



Fall Teaching Conference 2021 “Back Again” Strategies and Resources

Instructors this term are going back to the classroom during an uncertain and unsettled time. While in some ways this transition might feel like a return to something familiar, it is also sure to present new challenges. Harvard’s classrooms may be the same, but we return to them changed in various ways by the pandemic—including by the new ways we have learned to teach, some of which we may wish to bring with us into our in-person seminars and lectures. This resource is designed to help Teaching Fellows consider key questions as you take on the role of leading a class in person, in terms of 1) how to plan, 2) what to do in class, and 3) how to support yourself and your students outside of class.

Consult with your coursehead and other members of your teaching team as you consider what strategies might work for your course this fall. For official policy, refer to the [FAS Fall 2021 Plan](#). Consult the [Harvard University Guidance for On-Campus Activity](#) for masking and other health and safety rules, the [guidance that Harvard College undergraduates](#) are following, and the university [Covid-19 information](#).

Before Class: Plan how you will establish a welcoming and comfortable classroom environment.

1. Flexibility. Plan how you will talk to your students about flexibility, and consider how you might adopt a spirit of experimentation and flexibility as you try new things and see what will work with your class. Consider sharing this quote from Dean Claudine Gay: “... *remember to give ourselves room to take risks, knowing we won’t get everything right the first time. It’s ok to try, to learn, to change.*” Consider ways you can be transparent and acknowledge that it will take time to get used to being in classrooms again, and create open lines of communication with your students.
2. Getting to know each other. Plan how you will get to know your students and have them get to know each other without the aid of Zoom names and pronouns. Consider using name tags or table tents. Students could also record video introductions on Canvas or Slack. Refer to our [Bok Guide: How Do I Plan for the First Day of Class?](#) and consider what adjustments you might make given the current times.
3. Establish community norms. Consider establishing [group agreements](#) to discuss and agree upon expected behavior in the classroom. Establish a system to use with students to keep track of how they are learning and feeling about the course, whether it is periodic [minute papers](#) (on paper in class or via Google form), a Slack channel, or regular office hours. For more ideas see our resources on [ongoing feedback](#).
4. Check in with students. Students and instructors alike may be experiencing stress as we transition back to in-person teaching. We should be aware that we may acclimate at different paces as we adjust to being around people again. Set up a clear channel of communication with your students that allows you to check in on how they are feeling. Encourage students

to reach out to you (and let them know how best to do so), and consider requiring that everyone come by your office hours once to get to know you, learn more about the class, and begin to establish rapport. You could also adapt some of the strategies for [ongoing feedback](#), like Google forms. Knowing more about how students are doing will help you plan your teaching and deal empathetically with challenges that arise. Consider what system would work for you, what you would want to know from students, and what would help you as a teacher.

5. Resources:

- a. Karen Costa, "[Trauma-Aware Teaching Checklist](#);" based on the CDC's [6 Guiding Principles To A Trauma-Informed Approach](#).
- b. Sarah Brown, "[A 'Trauma Informed' Return to Campus](#)," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (27 July 2021).

In Class: Consider what you will do in class, given that everyone will be wearing masks, and how you might implement some of the strategies that worked well during remote teaching.

1. Masks. Refer to our [Guidance on Teaching While Masked](#), shared with faculty, for ideas to ease teaching and learning while masked. Consider building in time for everyone to step outside if they need a break, and let students know how to take a break if they need one.
2. Engaged communication. For strategies on using gestures, vocal volume, and visuals to communicate clearly, check out the workshops led by Erika Bailey, *Head of Voice and Speech, American Repertory Theater; Lecturer on Theater, Dance & Media*.
 - a. Attend Erika's session at the Fall Teaching Conference: [Teaching with Presence](#) (a recording will be available after the session on our *Hit the Ground Running Canvas* site ([register here](#)).
 - b. Videos from prior workshops are already available:
 - i. [Engaged Communication: Anxiety, Performance, and Presenting in Zoom](#)
 - ii. [Teaching with Presence...even through Zoom!](#)
6. Remote teaching technologies. Consider how some of the strategies and technologies from teaching remotely could still be used for teaching, communication, and collaboration with your class. Building on the environment of flexibility and experimentation, consider trying out one of your favorite remote teaching activities in class. Many online collaborative tools could work well in person; for example, you could have students bring laptops and do a [Google Jamboard](#) while you project it at the front of the room.
7. Small group work. Whether you realized it or not, you probably greatly increased the amount of small group work you did in your course because of the appeal of using breakout rooms to help students connect more and escape the cognitive load of a packed Zoom room. Now that we're back in person, consider how small group work might remain a feature of your section. What active learning strategies will you continue to use? For more ideas, [see our page on active learning](#).

8. Listening. Build time for listening in your class. Make sure you take the time to listen to students and to have them listen to each other, and let them know what to do if they can't hear or are having trouble understanding. Pause at least 5 seconds, if not longer, after asking questions. In Zoom, people often simultaneously asked questions or shared comments via chat rather than waiting to speak, and it may take time for students to feel comfortable speaking up in the classroom. Invite students to ask questions or share thoughts throughout the class.
9. Resources:
 - a. Beth McMurtrie, "[Teaching: After the Pandemic, What Innovations Are Worth Keeping?](#)" *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (1 April 2021).

Outside of Class: Connect with friends and colleagues to help you in supporting your students and taking care of yourself.

1. Teaching support network. Talk to friends and colleagues about what they are thinking about as we return to campus and how they are planning their classes, and invite them to discuss your teaching plans.
2. Supporting your students. Check out the [Bok Guide: How Can I Support My Undergraduate Students?](#) to familiarize yourself with some of the offices and support networks around Harvard where you can refer your students.
3. Time management. As you plan our own time and take care of yourself, check out our [Bok Guide: How Do I Manage My Time Effectively as a Teacher?](#). Be kind to yourself throughout this transition.
4. Resources:
 - a. Danielle Farrell, "[B-2 B-Well: Navigating the Return—Together. Coming back to campus post-COVID](#)," *Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences* (15 April 2021).
 - b. "[COVID-19 Rages On Globally. Here Are Resources to Help](#)," *Harvard Business Publishing* (3 May 2021).

For further support or guidance on your particular teaching circumstances, don't hesitate to reach out to us. You might consider taking a [Bok Seminar](#) this fall to practice particular skills, or sign up for an [individual consultation](#).