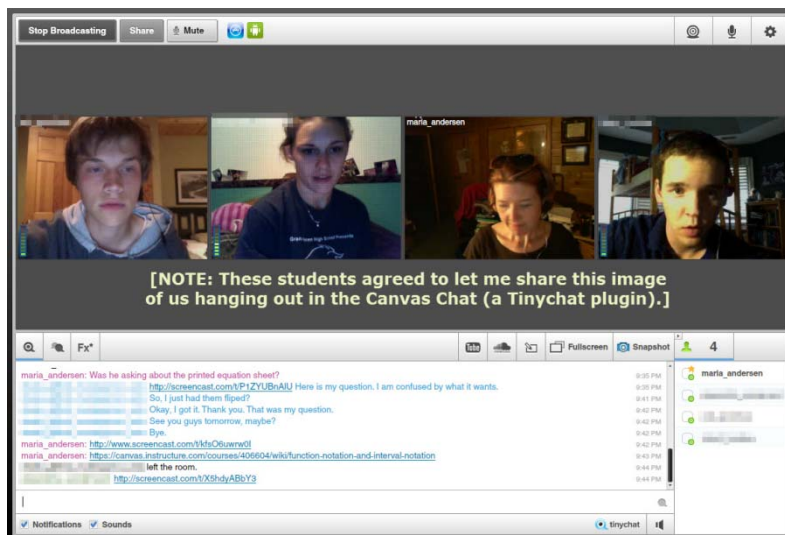


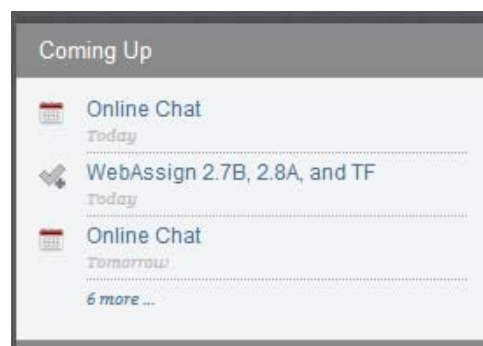
Instructor Guide: Online Office Hours in Canvas Chat

Online office hours in Canvas will be very different than in-person office hours. The main difference is that you'll be interacting with a whole group of students, rather than one at a time. It will feel more like a small-group tutoring session than a series of one-on-one conversations. Online office hours can be an extremely effective way to connect with your students and provide them with good learning support. Here are our recommendations for using Canvas Chat most effectively for online office hours.



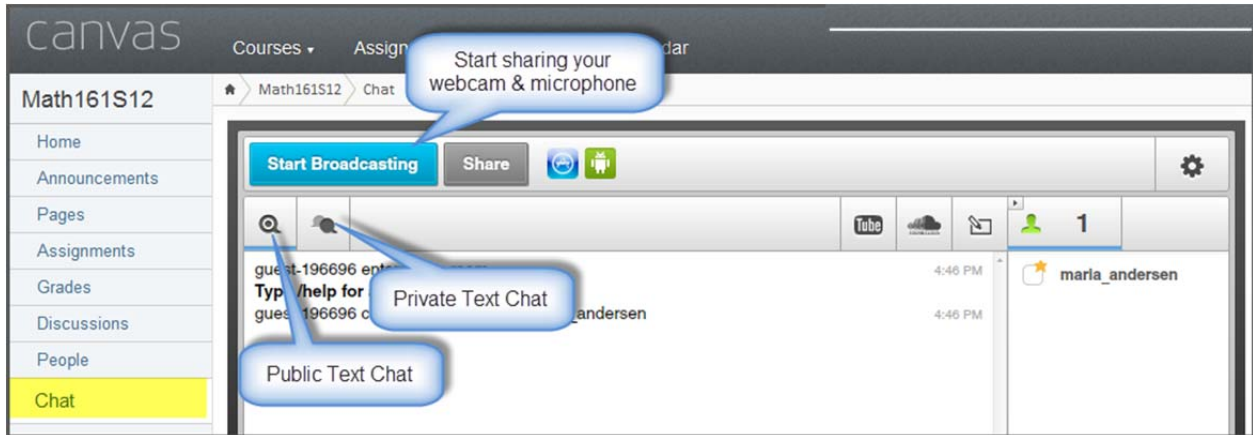
Webcams: Consider requiring a webcam for online students. Many students will have webcams built-in to their laptops and desktops (don't be surprised if many have never used them before). Listing the webcam requirement in the syllabus makes it easier for students to use financial aid to make the purchase if it's needed. USB webcams can be purchased for as little as \$20. You will be delighted by the ability to SEE your students and interact with them, and so will they.

Scheduled Sessions: Choose a couple hours that you can commit to on a regular basis every week (e.g. 9-10pm on Monday & Wednesday). Keep in mind that most of your students will be online in the evenings, and the later you can meet, the more likely students are to show up. Look at the data from past courses and see if login times indicate optimum meeting hours that you can live with too. Although office hours are usually optional activities for the students, you should still put all the sessions on the Canvas calendar. This will ensure that students see the scheduled chats in the "Coming Up" window of their Canvas screen.



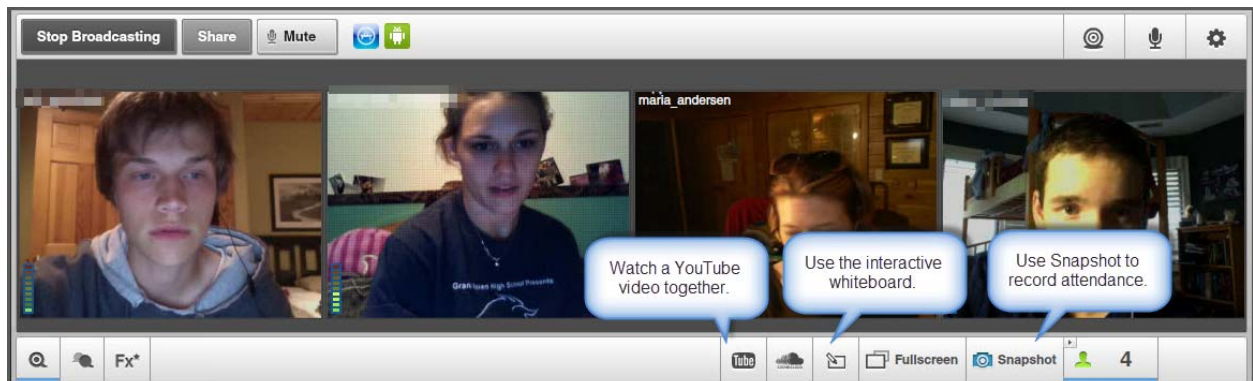
Syllabus: Explain how you will use online office hours in your syllabus. Let students know if these sessions count towards their grade or if there are a minimum number of sessions to attend during the course. One way to count these sessions is to include them as a way to earn participation points in the course. For example, participating once in Discussions may earn 1 point, and attending and asking questions in a live Chat might earn 2 points. Every instructor has a different philosophy about grading and participation in online courses, so do what is right for you and your course – just make sure that it is clear for the students.

User Limit: The Canvas Chat tool is a program called Tinychat. There is a user limit of 10 people in a room (and you count as one of those 10). You might want to warn students, up front, that arriving late may mean they have to wait for a space to open up. Limiting the number of participants gives Tinychat a clean interface and better functionality. You've probably never been able to help more than 10 students simultaneously in real-life office hours and if you're getting more than 10 students to show up to each office hour, bravo for you! Consider adding another hour.



Getting Started: Make sure your webcam and microphone are hooked up and functioning **before** you open Canvas Chat. When you open Chat, press on the “Start Broadcasting” button and choose the proper Camera and Microphone options. If you (or a student) have poor Internet service, you may want to choose to use **only** the microphone to reduce bandwidth usage. If so, just choose that option as you go through the startup process. The students go through the exact same process that you do. As students arrive, encourage them to “Start Broadcasting” too.

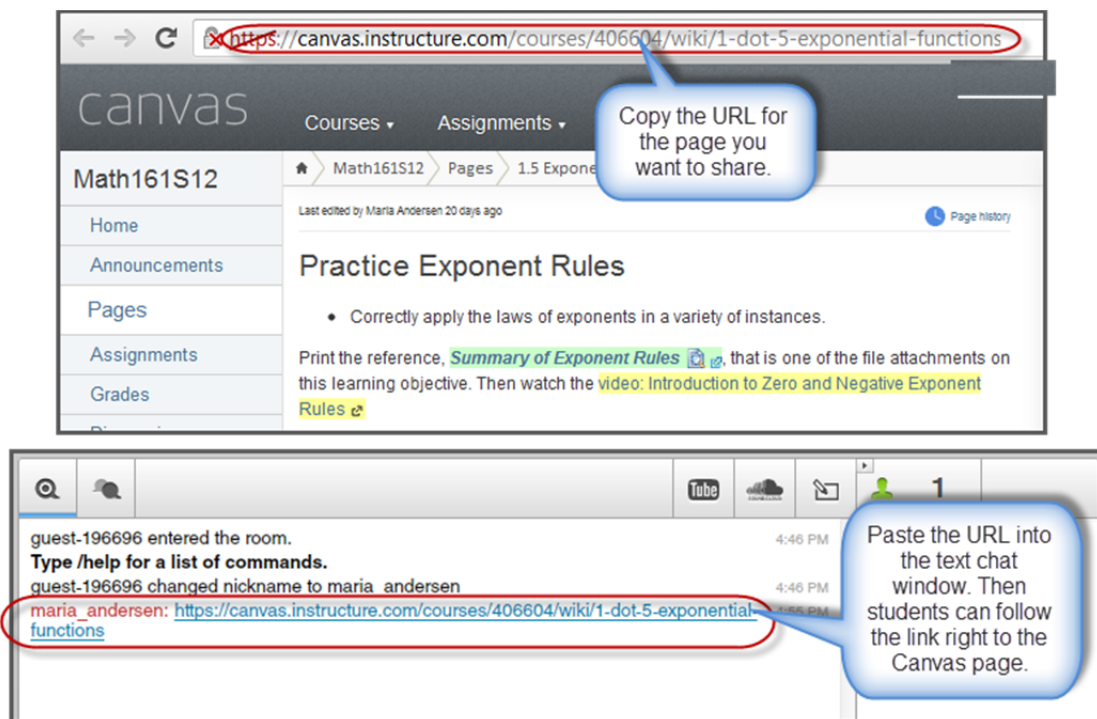
Watch a YouTube Video: You can simultaneously watch a YouTube video with other participants in Chat. It might be fun to schedule “viewing parties” for longer videos so that students can interact as they watch videos.



Use the Interactive Whiteboard: There is a built-in whiteboard tool in Canvas Chat. You'll like it fine for occasional use, but if you are going to use it a lot (e.g. math, economics, chemistry) you may want to consider using a more robust tool like Scribblar (free). Any whiteboard tool that can be shared through a URL can be used. Simply paste the URL to the alternative whiteboard room into the text chat window. Remember to re-paste it if students arrive after the initial sharing.

Share a screenshot: The easiest way to share an image off your computer screen (or short video) is to use a 3rd-party program like Jing or Screenr (both free) to grab the image and then share it with a URL in the text chat window. Also remember that you can hold objects up to the webcam (e.g. a calculator screen).

Share a PowerPoint or Document: Sorry, you can't share a document directly in Canvas Chat. Keep in mind that this sort of tool is meant to provide small-group or one-on-one interaction with students. It is not meant to mimic a lecture-type environment. However, you **can** share the location of a Canvas page that contains the PowerPoint or document. Right-click (PC), or Command-click (Mac), on the Pages menu to open it in a new browser tab and then navigate to the desired page. Then copy the URL for the Page you want to share and paste into the text chat window.



