

Here are five tips I learned from my first online teaching for the MBAs (Competitive Strategy) via Zoom. Feel free to distribute and add more tips to this list. Any comments/questions please email dr.chengweiliu@gmail.com

Keep calm and carry on SOCIAL DISTANCING,
Chengwei Liu
ESMT Berlin

Tip 1: find a comfortable setup/position that suits you

I do not feel like sitting when teaching so I set up my desk/room accordingly. To appear to be more engaging(!), always try to make your eye contact with the camera, not the monitor. The height of the camera needs to be optimized before the actual teaching.



Tip 2: make everything you need during your teaching handy

I highly recommend dual screens. In my case, I use my Macbook as the main screen, and my iPad as my second screen (like what is projected in the classroom). I can then write on my slides (or during whiteboard demonstration) using apple pen. Some additional notes:

- (a) it's a good idea to invest on a nice webcam. I chose [Logitech StreamCam](#). You can adjust the angle and height more easily. It also has superior camera and microphone than built-in ones.
- (b) try to use sunlight and turn off LED lights. LED will generate flickering effects.
- (c) have a notebook at hand to document anything you like.
- (d) prepare plenty of water... you will likely speak much more than face-to-face sessions.
- (e) do not use Airpods (or wireless headset) if you plan to play any video. Switching audio sources back and forth is tricky.



Tip 3: Make the most out of the Zoom breakout room function

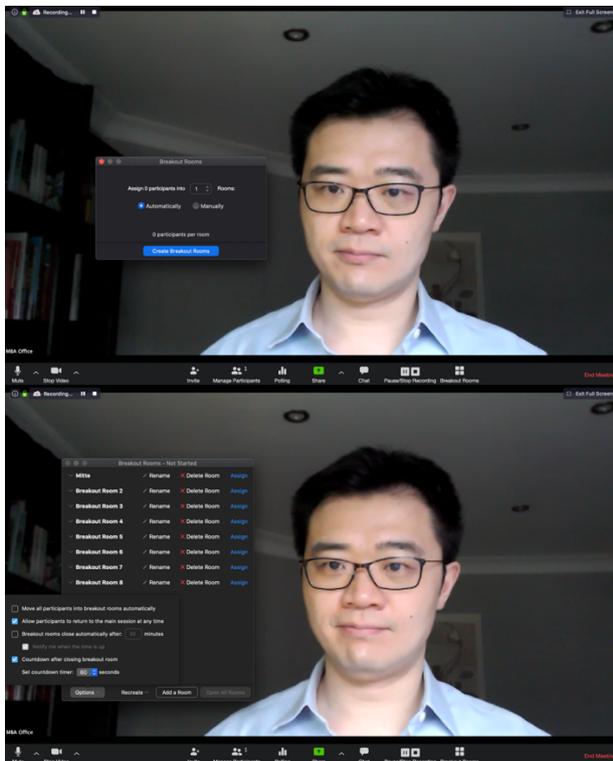
You can assign groups automatically (i.e., random allocation) or manually (by pre-arranged allocation). Students enjoyed both. The former works for any type of discussion and it can generate diversity bonus (as students engage different classmates each time). The latter allows professors to run graded group assignments as usual. In my case, I ran two group based simulation games in real time and the breakroom function was great for this purpose!

Students can share their screen(s) in their own breakout room. Professor can ask them to have a volunteer to summarize the discussion in a document (e.g., PowerPoint slide) and then share it with the whole class when the breakroom session ends. Note that this student needs to be made as a “co-host” to be able to share his/her screen with the whole class (per Zoom default setting).

For the manual group setup, a useful tip is to ask students to change their ID when login to “Name_GroupName” (e.g., Chengwei Liu_Mitte). You need to log in slightly earlier to create these groups manually (see Group Mitte I created). You can only assign students to their groups when they join the Zoom session. With 48 students, it took me 3 min on average if their IDs include the group info. Note that this assignment can only be done by you as the “host”. You can make someone else as the host but all the group setup will be gone when this host is transferred. In short, you as the professor needs to assign groups yourself.

You can join any breakout rooms (regardless of automatic or manual setup) any time you like. They can also ask for your help (so keep the breakout window visible and don't be too relaxed :-)

Importantly, the manual group setup will be gone when the session ends or you then use automatic assignment. Plan ahead to avoid unnecessary re-setup.



