



Angler Education Best Practices for Online Classes and Clinics

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Online classes should not replace the quality in-person hands-on teaching format but can be used to supplement class topics when needed. These best practices represent the minimum expectations for online training for the Aquatic Education Program. Please notify the Aquatic Education Program staff prior to offering an online session, AnglerEdu@tpwd.texas.gov

BEFORE the Session:

- Find a co-teacher(s) to help you manage the online meeting and chats during the meeting. A minimum of two people is best (host and co-host), but three is even better.
- Use an on-line learning platform that is secure and allows various features such as screen sharing, virtual whiteboards, polls or quizzes, etc. to make your session interactive.
 - Keep the meeting link private (do not advertise the link publicly).
 - Use a meeting password and/or a “waiting room” for participants as they arrive.
- Check your internet connection. If possible, use an ethernet connection instead of Wi-Fi, if using a wireless connection make sure you are close to your router.
 - Test your internet connection speed while using your device video camera.
 - If you do not have an ethernet connection, you can use a personal hotspot from your mobile phone for improved internet connection.
- Room and equipment set-up (hold an online pre-check meeting check with a buddy):
 - Ensure lighting is adequate during the time of day or evening you plan to host your session.
 - Ensure your microphone and speakers levels are set.
 - Check the room background for any distractions. (Virtual backgrounds are discouraged because they sometimes interfere with the presenter’s movements.)
 - Turn off the “mirror my video/screen” setting, so that graphics you show on camera are not backwards.
 - Use a stationary chair vs a swivel / rolling chair.
 - If filming in a static setting – do not be so far away that people can’t see items you are holding – make sure to zoom in or move in close to the camera when needed.
- Use a pre-registration process to insure only registered participants have access to the online session information.
- Communicate with the participants in advance (a few days before):
 - Provide session information or the agenda to the participants.
 - Send any pre-reading, [literature or video links](#) that will be used during the session.
 - Provide a material or supply list of items that participants will need during the session.
- If teaching youth, request that a parent or responsible adult over the age of 21 be physically present with the youth participant during the online class.

We would like to acknowledge colleagues and partners who provided information and helpful tips: Boy Scouts of America, Fishing’s Future, Informal Science Education Association, National Association for Interpretation, and TPWD I.T. Security.

- Plan your agenda in advance:
 - Keep the online session(s) short (1 to 1.5 hours). If conducting longer sessions, set aside a short break time.
 - Stick to the agenda, do not change during the presentation.
 - Teach in small chunks, one topic per 15-20 minutes. Keep it simple.
 - Plan to use polls or trivia questions to engage the participants.
 - Assign “homework” or allow for other interactive engagement.
 - Make sure visuals (PowerPoint slides, documents, or teaching tools) are large and easy to see on a small screen (some participants may be using a tablet or cell phone).
 - Use a quick reference sheet with online hyperlinks you plan to use during the meeting so your time during the online session is optimized or have the webpages que’d up before the session.
 - Request that participants use a screen name that matches the name they registered with, so that they receive proper credit for the work that they have done.

DURING the Session:

- Do not allow others to join a meeting before you, as the host, have arrived (use a virtual waiting room).
- “Lock” your meeting once the session has begun, to prevent others from joining if the meeting IDs or access details have been leaked.
- Introduce yourself and teaching partners, and participants. Review the agenda for session; take attendance or a head count (adult, youth, gender). If using Facebook Live, ask participants to enter their zip code or city in the comments. If using a platform such as Zoom, use the chat box for “check-in.”
- Ask participants to mute themselves after introductions.
- Engage the audience by asking questions, using poll features (if available); check for understanding (allow participants to try an activity and show their work). Remind them to “unmute”.
- Have fun!

ENDING the Session:

- Provide information about the next learning opportunity (Topic, date, time, and pre-registration info).
- Ask participants to complete a post-session evaluation to help you improve the next session.

AFTER the Session:

- Complete an Angler Education [report](#) online.
 - For facility type, enter the online platform used (Facebook Live, GoTo Meeting, Zoom, etc.).
 - For city, enter your location (where you taught from).
- Send electronic certificate to participants (if applicable), available [online](#).

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