
- Provide necessary explanations
- Refine the project outcome per comments
- Provide comments to other teams' presentations

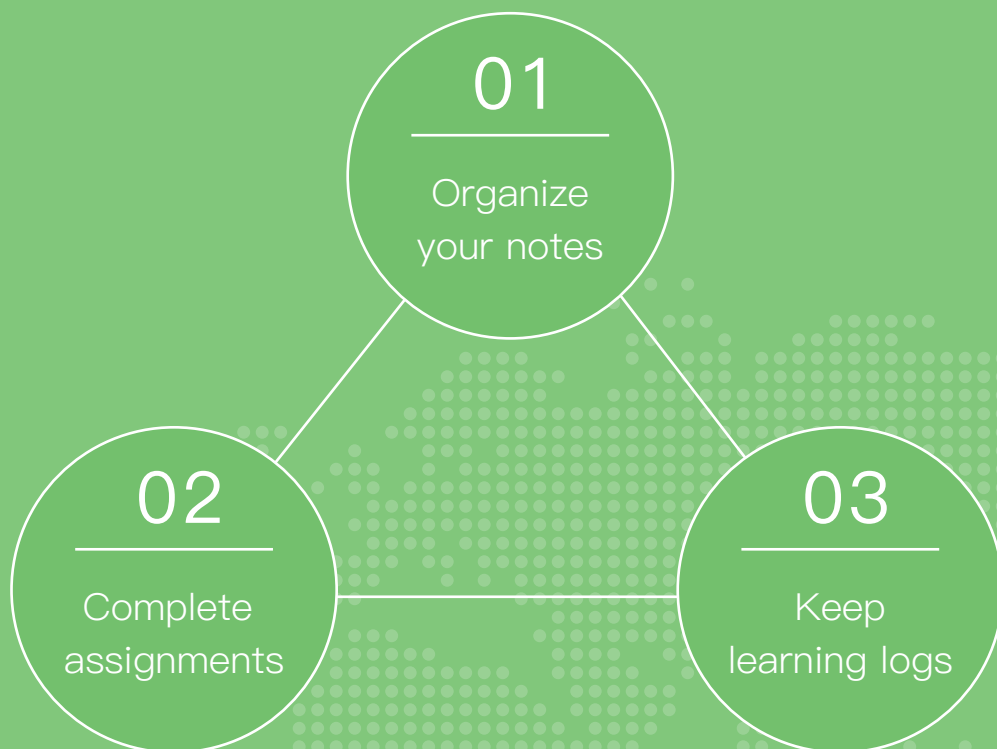




After-class Review and Assignments

“He who by reanimating the Old can gain knowledge of the New is fit to be a teacher”

It is advised that you review the courses after class and solve the challenging questions to further your understanding of what you have learned.



01. Organize your notes

As your notes taken during the class may be scattered, it helps with a deeper understanding of the content covered in class by organizing and summarizing your notes after class. Through this process, you can revisit the key/difficult points and clear your confusion to form a structured understanding of the lesson. We advise using a mind map to organize your notes and link them to the knowledge points gained from previous sessions.

02. Complete assignments

Make sure you complete the after-class assignments on time. Do not procrastinate or miss your deadlines. When working on the assignments, refer to the textbooks and notes if you have questions. When this effort fails, seek teacher's help via instant messaging applications or text messaging modules on the platforms.

03. Keep learning logs

Learning logs or learner's logs encourage students to reflect on what they are learning or have learned. We advise that you take the time to keep a learning journal before going to bed on a day-to-day basis to document what you have learned and what you can improve. You may further seek teachers' advice on improvement and questions you have to achieve better learning efficacy.

Learning Log Questions	Self-assessment
1. How was my performance in class today?	
2. Have I stayed focused and listened attentively during class?	
3. Have I raised my views in class?	
4. Have I contributed properly to my team project?	
5. Have I asked the teachers for help on unsolved questions? Have these questions been addressed?	
6. Did I have any questions I could not solve in the assignments? Have I completed all of them?	
7. Have I reviewed today's courses?	
8. Have I previewed tomorrow's courses?	
9. List your achievements and opportunities for improvement for the day?	

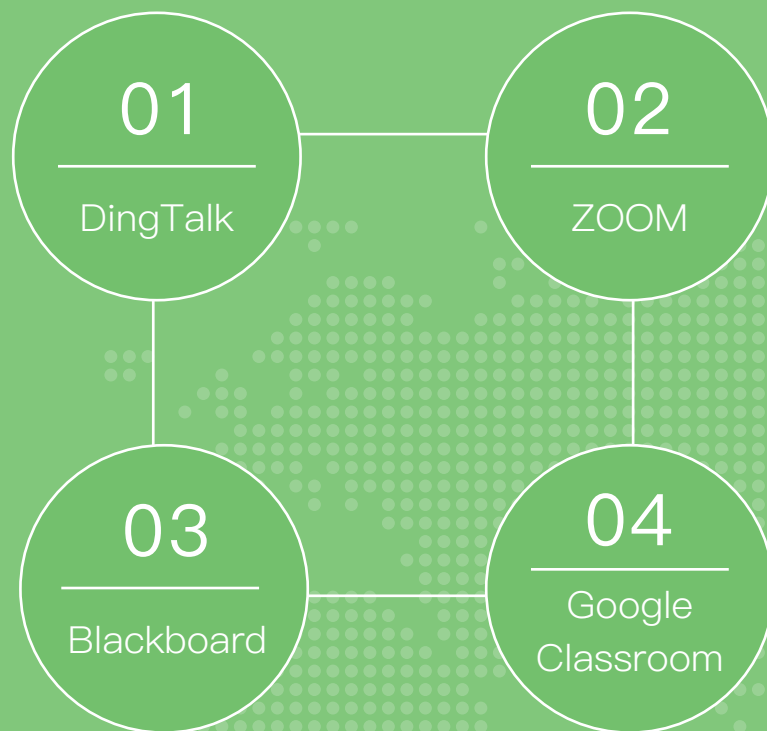




e-Learning Solutions

“Solutions come first to better serve the learning needs.”

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, many online learning platforms have emerged on the market. Before starting your online learning experience, familiarize yourself with the platforms selected by your school or teacher, including their main features and functionalities.



01. DingTalk



DingTalk is a free platform for group communication and collaboration to support your online learning experience on different terminals.

01

Join a Class Group



Install DingTalk App on you device and use your mobile phone number to complete the sign-up and login (please use the same phone number as the one provided to your teacher).

02

Submit pre-class assignments



If you are required to submit preview tasks or check off your tasks on the platform, please complete and submit them by the designated deadlines.

03

Attendance check-in before class



Log in to the platform at least 10 minutes before the class and join the class group. Please ensure your attendance is checked in if it is required.

04

Listen attentively and interact with your teacher and group



During a live class, you can request to link mic with the teacher if you have a question. When you are assigned to a collaborative projects, we advise you to create a DingTalk group to facilitate communication using the video-conferencing mode.

05

Present your group project



Under the video conferencing mode, team presentation is supported. Your presentation can be shared with the group by clicking “Share Screen” on the page to start your presentation.

