

Let's chat about chatting!

Opening a digital backchannel in your on-campus classes

About you



- introduce yourself
- tell us about course(s) you teach
- do you backchannel?

<https://bit.ly/ETOZoomChat>

What exactly is a backchannel?

“...a secondary electronic conversation that takes place *at the same time* as a conference session, lecture, or instructor-led learning activity”

“Increasingly ...being *brought into the foreground as a formal part of lecture interaction* as speakers actively encourage audience members to join in with questions or comments, sharing their feedback with one another *without disrupting the speaker*”

[7 Things You Should Know About Backchannel Communication](#) (Educause, 2010)



In today's session

1

Rationale

2

Considerations

3

Uses

4

Tools

5

Recommendations

What questions do you have about today's topic?

<https://bit.ly/TeamsQA>



https://bit.ly/ETO_Piazza



⚠ Don't join the Piazza Network!

www.menti.com, code 12 93 27 2



Use any of these 3 open-ended Q&A forums throughout the session

Why use a backchannel chat in class?

1



◀ Pre-COVID vs. Remote teaching ▶

Some instructors observed increase in student participation via chat in Teams or Zoom



What does the research say?

*“...students felt more comfortable asking and answering questions in online classes, suggesting that there might be **features of learning online** to which students are receptive, and which may also **benefit in-person classes.**”*

Hollister B, Nair P, Hill-Lindsay S
and Chukoskie L (2022)

*“... text interaction in which students asked questions or made comments in the LVC (Live Virtual Classroom) chat box during the instructor’s lectures **was a preferred mode of interaction** for students when they were participating both online and onsite.”*

Vu and Fadde (2013)

What are some considerations for using backchannel chats?

2

Is it worth it to implement a chat?



- benefits
- challenges
- considerations

<https://bit.ly/ChatPadlet>

challenges

distracting

hard to manage

benefits

supports multiple means of expression

helps uncover points for clarification

encourages more students to participate

students can help answer each other's questions

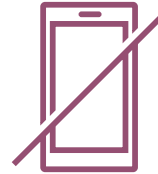
engages students with course content

Considerations

How do we
address these?



Privacy



No device or tech failure



Inappropriate or off-track
comments



Managing class time

https://bit.ly/ETO_ED

Additional questions to help you select the right tool

- Is this platform accessible?
- Do I want the ability to moderate comments before making them visible to everyone?
- Will I be projecting comments/question on screen during class?
- Do I want students to be able to respond to each other's posts?
- Should they be able to like or upvote post posts?
- Do I want the chat to have a structure (with specific prompts/questions/topics)?
- Should the students have the option to post anonymously?
- Do I need to save the comments/responses?
- Will I assign a participation grade to responses?

**How can I use backchannels
chats in my class?**

3

Find the right balance for your class

least restricted

free flowing chat



less restricted

focused chat



most restricted









instructor prompts/questions

Type of chat	Details
Free flowing chat	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• true backchannel – a conversation that runs in parallel with the lecture• students express what’s on their mind at any time during the class• may veer off-topic
Focused chat	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• students ask general questions or make comments related to the class content (clarifications, observations)• students ask logistical or administrative questions (some can be answered by peers)
Responses to specific prompts and questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• chat is organized into specific prompts/questions/topics (e.g., students identify key points, create summaries, report back, take notes, work collaboratively on a response)• students may be asked to respond only at specific times during the class• lends itself to low-stakes assessment activities









**What tools can I use to
implement a chat in my class?**

4

Feature comparison table for chat tools from today's session

	Web conferencing		Discussion		Collaboration	Non-Vetted		
	 zoom	 Microsoft Teams	 piazza	 ed	 MS Whiteboard	 padlet	 Mentimeter	 zoom
	Meeting chat	Meeting Q & A	Live Q & A	Q & A	MS Whiteboard	free account	free account	*Channel chat
Part of U of T's Academic Toolbox	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Mobile-friendly	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Anonymous posting			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Supports multimedia		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Moderation		✓	✓	✓		✓		
Like/upvote		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
Download a record of questions and responses	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	

*Although currently available with a U of T Zoom license, Zoom's channel chat feature has not been approved for inclusion in the Academic Toolbox

	Vetted					Non-Vetted		
	 zoom	 Microsoft Teams	 piazza	 ed		 padlet	 Mentimeter	 zoom
Feature of Tool:	Meeting chat	Meeting Q & A	Live Q & A	Q & A	Whiteboard	Sticky Notes	Live Q & A	*Channel chat
Part of U of T's Academic Toolbox	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Mobile-friendly	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Anonymous posting			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Supports multimedia		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Moderation		✓	✓	✓		✓		
Like/upvote		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
Download a record of questions and responses	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	

Thinking of using an un-vetted tool?

