Quick Start Guide for Collaborate
Blackboard Collaborate

Blackboard Collaborate is a simple, convenient, and reliable web conferencing solution built for education and training. Engage with the material and your class. Thanks to robust collaboration and conference tools, everyone feels like they’re in the same room together, regardless of their location or device.

Quick Links

- Watch a video tour of Collaborate from Blackboard.
- Familiarize yourself with the Collaborate interface.
- Learn how to create a Collaborate Session.
- Demonstrate to students how they can enter Collaborate from a guest link.

Collaborate works best with a webcam and mic/headset. Students can connect by phone or computer. They may also need a webcam and mic/headset to connect. If you need equipment to remote teach, request equipment.

Test your equipment in Collaborate before your scheduled class meeting. Practice lecturing by doing a run through with a colleague.

1. Test your mic.
2. Test your webcam.
3. Test your wi-fi speed.

Where is Collaborate Located?

If using an e.co course template, Collaborate is located in the main left menu.
Adding Collaborate to Main Menu

If you are not using a course template, you can add Collaborate to the main menu.

1. In the left main menu, choose the **plus sign** in the far left corner of the menu.
2. Choose **Tool Link** from the drop down menu.

3. Type Collaborate in the **Name** field.
4. Select **Blackboard Collaborate Ultra** from the drop down list.
5. Click on **Available to Users**.
6. Click **Submit**.
Launching Collaborate

Use the Chrome browser when launching Collaborate. Launch Collaborate by clicking on the tool link on the left main menu. This brings you to the Collaborate dashboard. The dashboard will help you launch a Collaborate session, edit settings and copy a guest link for students.

Collaborate options are located at the circle with three dots on the upper right of the screen. Click on the three dots to access Collaborate options.

1. To enter the Collaborate room, select Join Course Room.
2. To set up the room, select Edit settings.
3. To give students a link to join a Collaborate room, select Copy guest link.

Students may enter the Collaborate room either by choosing Join Course Room or by clicking on a guest link.
Collaborate Audio and Video

Collaborate requires instructors and students have a webcam and headset/microphone. Many laptops and computers come with a built in webcam and mic. For those who do not have a webcam or headset, please request equipment.

After launching Collaborate for the first time, the program will step you through an audio and video check. You must give the browser permission to use the audio and video. A pop-up will appear, choose to allow both audio and video. Please make sure you are using the Chrome browser.

Collaborate provides a Set Up Wizard the first time you enter a Collaborate room. The wizard will step you through testing both your audio and video. Follow the instructions on the screen.

By default, your audio and video will be muted when you enter the room.
Speak and Show

At the bottom of the Collaborate room, you can select the **microphone and video camera** icons any time during a meeting to turn them on or off.

The microphone automatically turns on after you enable it, but you will get to preview how you’ll look on screen before sharing your video.

The right button is Raise Hand. You can ask participants to raise their hands to verify they can hear you.

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Session Menu

On the upper left hand is three lines or a hamburger icon. The icon leads to the **Session Menu**.

The Session Menu provides the option the **Start Recording**. Once you are recording, return the this menu to find **Stop Recording**.

If your audio is not connecting well, try **Use your phone for audio**. This option will provide a unique phone number and ID to log into the session.

On the bottom of the menu is **Leave Session**.
Collaborate Panel

Tools that appear in the **Collaborate Panel** relate directly to what is happening in the session at that moment. Click the Purple button in the lower right of the screen.

Tools in the Collaborate Panel

- **Chat** with everyone in the session. Open the Collaborate Panel and select the **Chat** icon. Click on **Everyone**.
- Moderators and presenters can share a blank whiteboard, an application, PowerPoints, and images in GIF, JPEG and PNG formats.
- View the list of attendees. Open the Collaborate Panel and Select Open **Attendees** List.
- Set up your audio and video and your notifications. Open the Collaborate panel and select **My Settings**.
Sharing a Presentation

Collaborate allows you to share your screen with participants. Open the Collaborate Panel and select **Share Content** button.

