When, Why, and How to Use Synchronous vs. Asynchronous Communication

Online distance education ≠ Asynchronous
Online distance education = Asynchronous (benefits) + Synchronous (benefits)

Preserve the flexibility and convenience of asynchronous communication while enhancing efficiency and quality of feedback and interaction through synchronous communication.

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<th>Synchronous Communication</th>
<th>Asynchronous Communication</th>
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| **When?**            | Use as a complementary learning/teaching component to:  
                      | • Discuss less complex, more immediate issues  
                      | • Get students acquainted  
                      | • Plan tasks  
                      | • Hold task-oriented sessions (e.g., office hours and exam review sessions)  
                      | • Conduct brainstorming sessions. | Use as a learning/teaching platform to:  
                      | • Reflect on complex issues  
                      | • Communicate when synchronous meetings cannot be scheduled because of work, family, or other commitments. |
| **Why?**             | • Motivation - increased student commitment and motivation because a quick response is expected  
                      | • Tele-presence - real time interaction builds a sense of social presence and involvement  
                      | • Immediate feedback - encouraging quick feedback on ideas, and support consensus and decision making  
                      | • Pacing - encouraging students to keep up-to-date and provide a discipline to learning  
                      | • Spontaneity - making it easy to add new ideas to the conversation, brainstorming or decision making  
                      | • Familiarity - simulating a more traditional F2F environment  
                      | • Focus on listening and speaking. | • Convenience and flexibility  
                      | • Reflection - more time for reflection because an immediate response is not expected  
                      | • Easier access to and incorporation of course materials  
<pre><code>                  | • Focus on reading and writing. |
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<th><strong>How?</strong></th>
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<td>Use synchronous means such as LiveOnline@UT/Zoom and other web conferencing tools, instant messaging, and chat.</td>
<td>Use asynchronous means such as Canvas Discussions, Assignments, Pages, and Inbox (Conversations).</td>
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| **Tips** | • Decide what your objectives are for using communication  
• Inform learners of your expectations for how communication tools will be used as part of the course  
• Facilitate and monitor both synchronous and asynchronous dialogue to keep it on topic  
• Be aware of those who do not to participate  
• Be organized  
• Be flexible  
• Ensure time for learning how to use communication tools  
• Ensure time for interaction  
• Outline the rules for participation in your syllabus  
• Use audiovisuals when appropriate  
• Summarize the major points at the end of each session  
• Prepare a contingency plan. |

| **Examples** | • Students expected to work in groups may be advised to use instant messaging as support for getting to know each other, exchanging ideas, and planning tasks  
• An instructor who wants to present concepts from the literature in a simplified way might give an online lecture in LiveOnline@UT/Zoom  
• Students expected to participate in group seminar-type discussions may do so in LiveOnline@UT/Zoom breakout rooms.  
• Students expected to reflect individually on course topics may be asked to maintain a blog  
• Students expected to share reflections regarding course topics and critically assess their peers' ideas may be asked to participate in online discussions on a discussion board. |
Communication in Relation to Participation

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<th>Synchronous</th>
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<td><strong>Cognitive Participation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Personal Participation</strong></td>
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<td>Increased reflection and ability to process information</td>
<td>Increased arousal, motivation, and convergence on meaning</td>
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The Degree of Synchronous Communication in Relation to Bloom’s Levels of Learning

![Diagram showing the relationship between synchronous communication and Bloom's levels of learning]

References: