

Royal Tyrrell Museum Distance Learning: What To Expect

Thank you for choosing to participate in a distance learning program with the Royal Tyrrell Museum's Distance Learning Centre! This document outlines basic video conferencing concepts, etiquette, and guidelines to assist you in preparing your class for your event.

First, we'll outline some key concepts about our video conferences.

Types of Presentations

There are two main types of video conferencing presentations and it is important to know in advance which type of presentation you will be participating in to prepare your students accordingly.

- **Point-to-Point Presentations**

A Point-to-Point video conference is a presentation where your class alone is connected for the event. In this case, your microphone may be turned on for the duration of the connection, allowing natural response from your students. *This being said, students should be made aware of the fact that any excessive noise or talking produced during the event could prove disruptive.*

- **Multi-Point Presentations**

A Multi-Point video conference is a presentation where your class is connected along with one or two other classes, and all parties can see one another on the screen along with the main presenter. In this case your microphone must be turned off for the entirety of the program; otherwise, all parties connected will experience audio feedback and distortion. This being said, students should be prepared to respond visually, often prompted by the presenter. The educator or technician should also be prepared to turn on the microphone at the presenter's request for fielding questions from students.

Using the Technology

Video conference technology has come a long way over the past few years and problems are generally minimal. There are a few points you should be aware of in regards to how this technology operates.

- **Bandwidth, Video and Audio**

The term "bandwidth" essentially refers to the amount of traffic space available on a network. This applies to your location's network, the internet itself, and our network. The greater the amount of bandwidth available, the better. *If bandwidth is low, the quality of the connection will suffer.*

Video and audio both depend on a certain amount of bandwidth. Audio does not require as much bandwidth as video does; in which case you may notice the video suffering if the connection is poor, but the audio will still be fine. Test connections prior to your event will help determine the best connection settings to ensure the highest quality possible during your event.

- **Two Second Delay**

Depending on the quality of your connection, there will be a one to two second delay between end-points. Meaning, if your class responds to a question, it can take one to two seconds for the presenter to acknowledge their response. This delay is normal and is nothing to be concerned about, but you may want to make your students aware of it.



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- **Microphone**

Most video conference systems are equipped with an "area" microphone. This is a microphone that picks up audio from a certain area around it, and is best suited in a classroom environment where students may respond from different locations within the room. If your microphone is an area microphone and it has a longer cable, try to position it within your group of students so they can all be heard.

Responding to the Program

Our distance learning programs are intended to be as interactive as possible, and as such will require response from your students throughout. There are two main types of response your students will be encouraged to offer during a program.

- **Natural Response**

Natural Response occurs when students are reacting naturally to what they see or hear during the video conference event. Natural response is encouraged in all our presentations! Students should keep in mind that speaking while the presenter is speaking is not acceptable, but they are encouraged to laugh, applaud and respond naturally throughout the event. Natural Response promotes a presentation that is increasingly interactive and fluid, and discourages "talking-head" syndrome.

- **Prompted Response**

Prompted Response occurs when students are prompted by the presenter to answer a question or become involved in an activity. The response may be visual or auditory, and in many cases students will simply follow the presenter's lead. Students should be prepared to speak loudly and clearly in the event they are asked to respond individually.

Supplementary Program Materials

Some programs provide you with digital supplementary program materials to use in your classroom either before or after the event. These materials will compliment the programming, and give your students the opportunity to extend their knowledge beyond the screen. Check your confirmation letter that you received either by e-mail or fax to determine if your program includes supplementary material.

Though we encourage you to use these materials in your own classroom, we ask that you please do not distribute them elsewhere, as they are copyright of the Royal Tyrrell Museum.



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General Guidelines

Whether this is your first video conference event or your fiftieth, chances are you and your class are very excited to participate. And so are we! However, it is important to keep some simple etiquette and guidelines in mind while connected for your video conference program.

- **Room Layout**

Regardless of where your video conference equipment is located, it is important to organise the room and the students so everyone can be seen and heard. It is often best to seat students on the floor in rows, however if students are at desks or tables, do your best to position them closer together. It is important everyone is within the camera's view, and therefore visible to the presenter. In addition, a camera located higher up can more easily see all the students than a camera located lower down; especially those students seated toward the back.

Under ideal conditions, it should not be necessary to adjust your camera's position at any point during the program. Adjusting your camera is distracting for the presenter and your students, and interrupts the general flow of the program.

- **Lighting**

Do your best to ensure adequate lighting in the room you are located in. It is tempting to turn the lights down or off to create a more "movie"-like atmosphere, but it becomes difficult or impossible for the presenter to see the students, gauge their response, and properly ask questions. If you are concerned about students being unable to see the screen if the room is too bright, do your best to darken the end of the room the equipment is located in, while keeping your students in the light.

We are excited to bring the capabilities of this technology into your classroom, and look forward to connecting with you. If you have any additional questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact us.

Pre-Event Checklist...

- **Bandwidth**
 - Does your school have bandwidth available for the presentation at the time scheduled?
- **Room Layout and Lighting**
 - Are all students visible to the camera?
 - Is the camera situated at a suitable level, and in such a way that it does not have to be adjusted during the program?
 - Is the lighting suitable?
- **Equipment Layout**
 - Are all students able to see the screen?
 - Are all students able to be heard by the microphone?
- **Etiquette**
 - Student preparation
 - Remember to keep speaking and noise to a minimum while the presenter is speaking.
 - When answering a question, speak loudly and clearly. Some practice and role-play beforehand is recommended.
- **Prepared to have fun!**

