CAMERA USE IN ZOOM:
Making the Right Choice for Your Class

Why Students Have Them Off

TECHNOLOGY
Students may lack webcams, sufficient WiFi access, or the computer processing capability to handle all Zoom features.

FATIGUE
Students may be in Zoom classes or meetings for many hours a day and may need a break from constantly being "on."

ANXIETY
Students may have anxiety, image concerns, or a history of trauma that makes sharing their videos difficult.

PRIVACY
Students may not want to share their surroundings with others. They may not want their image recorded.

ILLNESS
Students may feel well enough to attend a virtual class, but may not want to share video due to their symptoms.

CARE NEEDS
Students may have parental or elder care obligations that are competing for their attention and availability.

Why Instructors Like Them On

SIMULATES FACE-TO-FACE LEARNING

DRAINING TO TEACH "EMPTY BOXES"

ASSISTS WITH COMMUNITY-BUILDING

TO CONFIRM STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

from Lindsay Masland at the **CENTER FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE** — **Appalachian STATE UNIVERSITY**

Ask Yourself: Is There a Learning- or Student-Centered Reason to Have Cameras on in Your Class?

Click any box for more information!

NO
As an instructor, I just prefer to have cameras on.

THEN →

Review the reasons why students may have their cameras off. Are there reasonable accommodations you can make around camera use that reflect students' realities?

AND ↓

State your expectations as early as possible in the course (i.e., in the syllabus and other relevant course materials). Provide your students with a clear rationale for why you prefer cameras on.

AND ↓

Instead of beginning class with announcements or lecture, start with an engagement or community-building activity. Many students will naturally turn cameras on for these interactions and may be more inclined to keep them on through the period, as a result.

AND ↓

Show students how to switch to gallery view in Zoom, which may decrease unwanted feelings of "spotlighting." Also, plan for moments throughout class when all cameras are off (such as during a brainstorm) to decrease fatigue.

If students do not have webcams, computers with integrated webcams can be checked out from the Belk Library Technology Desk for 3-day periods. However, inventory is limited, so be prepared to make other course accommodations.

AND ↓

Show students how to add a virtual background in Zoom, as this may allay some privacy concerns. Be aware that not all computers have sufficient processing power to handle a virtual background.

OR →

Ask students to upload a current photo as their Zoom profile picture. This way, if students do need to turn cameras off, their images are still visible, which are much easier to speak to than black boxes.

YES
I believe we need cameras on to achieve learning goals that pertain to:

OBSERVABLE SKILLS
I am teaching observable skills such as public speaking, dance, or sign language. I need to be able see my students to give them effective feedback.

THEN →

Consider the difficulty of confirming engagement through video alone, as students could be looking at the camera, but actually reading emails. A better approach is to use Zoom features that invite active engagement.

TRY →

Ask students to use the Reactions feature in Zoom. In response to inquiries, students can express agreement, confusion, excitement, and more. Students who don't react can be prompted through direct message in the chat.

OR ↓

Students can be invited to use the Annotate function in Zoom to mark up a slide or image you share. Ask students to vote with checkmarks, to use lines as a strikethrough, or to highlight important ideas.

ENGAGEMENT
I want to make sure that students are engaged in the class, since engagement predicts learning.

TRY → Ask students to answer questions in the chat. Students can "reply all" or directly to you with their answers. Chat responses can be a better indicator of engagement and community-building than physical appearance.

OR → Class polls through Zoom, AsULearn, or Google Forms can be used to assess learning and to collect information about student preferences, experiences, and identities.

COMMUNITY-BUILDING
Community is important to me, and that feels easier to build when cameras are on.

THEN ↓

Seeing a person's face is just one way to get to know them. There are many ways to incorporate sharing, support, and belongingness into your virtual classroom that don't rely on sight or cameras.

TRY →

Use the Breakout Rooms feature of Zoom for small-group activities. Invite students to work in small groups on an engaging task, and you can drop in to work with them or to answer their questions.

AND ←

Before class, place the prompts for your small-group activities in a Google Doc, Slides, Padlet, or other collaborative space. While students are in breakout rooms, watch the them contribute to the collaborative product, and add comments in real-time for a highly engaging experience.

OR ↑

Experiment with the types of feedback you give to students, both in Zoom and on their work. Feedback that validates student effort while scaffolding toward deeper levels of understanding can enhance feelings of support and connection.