06

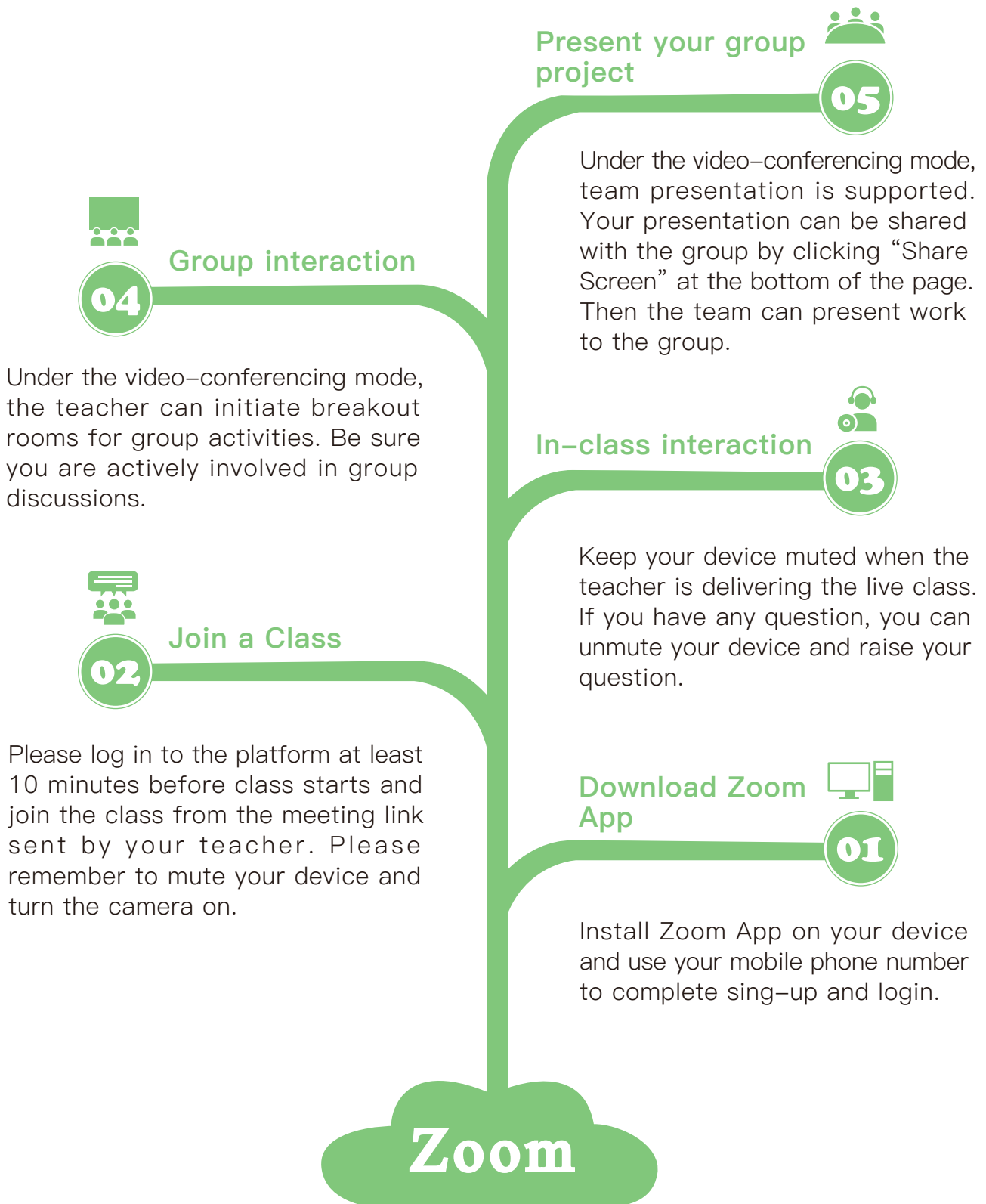
Submit after-class assignments



Please complete and submit your after-class assignments onto the platform. They can be submitted in the format of images, docs, or audio recordings. If you have any questions, click “Assignments” and communicate with your teacher in the question pop-ups.



02. ZOOM



Zoom is an easy, reliable one-stop platform for interactive video and audio conferencing and screen sharing.



03. Blackboard



Blackboard provides an accessible and reliable virtual classroom solution to power your online teaching and web conferencing needs.

Log in to Blackboard

Enter the Blackboard official website and log in using your user name (student number) and password (consult your teacher for password).



Course Info and Resources

After login, you can check the courses you are signed up for. Click on the link and go to the main page that lists your course notices, information, and material archive.

