

# GDLN -tips

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THE  
AUSTRALIAN  
NATIONAL  
UNIVERSITY

Asia Pacific Press at the  
AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY  
<http://ncdsnet.anu.edu.au>



## Global Development Learning Network GDLN Orientation Guidelines Presenting and Teaching

‘Connecting people with other people using videoconference’

These guidelines are designed to prepare facilitators and presenters in the use of the GDLN (Global Development Learning Network). There are four sections:

1. Using the GDLN videoconference facilities
2. Presentation format
3. Technical issues
4. Working with interpreters

### Key points to remember:

Attention spans for even the most attentive students do not exceed 15 to 20 minutes. To make videoconference sessions more effective, the presenter/instructor must actively involve learners in the learning process; give them something to do besides listen to the presenter talking.

Training is critical for videoconference success. It is a fatal error to assume that one should simply replicate regular classroom instruction, but on camera. The instructor must not only develop quality teaching materials and activities, but also must be mindful of the use of technology.

Videoconference can provide instructionally effective, highly interactive learning experiences that are flexible, equitable and responsive to individual needs.

### Advantages of the GDLN

- Next best thing to being there.
- Save cost of travel.  
Reasonably cost-effective.
- Two-way systems make it possible to interact from student to teachers, local and remote sites.
- Very visual.
- Good for developing a distant ‘learning community’.

### Disadvantages of the GDLN

- Faculty and students may not be comfortable with the technology at first.
- Interactions must be carefully planned.
- Visuals must match the format.
- Presenter becomes ‘talking head’ instead of interacting with students at student to student, site to site.
- Technology can and will fail.

# 1. Using the GDLN videoconference facilities

## BEFORE THE SESSION

### First steps

- Participate in a conference as an observer to understand the flow.
- Learn about the equipment.
- Consider what will be happening at the other site(s).
- Practice your presentation skills.
- Go through a ‘dress rehearsal’ during which you use your visuals.

### Plan ahead

- Who are the audience?
- Obtain a participant name list in advance. It should also include work and educational background.
- What are their expectations?
- What language(s) will be used?
- Will you need to work with an interpreter?
- Will there be both simultaneous and consecutive translation?
- Do the course materials need to be translated (remember to allow plenty of time for this).
- Prerequisites.
- Cultural issues (high context—will be more difficult to engage in discussion in the early stages: low context—may monopolise discussion).
- Are the participants comfortable with the technology?
- Who are the facilitators?
- Who are the technicians?
- Is there a common understanding on how the session will be run—for example, how long people will talk, where the cameras will be positioned, length of time to spend on each session, time for breaks and so forth?

### Pedagogical considerations

- Plan for interaction within and among local and remote sites. **The more interaction the better.**
- Modify the ways you would conduct face-to-face classes so they work at a distance.
- Use visuals as organisers and to extend presentation and discussion.
- Use common effective teaching principles—analyse, design, develop, implement and evaluate.
- Add as many interactive components as possible, perhaps more than if it were a face-to-face class.
- Require and expect contribution from all sites.
- Focus on what you want the students to learn, do experience.
- Try to follow up communicating electronically. For example by bulletin board, fax, paper, phone or in person.

## Cultural awareness preparation

Be aware of cultural sensitivities and issues that may arise.

For example in some cultures if both the boss and the subordinate are present in the same class this could hold back 'open' discussion.

## DURING THE SESSION

### Establish the rules at the very beginning

This should be done in advance of the session and then again at the beginning of the session. The 'rules' should include participant protocol.

For example, remind people about the 'mute' button; rules for length of time speaking; mobiles off and so forth.

### Facilitation: know who's in charge

It is very important to have facilitators at BOTH ends.

If you are the key facilitator, establish contact with your counterpart prior to the session to establish rules, procedures and so forth.

A challenge for the facilitator is to keep the participants on track. Videoconference offers the added challenge of keeping silent participants from disappearing.

### Session protocol

- Arrive early
- Begin on time
- Finish on time—or you may be cut off mid sentence
- Open by introducing participants—it would be a good idea for the participants to have name tents so those at other sites know the names of everyone.
- Review objectives
- Encourage participation
- Ask questions
- Keep session focussed

### Instructional issues

- Do we need to be able to see everyone?
- Do we need to be able to hear everyone?

### Time

- Running overtime is not an option.
- Ensure your clock matches the time at the other site(s).
- Plan to finish at least 5 minutes ahead of schedule to ensure important matters are discussed and completed. If there are a few minutes left this time can be used for informal discussion and good-byes.

