Principles of online classroom engagement

## Transcript

Moving to a virtual classroom is not easy. Whether you're new to this or a pro, there are five things everyone teaching online should do.

### Number one location.

When online teaching, where do you conduct the lessons? Many of his share a space and even a home office is no guarantee, as this dad found out. “And what will it mean for the wider region? I think one of your children just walked in.”

Isn’t she gorgeous!

So let people know you're taking a class to minimize interruptions. And don't forget to turn off your mobile phone. Your background should be free of distractions and steer clear of being backlit where your background is lighter than the light on your face. If you use daylight through a window onto the side of your face, not direct sunlight, and that seems to work quite well. Try not to film in a bedroom and if you have no alternative, avoided looking like a bedroom.

### Number two, is your voice.

38% of good communication is our voice. The way we say something. I would suggest that's even more important when we're teaching online where students can't see us as well and sometimes not at all.

So take a listen to this. “What's a leader and why are they important? We have leaders in government, our school, sports, even our friendship group. So today we're going to talk about what makes a good or a bad leader and why we need them.”

That was really fast, wasn't it? Now, listen to this. “What is a leader and why are they important? We have leaders in government, our schools, sports, even our friendship groups. So today we're going to talk about what makes a good or a bad leader and why we need them”

So the same information, same words, just a different delivery. Have a listen to this. “OK, so today's lesson is a bit different than usual. Can anyone tell me how? Yes Archie. That's right. There is a written assessment you need to fill in and submit after the lesson.”

Now this.

“OK, so today's lesson is a bit different than usual. Can anyone tell me how? Yes, Archie that's right there is a written assessment, you will need to fill in and submit after the lesson.”

Whose class would you rather be in? If you want students to engage you need to sound engaged. The faster you speak the less clear you become. When you slow down, you can emphasize important ideas and put energy and meaning into your delivery.

### This brings us to number 3 visual

Where 55% of good communication is located. Just like in the classroom, you need to look at your students when you're talking to them. So that means knowing where the camera is on your computer and you use that when you're both listening and speaking to your students.

Unlike them, there's only one of you, so where your eyes are focused makes a big impact on the whole class. The temptation is for us to look at the screen, and that's not engaging. It's easy to forget, so do whatever you have to do to remind yourself of where that camera is. For me it's googly eyes! And if eye contact is going to be affective, your computers camera needs to be at eye level, so start by cleaning the lens, get rid of all those smudges that we don't realize are there. And then look not here or here but here. That way you're looking at your students when you're speaking to them. If you can see the ceiling behind you or numerous chins in front of you then you're not looking at the right place and practice using your computer's video record feature. Play this back and see how you're coming across.

Just as we did when we were first prac teaching, get feedback from others or give it to yourself. You might think it coming across all warm and smiling, but that may not be the reality.

Visual communication also includes your posture. If you're going to lead a class, you need to fill the frame, check your head room, not too much, not too little, and sit it back rather than crowd in on the camera. Sitting back allows our body language to be open and positive, and it sends a message that you're engaged and comfortable. It also means you're speaking at your microphone rather than your keyboard. Much easier to understand you.

### Finally, you presentation.

Checks and narrow stripes can strobe on some students screens, so solid colours seem to work best and avoid commenting on how you look. We do get self-conscious, but if we put ourselves down or mention how we look, we just make our students uncomfortable. If you wouldn't do it in a regular classroom, don't do it here. Your voice and your visual can make the difference between confusing and demotivating your students or inspiring, encouraging them. It's that important.

### Number four is, know.

Know your technology. If you have bad internet, your whole class has bad Internet. Can you confidently share a screen? Understand what your software can do, how to break your class into groups? If you can't, then your content and its delivery will suffer. We need to control the things we can control because the things we can't, we can't. We're so used to knowing our subject, presenting in a classroom, reading the room, settling everyone down. But the environment our students are learning in right now their resources and their access are beyond us. So knowing our technology makes all the difference, the more confident you are about it, the more creative an enjoyable your teaching's going to be.

So number one location, where are you going to teach from?

Number two, voice sound enthusiastic, engaged and slow down.

Number three- visual look at your students when you speak and four, know your technology so your content doesn't suffer.

These four letters to number five. Be yourself. The whole point of one to four is so you can be you when you get these four sorted, you can then relax and get on with the business of teaching.

It will take getting used to, but very few of us felt at home on our first day in the classroom. It took practice and experience and this is no different. I'm from the Australian Film TV and Radio school and we've been working with the New South Wales Department of Education for a number of years and these top tips we've adapted some of our teaching to share with you.

If you'd like to take your online teaching further, go to the web link provided at the end of this video and thank you for all the work you do and good luck.