Teaching Virtual (online) Workshops, Classes or Courses

There are two ways to teach online: through live classes/workshops or by using pre-recorded videos for on-demand classes/courses.

Teaching Equipment

With any equipment purchase the best you can afford. If your budget only stretches to the entry level item then buy that and invest in better equipment as you gain in experience and income.

Cameras

When teaching a workshop via Zoom, you will need a camera facing you for direct interaction with your students (face-to-face), as well as a second camera (overhead) aimed at your work surface for demonstrations.

Face-to-face camera

The camera facing you can be built-in to a laptop, desktop computer, tablet, or phone.

The device must be connected to the internet, and you must log into a Zoom account on it. For phones or tablets, you can utilize the app; for computers, you can use either an internet browser or the desktop app.

If you currently attend Zoom meetings, you likely have a suitable camera setup for face-to-face interaction.

Demonstration (overhead) camera

The second camera for demonstrations can be any of the following:

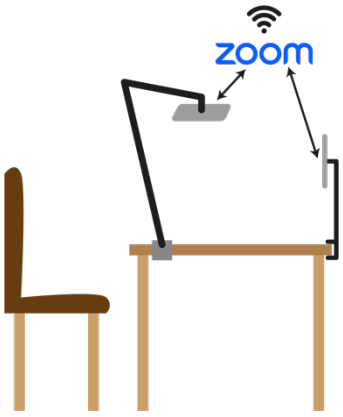
- A phone/tablet with the Zoom app downloaded.
- A freestanding camera (e.g., document camera).
- A camcorder.
- A digital action camera (e.g., GoPro, Insta360).
- A DSLR with video capabilities



Remember, if you're using a device other than a phone or tablet, it needs to be connected to your computer via a cord or directly to Zoom.

Recording for on-demand (pre-recorded videos)

You will need one camera for overhead shooting. Follow the advice for demonstration cameras, but remember it does not need to connect to Zoom.



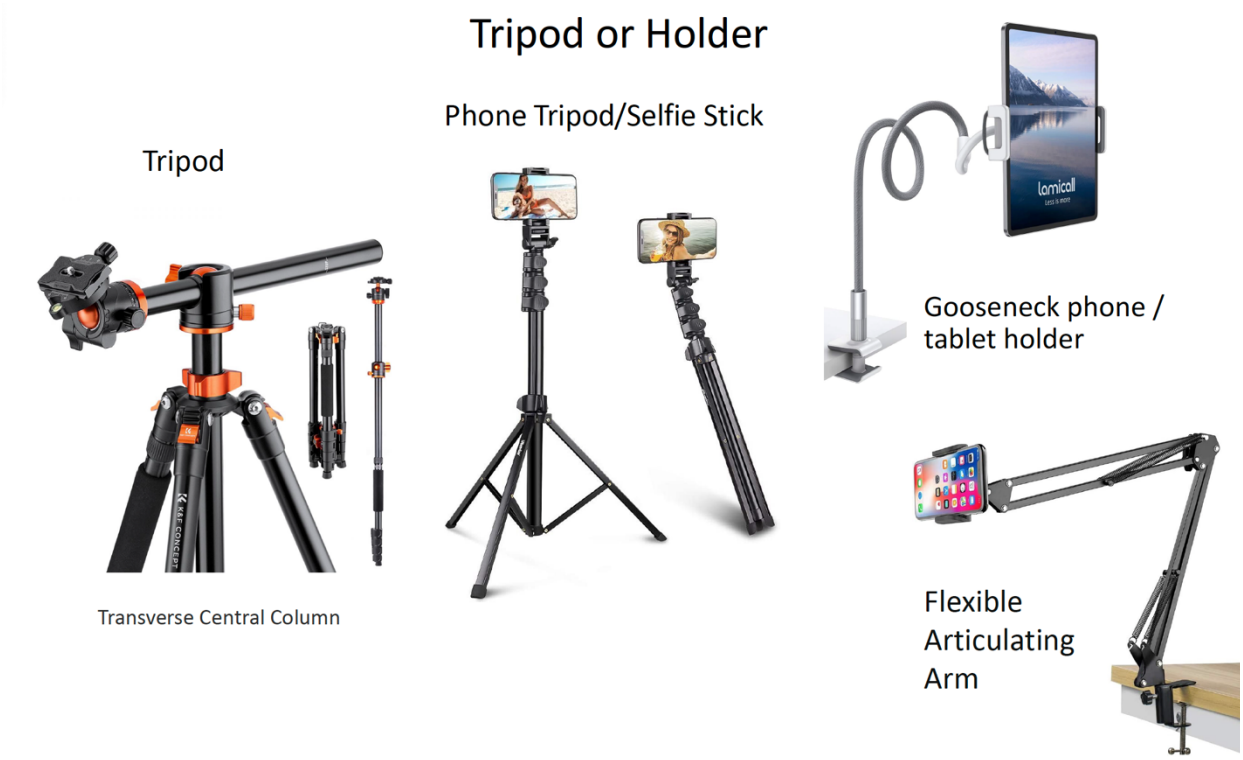
Tripods, Frames and Accessories

Tripod (monopods, holders)

Each device will need a holder of some sort. If using a computer as your face-to-face camera, you don't need to worry as it is self-supporting.

