

# FAQ: Completing and Assessing Oral Communication Assignments Remotely

## 1. Should I use Canvas Conference or Google Hangout Meet?

For virtual presentations, it comes down to instructor preference.

- With **Canvas Conference**, an instructor would click on one student's name in the class list and make them the presenter. With **Google Meet**, anyone in the session can begin presenting; there's no administrator in the meeting.
- Both Canvas Conference (*if Mac users access via Chrome*, not Safari) and Google Meet allow screen sharing, which would permit someone to run, say, a PowerPoint presentation (or any other application they're running on their computer) and still be heard while their slides are displayed on screen.
- You can embed a Google Meet link within Canvas: (1) create a Google Meet, with a nickname like "COM192class"; (2) copy the (reusable) link, when prompted in the Meet set-up; (3) create an **Announcement** in Canvas and paste the meeting link there. *A note on all the Google solutions discussed: For both ease of use and security, everyone needs to use their Puget Sound credentials for Google login, not personal Google/Gmail accounts.*

An important factor is what platform is most familiar for you and/or your students. That said, if your assignment is a **group presentation, Google Meet** – in which the students can co-present without intervention of a moderator – seems the better option. For **individual presentations, Canvas Conference** allows you to call on the speaker, moderate Q&A, and provide transitional comments.

**Google Meet** shows everyone's faces to everyone else (as long as they have their cameras turned on), particularly if you choose the "grid" feature, while in **Canvas Conference** you would need to click on individual students (e.g., when it is their turn to speak) and make them moderators in order to allow them to see others' faces. In either case, eye contact with their audience will clearly be different in the virtual vs. the face-to-face classroom. We are encouraging our students to practice talking directly to their screen (as opposed to directly to the camera) for maximum effectiveness. We think having "audience" cameras on for student presentations is a good thing but, if bandwidth precludes this, then ask students not speaking to turn their cameras off.

## 2. If I wish to record the session, what options do these platforms provide?

Advantages to recording are (a) you can review the recording to grade and provide feedback, which might be especially helpful given that your attention as instructor might be more divided than usual as you negotiate technology (and potential glitches), as opposed to the focused attention and note-taking that might otherwise be possible in the face-to-face classroom; and (b) students may be able [see below] to review the recording as part of informal reflection (personal learning) or more formal reflection that you might have assigned (e.g., through *Sounding Board* ePortfolio). Students should know in advance whether you plan to record the session or not, and what will happen to the recording. Expect that it may take up to 24 hours for a recording to actually load in Google or Canvas.

There is a recording feature in **Canvas Conference**, but afterward it is only accessible from within Canvas for 14 days (this may be sufficient for your grading purposes); it is not possible for anyone other than the meeting creator to download the recording (which should be calming for students who may be concerned that a recording of them might be shared without their knowledge). Thus, if you had plans to

video record in the live classroom, such that students could get a copy of their speech to upload into their ePortfolio, that does not look to be possible with Canvas. (They could certainly record themselves on their own before or after class and upload that recording for reflection and/or posterity! Again, you need to be clear with them about your expectations.)

**Google Meet** very recently rolled out recording for video conferences within our Puget Sound account. Here is our best understanding of how to proceed:<sup>1</sup>

- You, as instructor initiate the meeting (you are “meeting organizer”). Do not initiate recording, unless your students are doing a group presentation or set of group presentations.
- For individual presentations, ask each student to “start record” as they start their presentation and to “stop record” when they are finished.
- If a student starts a recording, it will still be saved in the professor’s drive and “shared” with the student. This assumes the professor is the one who originally generated the link for the meeting. The student can view the recording, but cannot download it. The student can’t share it to other students’ Drives without the explicit permission of the meeting organizer (you).

If you don’t need to see students doing their presentations live, they could record themselves on their own time with whatever device they’re comfortable with. You could set up a shared **Google Drive** (unlimited storage with your Puget Sound account) to handle the uploads. You need to know that **Canvas has 1GB storage limit per course**; video files max that out pretty quickly; choose Google!

