



# Turning On the Camera

## *Encouraging your Students*

### Why they might not turn on their cameras

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- 1. Technology problems, they may not have an integral webcam (borrow one from JAC)
- 2. Don't like to see themselves in a "mirror" all the time
  - a. Prime age for self-consciousness
  - b. They edit/enhance their online pics to show their best selves (Instagram, FB)
  - c. Feel they are always being judged on their looks
- 3. Don't have their own study space at home
  - a. Parents, siblings, roommates can embarrass them (show them your kids, partner)
  - b. Might be embarrassed to show their home (demonstrate "blur")
- 4. Privacy issues
  - a. Sensitized to identity theft and other privacy violations
  - b. Don't like having their picture taken – worried it may be used to make fun of them

NOTE: Sherri confirmed that IT has asked Microsoft about initiating the ability to turn off a student's camera (example, if they are inappropriately undressed). *Added on June 4, 2021.*

### Why we want them to turn on their cameras

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- 1. Because it's more natural and fun to teach to actual reacting people. We get energy back from people, not from initials!
- 2. Because it helps create community, and community is one of the 3 cornerstones of effective online learning.
- 3. Because connectedness to other people is important for our mental health; showing our faces helps our students to make friends with one another as well as with us.
- 4. Because, unlike last semester, they know what they signed up for – an online class.
- 5. Because we want/need to know they are actually THERE, doing the work that students have to do.

## TURNING ON THE CAMERA

### *Encouraging your Students*

## Can we “make them” turn on their cameras?

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- 1. No.
- 2. Unless there is a direct link to demonstrating competencies (ex: Theatre acting, French class, PhysEd yoga moves...). If in doubt, please ask your chairperson or dean.

## What are some alternatives to turning on their cameras?

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- 1. If you need to observe them demonstrating something, make a one-on-one meeting with them.
- 2. Encourage them to at least use a photo of themselves, so you might recognize them again in the future!
- 3. Regularly ask a student to share their screen. This is another way to increase the chances a student is actually “there” – they will be aware that at any time they might have to share their screen for “show and tell” at any time.
- 4. Ask students to turn their camera on and hold up their finished work in front of their face (this is best for visual materials; a sketch, a logo, a simple concept map, etc.). They get used to having the camera on.
- 5. For testing purposes: make your tests as “cheatproof” as possible; you won’t feel the need to watch them taking the test.
- 6. Assign rotating roles in your class – it’s another way to get to know your students. The better they know you, the more comfortable they will be to trust you and turn their cameras on.
- 7. Address your questions to those who do NOT have their cameras on. (Jim Katz’ suggestion)
- 8. Divide class into thirds; each day, one third has to be “the audience” with cameras on (Genevieve Caron’s suggestion)

## Why might your students cooperate to turn on their cameras?

### The answer is **COMMUNITY**

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- 1. **COMMUNITY** is one of the three cornerstones of effective learning. It’s up to the teacher to create a community. It’s up to you and all students to make sure this community is a safe learning place. The aim is for students to **trust you and trust each other**.
  - a. Make eye contact with your webcam.
  - b. Record a 3-minute video telling (and showing) them about your life. Show your pets, your kids, your house, your vacation pics, etc. Don’t make it professional; show your human side, your vulnerability. You are not a robot!
  - c. Explain to your students why you’d appreciate it if they’d turn on their cameras.

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- d. Do a poll in class asking, “How comfortable are you showing your face on camera during my class?”
- e. Ask the students what would make them feel more comfortable turning on their cameras. Or, ask them why they don’t feel comfortable with their cameras on. Let them send you an MIO (confidential) with the answers.
- f. Send out a persuasive request for cameras before class. Tell them why this is important to you.
- g. If you notice a couple of students who aren’t using their camera, send them a chat or an MIO saying, “I notice your video camera has been off. How can I help you be present in our online classroom community?”
- ✓ h. Interact one-on-one and in small groups with your students as often as you can, so you can get to know them as individuals as much as possible.
- i. For Tech (Career) program students, point out to them how difficult it will be to give them letters of reference if you don’t even know who they are.

## Fun ideas for creating community

Okay, some of these ideas are dumb... but who hasn’t made a fool of themselves to get their students’ attention? Community is about emotions and feelings, the things that make us feel connected. If we teachers take a risk, our students may take a risk. Teaching and learning is a risky business – we all learn from the risks that we take!

Plus, there is a real concern about the mental health of our students during Covid. They miss their friends. No romance! They are really missing out on so much by having to stay at home most of the time. Cheer them up! One of our teachers told us her son hasn’t met a single other student in his small program at JAC – how sad is that?

- ❖ Change up the wording: Valerie Bherer uses colour names for channels, instead of the old Group 1, Group 2, etc. Humour and creativity are awesome. Get your students to name their groups!
- ❖ Do like Susan Ajersch or Jan Richman and wear a different hat every day.
- ❖ Have a Hat Day for your students; a Pet Day; a PJ Day. My Latin teacher used to get us to dress in a Toga, lounge on the desks, and eat grapes! I still remember those fun days!
- ❖ Valentine’s Day is coming – are you going to dress up? Challenge your students to wear red?
- ❖ Put on a groovy song and have a group dance.
- ❖ Make your review questions into a Pub Quiz or Jeopardy episode.
- ❖ Divide your class in two and play hangman with review questions as clues.
- ❖ Try a Scavenger Hunt. Give your students 30 seconds to find things. We did this with the Deans at Christmas and we were surprised how fun it was (and how competitive we were!). This has the advantage of encouraging camera use, as students have to show the object. Examples of things to find: a pen, a roll of toilet paper, baby picture, book, etc.
- ❖ Use those real-time check ins like Polls and Thumbs Up in Teams, to see if students are on track.
- ❖ Ask students to post a pic of something that is meaningful to them on the chat.
- ❖ In break-out rooms (channels), have small groups come up with a list of 5 or 10 things they have in common.
- ❖ Did you know you could create a MEME in Teams? I can show you how!
- ❖ Start and/or end your class with an off-topic discussion or a shout-out to mental health. If you run out of topics, delegate to a student or two.
- ❖ Set up a “Hallway” team for your class or your program, as a place where students can ask each other questions or just chat.

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## Useful articles

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- Strategies to Encourage Students to Turn Their Cameras On  
<http://www.edutopia.org/article/strategies-encourage-students-turn-their-cameras>
  - Don't Let Student Webcams Trick You. <https://bit.ly/2RPolde>
  - Fun Class Learning Activities. <https://bit.ly/3klidjw>
  - More Fun Activities <https://bit.ly/32UgEbW>
  - Developing Community <https://bit.ly/2RUHWIV>
  - Check out Faculty Focus and 20-Minute Mentor (free to JAC faculty) for more suggestions.
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- Turning on cameras:
    - FOST handout on this subject