The options are:

- Tripod: Look for a version where the central column that the device attaches to can be moved to be horizontal as well as vertical.
- Phone tripod/selfie stick: Look for a version that has small tripod feet to allow you to place it on a table or floor.
- Gooseneck phone/tablet holder: Be aware that a flexible rod gooseneck-style holder can bounce if the table is knocked.
- Flexible articulating arm: These look like a 1960s anglepoise lamp arm.



Frames

If you are planning on teaching live or doing a lot of overhead recording, consider a table frame. The initial investment will be higher, but it will make recording a lot easier.

The options are:



Commercial camera mount rigs/frames, available online. They will be the most expensive option but will offer attachment options for lights.



Over-table frames sold as decorating tools for dining tables, available at Amazon, Ikea, The Range, Dunelm, or through an internet search for over-table frames. Check the maximum weight allowance and ensure it can carry the items you want to attach, such as your camera and lights.



Homemade frames, made using conduit pipe and connectors (Key Clamp fittings in the UK). Use 3/4 inch (21mm) pipe. Check out makerpipe.com or pipedreamfittings.com (UK).

Accessories

There are accessories that you may find helpful depending on how you are setting up your recording space.

The options are:

- Capture Card: This device may be needed if you are using a camcorder to record straight to your computer.
- Remote control: This can help with stability and also provide an easy way to start and stop videos if recording for an on-demand class.
- Data storage cards, such as SD cards: If you are using a device that requires them, consider having a few. The price of these cards has reduced significantly in recent years.
- Extra batteries: If using a device with a removable battery, consider having extra batteries available and keep them charged.
- Attachments for frames: There are various phone holders with clip/clamp attachments that can be used with frames.



Lighting

You will need a well-lit room for your demonstrations. If you have a very well-lit workroom, you may not need extra lighting. Note: If using room lights, be aware of glare and consider if you need some sort of diffuser. If you already use photography lights to take photos of your work, then they should work for your demonstrations as well. Cooler white light (5600K) works better than warm light, but it is possible to shoot with warm light. If looking for studio lights, you need to search for continuous output lighting for photography.

Considerations for studio lights:

- Lumens: The higher the number, the brighter the light will be.
- Dimmable: This is a valuable option if the price point works for you.
- Do the lights come with stands? If not, you will need to find something to support them.
- Check out selfie lights; there are many options and often come with a clip/clamp attachment that could be used on the device or clipped to a frame.

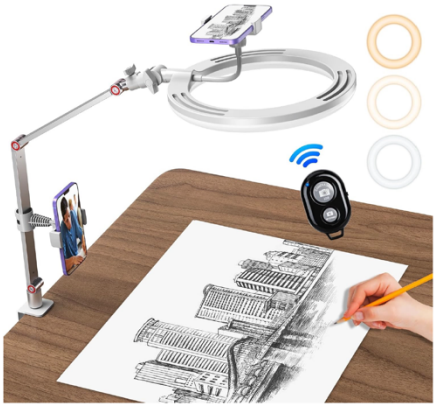
LED Studio lights



LED Selfie light on a clip



10in Selfie Ring Light with phone holders





Sound / Audio

It is possible to teach using the built-in microphone on your computer or phone, but you might want to consider a headset or cordless headphones/earbuds for ease. If teaching live on Zoom, be aware that you will need to turn the audio off on one device to prevent feedback. Check which of your devices has the best sound quality and turn the audio off on the other device.

Microphone options are:

- Stand microphone: Fixed in place, so good for on-demand if you are wanting to do voiceovers when editing.
- Headset with microphone: This works well if you are talking to the camera. Budget ones will have a cable to attach them to your computer, which can make moving around difficult if your demonstration setup is on another table.
- Wireless microphones: The budget end of this market can have mixed quality results, so do thorough research. If considering investing, look at Rode or DJI. They are more expensive, but often second-hand items will be available on eBay or Facebook Marketplace.
- Wireless earbuds, like Apple Airpods: These range widely in price and quality. They will work if you are doing short live sessions or short recordings. The battery life on any wireless earbud set is limited, so have a backup available if they fail.