## Participant protocol

- Be yourself
- Talk naturally
- Smile
- Ask participants to identify themselves and their site (if more than one site) when starting to speak. For example, ‘This is John Smith from xxxxx’
- Avoid coughing, tapping pens etc
- Avoid having side conversations unless you ‘mute’ the button.
- Pause 6 to 8 seconds to allow others to talk rather than jumping straight in.
- Maintain eye contact with the camera (know where the camera is).
- Try not to ‘talk’ with your hands.

## Stay focused

It is very tempting when not speaking to forget you are still part of the session and may be seen by others.

## Know the equipment

At ANU we have excellent technical support but it also helps to understand the equipment.

For example, know where the cameras are, talk with the technician in advance about the best possible position to sit, where to look etc. It is definitely worth spending 10 minutes or so with the technician to go through the equipment and understand the limitations.

## Using the ‘mute’ button

Its powers cannot be overstated. It is important to know when you can have side conversations with your team without the other side hearing you.

## Using the cameras

- Maintain eye contact with the camera when speaking to remote sites.
- When using visuals switch back to the presenter occasionally.
- Sit in one place or stand very still. If you need to move, move slowly.

## Graphics and PowerPoint slides

Can be very effective:

- as organisers (the presenter can use as a prompt without having to lower head to read notes)
- for extending the presentation and discussion summarising the presentation used as transitions to explain what will happen next. For example, in Part 2 we will discuss etc.

In summary visuals should have:

- landscape
- margins on all edges
- dark font on light background
- large font—30 to 36 point minimum—Geneva (sans serif)
- maximum of three to five points per slide

- key words not sentences
- no detail
- experiment to determine the best colours
- picture in picture—no essential information in the bottom right corner
- enlarged text or pictures prior to the conference using a copy machine.

## Videotapes

Check with the technician in advance what is possible. For example, can the system handle the videotape and connect at a high enough bandwidth.

If the audience are non-English speakers it is a good idea to have the ANU-based interpreter dub the English.

Prepare a synopsis of the script for distribution to participants in advance of the program.

## Make effective use of the time

Actively involve the participants in the learning process; give them something to do besides just listening to the presenter.

Pose a question or present an issue. All participants can contribute to the discussion. Students can mute their microphones, break into discussion groups and then report back. Alternatively, one discussion we held which worked well was to keep the microphones on so that the presenters were able to actively listen and contribute to the discussion.

## Be prepared for

- Technical failures—try not to panic. Be aware of potential problems in advance so you have an understanding of how drastic the problem may or may not be. For example, you can't hear the other site. Participants may be seated too far away and it is good to be able to refer to the problem and in this case ask them to move their seats closer.
- Participants freezing—not comfortable at first with the technology.
- Lack of interaction.
- Non-active facilitator at the end site.
- Visuals not matching the format

## General communication issues

- Use appropriate language—particularly when working with ESL participants.
- Ask questions.
- Listen.
- Don't interrupt.
- Don't over communicate.
- Watch your body language.
- Clarify and confirm.
- Maintain 2-way communication.

## What to wear

- Pastel and light-dark combinations.
- Avoid red and black, large checks, large prints, solid white, shiny jewellery.
- It can get very hot in the studio—consider your comfort.

## Materials to have available

- Pale blue or yellow paper for ad-hoc visuals.
- Bold markers in dark blue, black or red.
- Simple images to use during pauses or wait times.
- Site identification signs and name tents.

## Most common errors

- Moving around too much, moving objects or visuals too quickly.
- Not waiting for people at other sites to finish talking.
- Not pausing after you finish to wait for transmission and response from far sites.
- Not planning enough.

## AFTER THE SESSION

### Maintain contact with participants

If possible try to follow up communicating electronically, bulletin board, fax, paper, phone and in person.

If you have an ongoing program, it is important to reflect at the end of each session what worked and didn't work.

Be prepared to make changes to your presentation.

### Review your presentation skills

- Review your videoconference style.
- What could you do differently?
- What did I learn about videoconference style?
- Ask for feedback from a colleague.

## 2. Presentation formats

### Presentation format

### Teaching equipment

Discussion e.g. 2hrs	PowerPoint slides	Photos or book pages etc.	Whiteboard	Video or music
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Make sure there is a proactive facilitator at each site!</li> <li>2. Some delay in transmission so difficult to have spontaneous interactive discussion.</li> <li>3. The process can be somewhat stilted and take time to adjust to.</li> </ol>	<p>These work well—easily placed on screen.</p> <p>Minimum font size of 30 points is recommended.</p>	<p>Can be placed on a special table and readily viewed by camera. For clear visibility, remember minimum font size 30 point applies.</p>	<p>Located behind operator in ANU facility. With large writing, works well.</p> <p>Not easy to get to from normal seating (presenting) position.</p> <p>A portable flipchart easle could be placed behind presenter.</p>	<p>As long as operator can set up in advance, no problem.</p> <p>Videos with a lot of action/movement, may have poor quality transmission.</p>

