



## MAINTAINING STUDENT MOTIVATION WHILE TEACHING REMOTELY

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### Introduction

Helping students to stay motivated while learning remotely and without face-to-face support from the teacher or their peers can be challenging. On the other hand, teaching remotely is an ideal opportunity for teachers to try new ways of teaching, learn from their peers and colleagues and enable their students to become independent learners. In this guide we'll explore different strategies you can use to keep your students engaged, motivated and learning.

### Reasons for low motivation

- In a face-to-face lesson, the teacher can respond quickly to ensure learners are on track and getting the help they need. When teaching remotely, 'virtual monitoring' is difficult and can take time.
- Just as teachers need time to learn a new way of teaching, learners need to learn a new way of learning. Not only are there technical skills that learners may need to learn, but the interaction between peers can also be difficult.
- Technical issues related to joining an online lesson or submitting assignments electronically can cause frustration.
- For younger learners, there may be a lack of support at home as parents may not have time available or have good digital skills. Learners have to manage their own work and find solutions on their own, which can be time-consuming and demotivating.
- If your students are being forced to learn remotely for reasons out of their control (for example during the Covid-19 crisis or because of illness), this will be causing a lot of stress, which can make learners feel less interested in learning.
- If you are new to remote teaching, you are learning too, and your learners may not realise this. Lessons may not be as structured and organised as students may expect and this can cause demotivation.

### Ideas for motivating your learners

- **Ask your learners what they think would help them to feel more motivated:** There are many ways to do this, and it depends on their age and level. You could ask them for ideas for how to do an activity, to vote on the lesson they liked the best or suggest ways in which subsequent lessons can be taught.
- **Vary lesson types and try and have three or four different structures:** For example, for one lesson topic, you can use a flipped approach where you ask the learners to read a text beforehand and then follow up on language and comprehension in class. For another, ask the learners to work in small groups to do a project based on the topic of the lesson. Also, for older learners, try assigning different sections to learners to teach the other students.

- **Break lessons down into smaller chunks:** This way, if you have any technical difficulties, you can always complete parts of the lesson later – or set tasks as homework.
- **Keep your sense of humour:** You won't get everything right, and that's OK. Smile and move on.
- **Assign roles and responsibilities:** Depending on the age and level of your learners, you can assign tasks such as being a group lead for projects, taking the register or being the 'mute master' to ensure everyone stays on mute during presentations.
- **Refer to assignments and comments learners have made:** Try to personalise the learning as much as possible.
- **Have multiple ways of connecting with your learners:** Don't depend only on online live (synchronous) meetings but also connect with your students in an asynchronous way, for example through WhatsApp and email.

## Troubleshooting and preparation

- **Safety first:** When preparing a remote lesson, consider any risks to the learners. Always read reviews about the teaching tools you are using and look at the safety and security features.
- **Practise, practise, practise:** The more you try different ways of teaching, the better you will become. It's a good idea to do a practice lesson with friends and family if possible.
- **Prepare for the technology not to work:** This happens to the best of us! Always have a back-up plan. This can be a homework task or project which can be sent to learners on WhatsApp, email or SMS.
- **Dealing with difficult behaviour:** As you know, children have different ways of reacting to stress, and some learners may disrupt the lesson frequently. To reduce this, have clear guidelines and rules and get learners to agree. Talk to individual learners separately if their behaviour is repeated and find out how you can support them.
- **Support groups:** You need support too! Join a teaching community online (e.g. the British Council Teacher Community on Facebook) or create one with teachers in your school. Use this group to exchange lesson ideas and resources and provide moral support to each other. You can even schedule regular 'virtual coffee breaks' and meet online.

## Useful links

- An article about keeping learners' attention while teaching remotely: <https://bit.ly/RTTVoicesRT>
- Some free resources for autonomous learning: <https://bit.ly/RTTAutonomous>
- A recorded Facebook Live session on motivating learners: <https://bit.ly/RTTFBMotivation>
- More ideas for making your online lessons engaging for learners: <https://bit.ly/RTTOnlineMenu>