When you share your desktop or application it is seen by everybody in the live session and anybody viewing the recording later. Make sure to close any windows and applications you don’t want others to see before starting to share.

Share Applications is the easiest way to share your screen with students.

1. Clear your desktop of clutter.
2. Change your background to a solid color.
3. Enter the Collaborate room.
4. Remember to Start Recording.
5. In the Collaborate Panel, select the **Share Content** icon.
6. Click **Share Application/Screen**.
From the Share your screen window:

1. Select Your **Entire Screen**.
2. Click on the image of the screen so that it is outlined in blue.
3. Click **Share**.

1. Quickly switch from Collaborate to your presentation screen in order to avoid the continuous repeat image.

2. When the presentation is complete, at the bottom of the screen, click **Stop Sharing** to return to Collaborate.
Have a Plan B

The broadband load on Collaborate and other similar tools supporting the various schools, college, universities and businesses is extreme. It is possible, but unlikely, that Blackboard Collaborate and other web conferencing tools may not be able to provide strong broadband connections, making live classes technically difficult. Examine two factors as you plan for your courses, bandwidth and immediacy.

I. Bandwidth

Excerpt from “Videoconferencing Alternatives: How Low-Bandwidth Teaching Will Save Us All”

“High-bandwidth technologies work great for students who have newer computers, fast and reliable internet access at home, and unlimited data plans on their phones. For other students, courses that require frequent use of high-bandwidth technologies can limit their ability to fully participate in course activities. This can jeopardize their success in the course, create a sense of shame and anxiety, and leave them feeling like second-class citizens.”

If you choose to hold live classes, having your class at the same day and same time, as you do normally on campus, will help students keep to a regular schedule moving forward. However, with K-12 and working parents also home for a few weeks, households with one computer may be splitting time between students and work. Your students may not be able to join you for a live class meeting.

- Some students will be able to join live classes using the Blackboard App.
- **Record your live classes.** Students can watch recordings and keep on task asynchronously.
- Please be as flexible as possible with attendance and participation policies. Students may not be able to complete tasks in the same amount of time as when they were on campus.

Maximize Bandwidth

To conserve bandwidth and increase the strength of your Collaborate live sessions with students, the following tips may make the connection better:

1. Turn off all webcams.
2. Turn off student audio. Students can use the chat window to ask questions.
3. Upload PPT file to Blackboard and ask students to download, open and follow along without screen sharing.
4. Record lecture using Collaborate alone. Share the recording with students.
5. Break class into groups. Each group would meet live at a different time and day.
6. Keep lecture to 20 mins. recordings.
7. Create a script in the PowerPoint Notes. Printing ‘Notes pages’ to PDF allows students to read your notes and see the image at the same time.

2. Immediacy

Excerpt from "Videoconferencing Alternatives: How Low-Bandwidth Teaching Will Save Us All"

“The second factor, immediacy, refers to how quickly we expect our students to respond when interacting with us and with each other. Typically, we think of immediacy as a good thing. It’s baked into face-to-face learning, so it doesn’t feel like a limited resource. But one of the biggest advantages of online learning is that it can provide you and your students with more flexibility. When we require our students to be online at exactly the same time, we sacrifice one of the key benefits of online learning, and that can make an online course feel like more of a burden than it has to be.”

Remote teaching is not online learning but it to can take advantage of asynchronous tools and extend conversations giving all students a chance to participate.

8. Use Discussion forums to have open-ended conversations. Ask the students to initially post on Weds/Thur and then reply to their peers at least three times.

9. Use Blogs to give student a space to write longer one or two page responses and reflections.

For more information about how to transition your course to remote teaching, please visit the Moving to Remote Teaching on the e.co web site.

CCRI has extensive resources for learning Blackboard including workshops, tutorials and step-by-step instructions, as well as virtual and in person meetings. To learn more about the resource available to you, visit the Center for Instruction and Technology.
Getting Started Guide for Collaborate