Learning Tasks and Discussions

You should complete your assignments according to the designated timeframe. You can also participate in discussions to share your thoughts and ideas.

Team Project and Discussions

If you are assigned with a team project, please make your contribute to the project. You can also join team discussions by posting your comments on the platform.

Submit Assignments and Check Your Grades

Submit your assignments before due. You can also check your grades on the platform after the teacher has reviewed your assignments.

Take Tests and Check Grades

Your teacher can also assign online quizzes or tests. You can check the grades on the platform as well.



04. Google Classroom



Google Classroom is a free cloud-based learning management service developed by Google as a member of the Google Apps for Education. It provides comprehensive support to your online learning experience.

01

Sign in to Google Classroom



Go to the website link provided by your school, and enter your username and password. If you are using a smartphone or tablet, please download and install the Google Classroom App first.

02

Join a Class



If your teacher sends you an invitation, you will see Join on the class card on your Classroom homepage. Click Join to join the class. Contact your teacher to resend you an invitation if you do not see the class on your list or have accidentally deleted it.

03

Contact Your Teacher



Contact your teacher on Google Classroom if you have any question. Click People to find your teacher's email from the list of all your teachers.

04

Check and Turn in an Assignment



Complete your assignments before the due date. You can find assignments on the class card or on the homepage of the specific course. Turn in your assignment on the once you have completed it. You can check your grades here too.



FAQs

01

What should I do if I do not have access to a computer or the Internet?

It is a prerequisite to have access to a proper device (either a computer or mobile phone will do, but a computer is recommended for good learning experience) and the Internet to take online courses. If you do not have a computer or Internet access at home, ask your parents if they can purchase the devices and set up the network connection. If it is not viable, please contact your school and teacher in time, who can help create separate study plans for you. You will be asked to report to your teachers on your learning progress and troubles on a regular basis. When needed, seek help from your teachers.

02

What should I do if I don't know how to use the online learning platforms?

During the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, a number of online learning platforms with varied functionalities have emerged on the market. If your teachers require the use of multiple platforms, you will need to follow the instructions to download and install them, complete online sign-ups and logins, and join the courses. When you are not familiar with a certain platform, please refer to the **Handbook on Online Learning Technologies and Platforms** or contact your teacher for a platform user manual or tutorial video.



FAQs

03

What should I do if I am late for my online class?

Please ensure that you follow the course schedule and attend each session on time. But when you are late, please join the class via the given link anyway. Explain your lateness to your teacher after class and watch the video playback for the parts that you have missed.

04

What should I do when I can't hear my teacher clearly because of poor network connection?

When attending an online class, Internet connection issues may undermine the user experience as you would have trouble hearing the teacher properly. Under the conferencing mode, you can click “Leave Meeting” and join the meeting again. Under the live webcasting mode, refresh the page or sign in to the platform again. If the issue persists, please study offline on your own first and watch the playback later.

FAQs

05

What should i do if I have trouble concentrating during online courses?

Sometimes it is hard to remain focused during online classes because you are learning in front of a screen, and the teacher is not physically in the room to get your attention. You may need to remind yourself now and then to stay focused or ask a parent to sit through the classes with you if necessary. During the class, refrain from walking or eating snacks. Listen attentively to what the teacher says and read the slides or teaching materials carefully. If you have questions, ask the teacher via the mic-linking feature during the class, or take notes for questions later. It is always recommended to take notes of how a question is analyzed and resolved by the teacher rather than copy everything from the slides or the whiteboard.

06

What should I do if I don't receive any feedback from my teacher after I have left a message on the platform?

Whenever you have a question before, during, or after a class, you can try various resources to work them out by yourself. When you cannot solve a question by yourself, you can leave the teacher messages on the platform for help. If there is no feedback, you can contact your teacher via instant messaging applications, ask a parent offline, or ask the teacher via the mic-linking feature in the next class.