Speaker (for live teaching) options are:

- Phone, tablet, or computer: If you are using any of these, you could use the built-in speakers to provide your sound so you can hear your students. You will need to decide if the sound is loud enough to work for you.
- Headset: With or without a microphone, would work as your speaker.
- Wireless earbuds: See above, they would have the same issues whether being used as the microphone and speaker or just the speaker.



Teaching live

To teach on Zoom, you will need to have a Zoom account. The basic level account is free, but with the free account, you will be limited to 40 minutes.

Working with Zoom

Zoom will allow you to have two devices connected to the same meeting from within the same Zoom account. You can change the name on one of the devices to differentiate the two.

If using a tablet as your face-to-face camera and a phone as your demonstration camera, you will need to download the Zoom app on both devices and sign into your account on each device.

If using a computer as your face-to-face camera, you can access a meeting via an internet browser and log in, though it is recommended to download and install the Zoom desktop client if you can.

Checking your Zoom setup before teaching
Before you decide to teach, it is wise to test your setup to make sure you have what you need to hold a successful workshop. If you do not know Zoom, this link will take you to Zoom's support document on getting started with Zoom.

Using a free Zoom account, you can test your setup by creating up a meeting and signing in on both of the devices you wish to use for the live workshop/class. Set up both devices as you think you will use them and record a short meeting by yourself so you can go over how the audio sounds and the video looks afterward.

NOTE: You will only be able to record a meeting if you are using Zoom desktop client on one device or you have a paid Zoom account. If you are using a tablet and phone, you will not be able to record your meeting, but you will be able to check your setup while the meeting is live. Remember to check how the audio sounds and if your cameras are in focus. Ask a family member or friend to join you in the meeting to check how you look and hear to them.

Mock up a demo so you can look at how clearly you can see your work surface. Look at the demo view on the other device you are using (i.e., laptop, computer, or tablet). Keep in mind that you will need to have one device's audio turned off so you do not get feedback or echoing. Mute one device using the device's volume settings and also turn the audio off in the Zoom meeting.

Points to consider when testing your Zoom setup:

- Is your camera in focus?
- What is behind you when using your face-to-face camera? Try to have an uncluttered background or use Zoom's built-in background blur.
- Can you clearly see what's on your work surface with your demo camera?
- Can you hear your audio clearly?
- Is there any feedback sound?
- Try switching between your devices to see which one provides clearer sound.
- Is there enough light?
- Try different angles for the light. Often, an overhead light will cast a shadow if it is above your head.

Tips for teaching online:

- Clearly state what tools and materials are required in the registration info.
- Will you have a material kit option? If so, what is the cost and deadline for shipping?
- Set any expectations you have with the students.
- Prepare your workspace with everything needed.
- Sign in early! You never know when Zoom will want to do an update, and students like to sign in early and make sure everything is working as well.
- State upfront how you want students to ask questions: chat or unmute and speak.
- Mute participants with background noise.
- Post-workshop communication:
    - Will there be a recording?
    - Can students email you questions, send photos, etc.?

Teaching On Demand (pre-recorded videos) Courses

Teaching On Demand involves recording videos of yourself demonstrating a technique or project piece and offering that video as an online class or course via a platform. Students can consume the course at their leisure.

To make a pre-recorded course, you will need:

- A recording device: phone, tablet, or camera.
- Tripod or holder for your device capable of holding the device horizontally above your worksurface.
- Remote control to turn the device on and off easily.
- Lights: either good overhead lighting (watch out for glare) or studio lights directed at the worksurface.
- Computer with video editing software or with a connection to the internet so you can work online with an online video editor program.
- Platform to host the course.
- Way to sell the course and take payment.

Technical considerations for recording:

- Record landscape for a wider angle of view, unless specifically recording for reels, shorts, or stories on social media.
- Record in short sections. It is really hard to record a consistent long video so don't try! Record short sections and edit them together in post-production.
- Have a device that can zoom in on your worksurface. Unless you are recording in very high resolution avoid cropping in on videos too much as this can reduce the resolution and make the recording look fuzzy.
- Check the data storage space on the device you are using. Videos can be data heavy.
- Regularly download the videos from your device if struggling with data space.
- If using a phone, consider uploading the files to a cloud-based storage solution (Dropbox, Google Drive, One Drive, etc.).
- Keep your device plugged so you do not run out of battery halfway through a recording.
- Have spare data cards if you are using a device that needs them.

