

Holding Office Hours

There are numerous office hour models that are used by instructors across campus, but they all serve the role of providing a place for students to ask both content and logistical questions in a one-on-one or small group format, get assistance with course content in a less intimidating environment, follow up on exam performance, and build a better academic relationship with the instructor. Most of these activities can occur in an online format by holding Zoom office hours. Instructors can get help setting up Zoom through canvas [here](#). Below are some ideas for best practices to make online office hours more comfortable and productive.

- Set up the Zoom link ahead of time; send out a reminder email with the link 15-30 minutes ahead of the scheduled time.
- Remind students via email and when they login to mute their audio and then unmute when they would like to talk. You may also manually mute participants as needed.
- Remind students that they can use the public or private chat function or “raise hand” function to ask questions in addition to speaking up verbally.
- Ask students to type their name in the chat box when they enter the zoom meeting, which will help the instructor know who is in the meeting; sometimes screen names do not reflect the name of the person.
- If explaining course content, periodically check in with students about how they are following along and what questions they may have. The online format can leave the instructor without the normal context cues that they often use to gauge understanding during face-to-face instruction. Explicitly asking on a regular basis for this feedback can be helpful.
- [Breakout rooms](#) can be used to have students talk in smaller groups about a topic. The instructor can listen in on the conversations going on in the session and can broadcast information to all breakout groups.
- Talk about the use of online office hours during class and ask for student feedback.
- Don't give up! One instructor in EEB found that the first few sessions of online office hours felt awkward and difficult but after the fourth session 15-18 people were showing up and in class, students were expressing that they appreciated the flexibility it provided and liked the format.