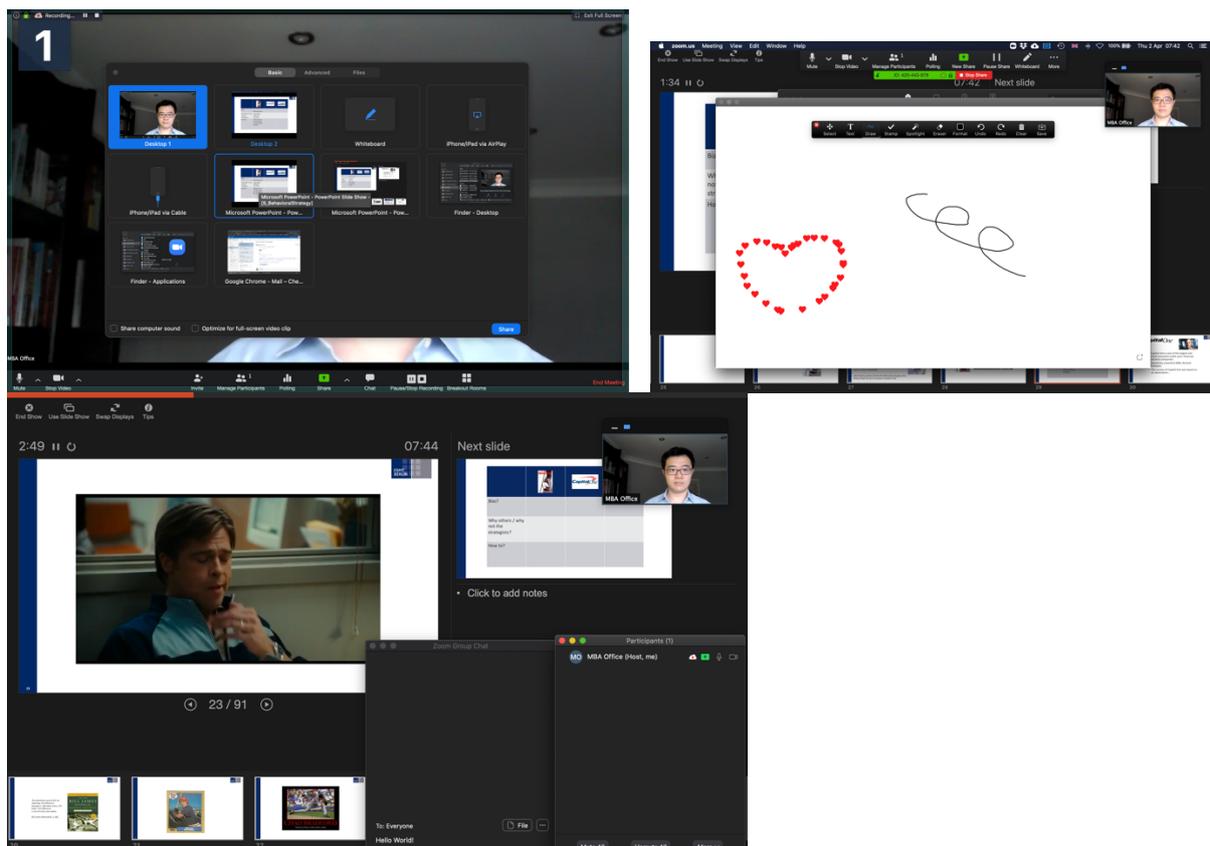
Tip 4: on sharing screens, video and polls

There are many ways to share your slides. I recommend the following: (1) play your PowerPoint slides show; (2) use Alt-Tab (Window) or Command-Tab (Mac) to go to Zoom; (3) use Zoom Share function to share the slide show. In doing so, I make sure they only see my slides show (not the distractions on my desktop/browser if I share one of the two screens) and I can highlight/draw on the slides using my iPad/apple pen.

White board sharing is also useful if you want to demonstrate anything. To save time, I chose to add a blank slide and draw there instead of switching back and forth between slides and whiteboard. But students can be allowed to draw on whiteboard as well. It could have been fun but my trial was ruined by naughty students who decided to ignore the task and draw a big heart on the whiteboard (and there is no way to find out who that was).

Video is useful and I recommend to download them (if possible) and insert them in PowerPoint slides directly. This is to save time switching back and forth between your browser/software and slides.

You can also use polls. You need to prepare and save the questions on Zoom website before the session. The format is quite limited, mainly multiple choice questions. But the results can be shared immediately.



Tip 5: managing class discussion

Below is my screen (main monitor; my second monitor iPad shows my slide show). Always have the participant window and chat window visible to you. The former allows you to see all the “hands” raised so you can ask them to unmute themselves and speak; the latter allows you to capture not only comments/questions but potential technical problem observed by student rep or students (e.g., slides are not shared or I forgot to unmute myself etc). You can choose to include participant video. My screen is not too big so I use the speaker mode: only the participant who is speaking will be shown. In theory you can show up to 48 participants (if you want to have a sense of class dynamics, but many turn off their camera...)

Finally, it’s a good idea to make one or two participants as the “co-host” (e.g., student reps), in case you are disconnected from the Zoom session for any reason. With the presence of the co-host, the session will continue (and hopefully you will find a way back).