### Lecture/coursework eg. 3+ hours

### Photos or book pages etc.

### Whiteboard

### Video or music

Lecture/coursework eg. 3+ hours	PowerPoint slides	Photos or book pages etc.	Whiteboard	Video or music
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Make sure there is a proactive facilitator at each site!</li> <li>2. Lecture from a seated position.</li> <li>3. Note audience in ANU's facility are seated facing the camera, <i>behind</i> the presenter. It is difficult to see their body language. It is also difficult to see the body language of an audience in other locations.</li> <li>4. Arrange 10 minute breaks, each 1–1½ hours.</li> </ol>	<p>The slides work well—can be placed on screen in electronic form. (font size minimum 30 points)</p>	<p>Can be placed on a special table and readily viewed by camera. For clear visibility, remember minimum font size 30 point applies.</p>	<p>Located behind operator in ANU facility. With large writing, works well.</p> <p>Not easy to get to from normal seating (presenting) position.</p> <p>A portable flip chart easle could be placed behind presenter in studio).</p>	<p>As long as the operator can set up in advance, no problem. If the video has a lot of action/movement, there may be a quality transmission.</p>

## Presentation format

## Teaching equipment

Working in teams  
at site locations

PowerPoint  
slides

Photos  
book pages etc.

Whiteboard

Video or  
music

1. With the knowledge of a team, the lecturer can keep communication with a distant site open and listen in on the discussion.
2. If the discussion goes off track the lecturer can intervene.
3. Translation services may be needed if language other than English is used in the team's discussion.  
(Encourage the team to use the language which they feel most comfortable with).

These can be placed on screen to remind participants of key parts of presentation.

Use this to summarise (your interpretation of) the discussion as the team is working.

### 3. Common technical problems and solutions

Problem	Possible cause	Suggested action
<b>Interference during the videoconference</b>	Possible problem with the connection.	If image breakup severe, disconnect and re-dial far end again.
<b>Audio pops and voice breakups during your videoconference</b>	Possible problems with the connection.	If audio problem is severe, disconnect and re-dial far end site again.
<b>Screen freezes and you no longer can hear the far end site</b>	Possible problems with the connection.	Disconnect and re-dial the far end site
<b>Voice echos</b>	Far end monitor volume is set too loud.	Set the volume to 50% at the far end site.
<b>Can't hear the far end site</b>	Far end site 'mute' button is activated. Far end site participants are seated too far away from the microphone. Your volume is set too low.	Turn off the 'mute' button at the far end site. Ask the participants to move closer to the microphone. Turn up the volume on the keypad.
<b>Far end site can't hear you</b>	Your mute button is activated. You are seated too far away from the microphone. The volume is set too low at the far end site.	Turn your 'mute' button off. Move closer to the microphone. Far end site needs to turn up the volume on their keypad.

## 4. Working with interpreters

Interpreters will need to be able to translate in both directions on the spot. In the GDLN sessions you will encounter both simultaneous and consecutive interpreting.

### Simultaneous interpretation

- With respect to simultaneous interpretation the interpreter may not be able to start interpreting until s/he understands the general meaning of the sentence.
- Allow for pauses.
- Try not to interrupt—the interpreter may not be able to utter a single word until you are almost finished your sentence.
- The simultaneous translator has no time to recall just the right idiom in the target language or weigh the merits of variant translations—therefore the more simple your language the better. For example, *It is a good idea* is just as effective as *it is an exemplary idea*.
- The key objective of the presenter is to ensure the meaning of the words is conveyed. Speak slowly—but not too slowly otherwise the audience get bored and will comment on how slow you speak even though they don't understand you!

### Consecutive interpretation

If you are using consecutive interpretation speak for two or three sentences then pause to allow the interpreter time to repeat what you have said. It is a good idea to check with the interpreter before the session how long you can speak for before they need to translate and have a practice run.

### Technical terms

- Provide the interpreters with a glossary of technical terms prior to the session as well as the course materials.
- It would be a good idea to have a session with the interpreters prior to the program and go through the material so they have a general awareness of the materials to be covered.
- Do not assume the interpreter will understand everything on the day.

### General comments

If the session is conducted in another language make sure a local speaker is at the ANU site. They can be invaluable in a number of ways such as interpreting cultural differences and helping with discussions. For example, if the participants break into groups for an exercise the microphones can be left on and the ANU-based interpreter can 'whisper' the translation.