



2020-2021 School Year: Engaging Youth from a Distance

This school year will inevitably be a unique one. We are not sure what the future holds for schools in terms of COVID-19. Even if schools are open for in-person classes, we are not comfortable putting our immune-compromised volunteers at risk by asking them to go into a school. Other in-person requests will be on a case-by-case basis if we have any non-immune-compromised volunteers who are comfortable doing these presentations. Our aim is to do virtual presentations with classes for students whether they are in-school or at home. That said, we've included some tips and resources for presenting online.

1. **Test your set-up ahead of time.** You'll need a computer (desktop or laptop), a microphone or phone for audio/sound, and ideally a webcam. Many laptops have a webcam and microphone built in. If not, you can purchase a webcam with a built in microphone relatively inexpensively from Amazon or Best Buy. Zoom is fairly common, but there is a possibility that a school uses a different platform, so if you can, test it out ahead of time so you are familiar with the controls.
2. **Prepare your environment.** Silence your phone, turn off desktop notifications, get rid of loud noises, and make sure your room is kid/dog free (if possible). Also, if your presentation will use a video feed of you (which we recommend), you should plan to dress appropriately.
3. **Set ground rules.** Be explicit with your plan and expectations. If students are joining the presentation individually from home, you'll likely want them muted for the presentation. Let them know if they should submit their questions via a chat box, or if they should hold them for the end. If we are being virtually presented to an in-person class, maybe ask the students to write down their questions so you can take them at the end. Whatever you are comfortable with—but let them know ahead of time.
4. **Keep it engaging.** Depending on the set-up, try to incorporate more questions and discussions throughout the presentation. For example, ask for students to respond to the true/false questions in a chat box. If they are on camera, ask them to give a thumbs up/thumbs down for true/false. If you are more adept at online presentations, think about adding in a poll. Think of ways to keep them engaged throughout the presentation.
5. **Check in regularly.** Presenting online can be hard because you lose the non-verbal cues that students can give to show understanding or confusion. It can be easy to just assume that they understand since you don't have that feedback loop, but make sure to check in from time-to-time to verify.