Before recording:

- Before you start recording, work out the structure for the entire class. Make a storyboard to capture all the things you need to record.
- Consider recording without audio and adding a voice-over afterwards if you struggle to talk and demonstrate at the same time.
- Consider providing PDF handouts of the video lesson content so the student has something to help them as they watch the video. You may need to take photos to help with the handout.
    - Consider whether the handout could be another added price?
    - Could it be turned into a book? It is hard to pull good stills from a video so consider taking photos as you record.

Editing videos:

- All videos will need editing to some degree.
- The chances are you will have a range of recordings of the same step or process and may need to cut bits from different videos to make up the whole demonstration. Please understand that this is normal!
- Leave yourself plenty of time to edit; it is a long process, often with back and forth actions to make sure you have the best end result.
- Check out the free online video editors if you do not have access to video editing software. But watch out for watermarks if using a free editor; this could look unprofessional if you are then offering those videos in a paid-for course.
- Consider investing in the editing software that works for you. Most of the free video editors online offer an expanded premium version.
- Check that the audio can be separated from the visual in the editing software. If you want to do voiceovers, this is essential.
- Use YouTube to help you learn the editing program.
- Consider outsourcing the editing if you are struggling for time or to learn the program. Look on fiverr.com, upwork.com, or freelancer.com.

Offline editing software programs

There are lots of video editing programs on the market. Do your research and find the one that will work best for you.

Adobe Premiere Pro

- The top end of the market is Adobe Premiere Pro and it's expensive! If you are a Creative Cloud subscriber, you will have access to it.
- It is a powerful program that professionals use. You will not need this power or functionality for simply video editing and if you are new to the program there is a steep learning curve to understanding how it works.

Apple iMovie

- Macs come with a video editor program called iMovie, it has enough functionality to process videos for an on-demand course.

Windows 11

- Windows 11 has a video editor called Clipchamp that is similar to iMovie.
- You may need to download it from Microsoft if it's not already installed on your device.

Platforms to host your courses

When you have your course ready, you need somewhere to host it. There are a range of options. This is a general overview of the options; there are many similarities and differences between the companies in the same industry sectors and also between the different options. The companies mentioned are the best known in their field but are by no means the only companies out there. Please note that the mention of them does not constitute a recommendation. Please do thorough research before you commit to any of these!

Online Course Platforms
In this category, there are two types: Course Platforms and Course Marketplaces.

Course Platforms: The best-known platforms are Thinkific and Teachable. There are others, so do your research. They are hosted platforms where you make your own account, add content, and sell it. Both have a free level, where you can list one course for free consumption, i.e., the student will not pay to watch it. If you want to charge for the course or list more, there are monthly fixed fees. It is your site, so just like a website, you have to market your courses for people to see them.

Kajabi is similar in that it is a hosted platform but different! It is an all-in-one business platform where you can build a membership with courses included. It is much more expensive!

Course Marketplaces: Skillshare and Udemy are marketplaces where you apply to become a teacher, upload your courses, and add them to the marketplace. The platform takes the fee, owns the purchase (i.e., you may not be able to contact the student directly), and pays you a commission (Udemy) or by watch hour (Skillshare).

Your Own Website

Another way to host and sell your On Demand classes is by having your own website. This option has a few variations too! The options are:

- A self-hosted site: You will need to buy a domain name and pay for website hosting. This option means you'll need a CMS (Content Management System like WordPress), ecommerce software (like WooCommerce), and an LMS (Learning Management System). WordPress and WooCommerce are free software programs available to anyone. There are also LMS plugins available with free basic versions too.
- A hosted platform like Wix or Squarespace: Both of these platforms now offer online learning add-ons. There are extra fees attached. Again, when deciding which way to go, do your research. Wix may look cheap to start with but when you add in all the functionality you need to sell and provide courses to students, it may be the more expensive option in the end.

On Social Media

The most basic and cheapest way to provide on demand video courses is to use Facebook. You would need to set up a page for the business and use private groups for the content. There are a couple of major negatives to putting all your eggs in the Facebook basket. It is their platform, and Meta can shut you down without warning, and they are not legally obliged to give you access again. You cannot totally secure your videos, and people can grab the URL and download the video even from a private group if they know how. Whatever way you sell your courses, I would offer a private students Facebook group as that's a great place to build your student community.

This document has been produced as a handout to accompany the AMCAW Virtual Guild Presentation Teaching and Learning Online by Sian Hamilton and Stephanie Chavez. March 16, 2024.

For more detailed information about teaching on Zoom, please refer back to the presentation recording available on amcaw.org/virtual-guild/video-library.