- You know your class and what their public speaking experience has been. For individual presentations, you may want to consider whether the combination of anxiety about speaking AND anxiety about technology will be more than some or all of your students can handle. That could be a reason to shift to having them record themselves.
- While speaking to a camera, without an audience present (basically, doing a podcast), prepares students less well for speaking directly to an audience – and, as reticent as we are to say this – you may need to shift to their recording themselves and submitting the video files individually, by a given due date, as you recalibrate the time available in the modified, on-line remainder of the Spring 2020 semester. If you make that choice, it looks like **Google Drive** is the way to go.

### 3. What adjustments might I make in my oral communication assignment in order to adjust to virtual presentations?

- Review your assignment prompt. Be as specific as possible about (a) what is the task, (b) what are you looking for students to do, and (c) how they will be evaluated.
- **Simplify: Consider how your assignment expectations**, particularly with the added complexity of virtual presentations, **align with most important course goals** for your current course. Be prepared to revise your expectations along the way if events or technological issues cause those expectations to be unworkable; do your best, however, to maintain equity across the run of a given oral assignment – or explain very clearly how you will adjust assessment to best maintain equity.
- Be clear in advance how the class session(s) will proceed. Let them know (a) speaker order, (b) time limits, (c) whether [and how] they can [or need to] use visual aids, and (d) whether you expect them to answer class questions or manage any post-presentation discussion.
- Will speakers time themselves, or will you give them oral time signals (say, at one minute left/half minute/time’s up)? Or, will you designate a non-presenting student to be the timer for the day?
- Be clear with the class about your **expectations for students who are not presenters** on a given class day: Is everyone expected to attend? Are there general or specific expectations

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<sup>1</sup> From Google: <https://support.google.com/meet/answer/9308681?hl=en>

that students will provide written feedback for their peers? Are students expected to ask questions? Consider how you might smooth the flow of the session by assigning specific peer evaluators, assigning specific peers to ask (at least the first) question(s), and/or providing a common peer feedback form. Give credit to students for their being there and completing their roles.

- Does everyone stay off chat (unless they need to let you know of a technical problem) so that focus stays on the speaker? (We advise, yes!) That said, our experience over the past two months is that students want to give one another “applause” or other kudos after speeches via chat, so let them!

#### **4. What if there are technology glitches?**

Expect that there will be glitches, in every speaking session. Let students know that if audio and/or video are “choppy” that you will allow for that (i.e., try to have them keep going, and be a little generous on time limits). You might also remind student listeners that they can “Turn on Captions” to assist their listening, if needed. And, remember: It is OK to ask students for assistance in addressing a tech glitch!

#### **5. Can I request a Speech Center workshop in advance of students preparing the assignment?**

Speech Center staff can join your class via either Canvas Conference or Google Meet. **If your class is meeting via Google, you just need to provide us the link; if your class is meeting via Canvas, you will need to ask Educational Technology** (Kevin Kirner, Margot Casson, or Paul Monahan) **to add us to your Canvas course.** We do ask that you be present for the workshop (i.e., outside of an extraordinary circumstance, we are not able to be your replacement or “substitute” instructor). We provided multiple virtual workshops (including SSI, senior thesis, and graduate classes) in Spring 2020.

#### **6. How can my students take advantage of support from the Speech Center?**

Students can use the “Request an Appointment” link at [www.pugetsound.edu/speechcenter](http://www.pugetsound.edu/speechcenter), or contact us at [speechcenter@pugetsound.edu](mailto:speechcenter@pugetsound.edu). Appointments are via Google Meet, initiated by the Peer Speech Consultants.

#### **7. How can I improve my own virtual communication?**

We suggest that you review the “Audio-based Communication” guide, under Resources for Students on the Speech Center webpage. In addition, we recommend the *Chronicle of Higher Education* collection of articles at [https://connect.chronicle.com/CS-WC-2020-CoronavirusFreeReport\\_LP-SocialTraffic.html?CID=CSCHE20MARNLCTARR](https://connect.chronicle.com/CS-WC-2020-CoronavirusFreeReport_LP-SocialTraffic.html?CID=CSCHE20MARNLCTARR).

Prepared by A. Susan Owen and Kristine Bartanen, Professors of Communication Studies, with support from Kevin Kirner, Educational Technologist for the Humanities

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University of Puget Sound.*

speechcenter@pugetsound.edu  
pugetsound.edu/speechcenter