Read this first!

Tips to safely implement un-
vetted tools in your course

<https://uoft.me/UnVetted>

**What are some
recommendations for
using a backchannel
chat?**

5

Recommendations

1

set clear
expectations

Provide guidelines for participation
& model appropriate responses

2

make it
intentional

Relate any question prompts to
course content and outcomes

3

check-in

chunk lecture content to allow for
periodic & consistent chat check-in

4

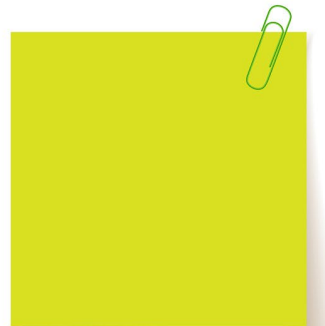
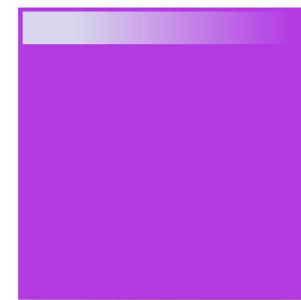
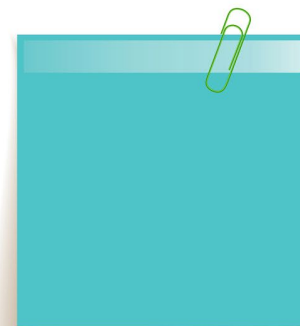
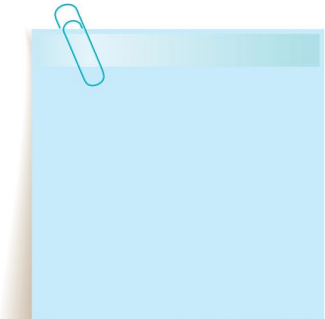
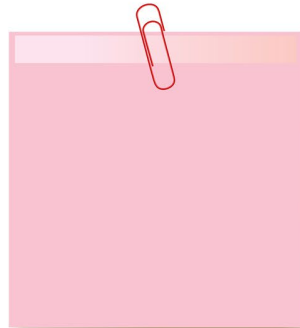
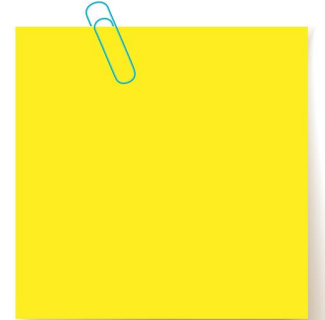
follow-up

complement backchannel with an
exit ticket for additional questions



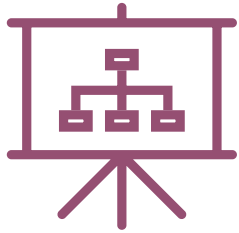
Exit ticket

What tools and techniques do you use (or plan to use) to encourage participation in your on-campus classes?



<https://uoft.me/MSWhiteboard>

After this webinar



Slides



Recording



Feedback Survey

SUPPORT RESOURCES



Resources

- Vendor Documentation & Support:

- [Piazza Support Centre](#)
- [Ed Discussions Support Portal](#)
- [Zoom Help Center](#)
- [MS Teams Meetings](#)
- [MS Whiteboard](#)

- U of T Central Documentation:

- [Academic Toolbox Tool Guides](#)

- FASE ETO Guides:

- [Which tool should I use for asynchronous discussions?](#)
- [Mapping learning outcomes to technology](#)
- [How to use Piazza in your Quercus Course \(Instructors\).](#)
- [How to use Piazza in your Quercus Course \(Students\)](#)
- [Tips to safely implement un-vetted tools in your course](#)

References

Castelli, F.R., & Sarvary, M. A. (2021). Why students do not turn on their video cameras during online classes and an equitable and inclusive plan to encourage them to do so. *Ecology and Evolution*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ece3.7123>

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Levy, Dan.(2020). *Teaching Effectively with Zoom: A practical guide to engage your students and help them learn.*

Vu, P., and Fadde, P. (2013). When to talk, when to chat: Student interactions in live virtual classrooms. *Journal of Interactive Online Learning*. 12, 41–52.

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(Educause, 2010)

THANK YOU!

edtech.engineering.utoronto.ca

fase.edtech@utoronto.ca