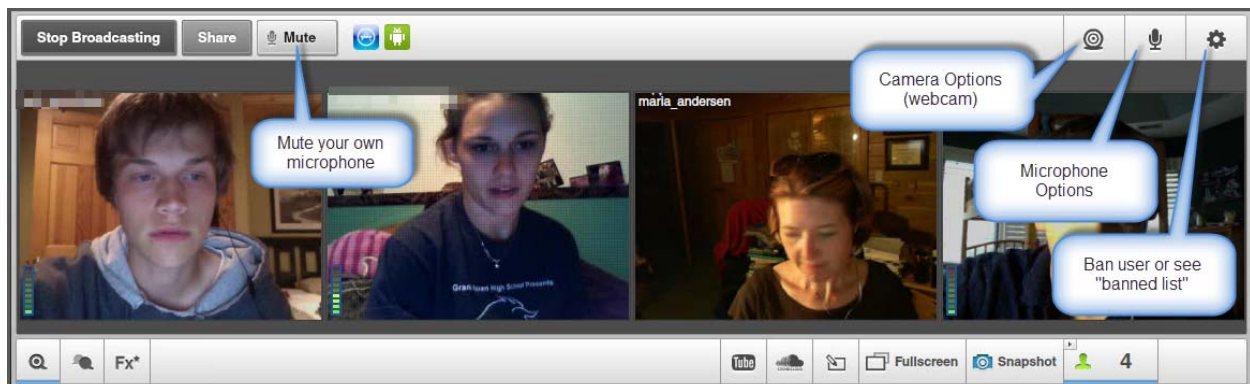
Attendance: You can easily make a record of attendance in Canvas Chat by using the Snapshot tool to take a picture (save the file with the course name and date for easy record-keeping). Students will come and go, so you may want to take a couple snapshots each session. The name of each student will appear above their picture (these have been blurred out in most of the pictures above). Alternatively, as long as you have not left the room, you can scroll back through the text chat to see who entered and left the room in your session.

Student-led Chats: A chat can be initiated by anyone in the class and you do not have to be in attendance. If you want students to meet in groups online, it might be beneficial to set up a schedule of structured meeting times for the groups to use Chat. If you want a tutor to be available to students at specific times, add the tutor as a student in your course (not as an Observer).

Students with no equipment or low-bandwidth: Students with no webcam/microphone can still participate in the online office hours as long as their computer has sound. They will be able to hear and see everyone, but their active participation will be in the text chat window. Make sure to actively include these students in the conversation by calling on them regularly for answers to questions or to solicit questions.

Troubleshooting Equipment: If you or a student has trouble getting their webcam to work, here are three easy things to try:

- Is the webcam already in use by another program? Look behind the browser window and in other tabs of the browser. Sometimes the camera automatically starts up in some other program. Turn it off there, and it may start working in Canvas. Only one program at a time can hold the attention of the webcam.
- Was the webcam started AFTER Chat was initiated? Try closing the browser window completely, then coming back to Chat.
- Try another browser.



Reducing the Echo Effect: When one of the participants in Chat uses the built-in microphone and speakers from their computer, all of you *might* hear an annoying echo-effect. This happens because the voices of other participants come out the speaker on that computer and go right back into the microphone, creating a feedback loop. A very simple solution to this problem is to get as many participants as possible to wear headphones or earbuds – you’ll find that most of your students have iPod headphones handy. Suggest they pull them out and use them. Voila! Problem solved. Note that since YOU will do a lot of the talking, you’re the one most likely to cause an echo-effect. You should always plan to use headphones of some type. As soon as the external speakers are silenced on all the computers, the echo effect should disappear. If headphones are not handy, you might ask the student who has the “offending computer” to mute their microphone (button at top of chat window) when they are not using it. That will help.