

Session 1: Preparing your In-Person Teaching Practice for Online FAQ

What specific download and upload internet speeds in megabits per sec (mbps) do I and my students need for successful online lessons?

Having a strong and stable internet connection for the student and the teacher is a crucial factor for achieving decent sound in your online music lessons. Ideally, you will have download and upload speeds of at least 10 mbps. This may not be possible for everyone and will depend on what speed of internet is available in your region. You can test your internet speed with online tools such as [speedtest.net](https://www.speedtest.net) or [fast.com](https://www.fast.com).

If possible, use an ethernet cord plugged directly into your internet router and computer. This will provide a more consistent and stronger signal than with Wi-Fi. It is also important that there is no competition for the internet bandwidth during the lesson, e.g. someone else in the house streaming video or playing online games.

For more information about internet speed and how it affects your online interactions, read this [allconnect.com blog post](#) on the topic.

With concerns over the expense of technology tools to upgrade my studio, what should I focus on (i.e. an external microphone, computer, speakers etc.)?

We recommend that you work within a budget that you are comfortable with for technology purchases for your studio and add new tools as you can afford them. Investing in the strongest internet available in your region will make the connection with your student from your side as clear and effective as possible.

The next step would be to purchase an external microphone that will improve the quality of the sound input on your end. You can purchase a fine quality USB microphone for under \$80. Getting high-quality headphones or speakers will enhance the sound output and enable you to hear nuances in your students' performances.

Are there additional apps, separate from the video conference platform (e.g. Zoom, Skype) that I could use for better audio in my lessons?

Cleanfeed provides instant, unlimited HD Audio connection for free at <https://cleanfeed.net>. It works best with muted Zoom or Skype video. Earbuds must be used on both sides, as well as the Google Chrome browser.

How would you suggest teaching students to follow the correct tempo through an online lesson? I ask them to set up the metronome but it hasn't been successful for younger children.

The metronome lets the teacher know if the internet connection is steady. For younger students, parents will need to be involved to help with the metronome set-up and operation. You can ask students to conduct and sign, play along with a recording, or play with stronger accents on strong beats to indicate the tempo.

How should my students set up their camera?

The student camera set-up will depend on which instrument they play. Having a good view of their hands on the keyboard, strings, or bow will enable you to give them better feedback and instructions. You will also want to see their face so that you can read their facial expressions as they interact with you and perform.

Their device should be placed on a stable surface and at the appropriate height and distance from them so that they can be seen and heard well. This can be done by placing their computer or tablet on a table or stack of books close to a place where they can comfortably sit and play their instrument.

A few other considerations are for them to set up in a quiet, well-lit room with no back lighting.

Session 2: Adapting your In-Person Teaching to Online FAQ

What are some tips for establishing a relationship with a new student online?

When developing relationships with new students, you need to discover as much about them as they do about you. Help make them feel comfortable in the online learning environment. Begin by asking them some questions, have them tell you some things about themselves, find out what they are looking for from your music learning interactions. This becomes the basis for shared discovery and getting comfortable in the online music lessons together.

It is difficult to hear dynamics well online and I am preparing students for exams. What recommendations can you offer?

Video conferencing systems are not ideal for hearing all aspects of music performance. Having your students record themselves performing in advance of lessons and sending those digital files for your feedback will help increase the fidelity of the sound. The other advantage of this approach is that it helps the student be more conscious of their performance. They will really listen to the recording before they send it to you. This is an opportunity for student self-assessment. They are more likely to practice, record, listen, and repeat before they send that piece to you for review. All of those steps will help them to further develop their performance and listening skills and prepare for their exam to come.

Many families are currently feeling overwhelmed at home with their own work and their children's school situation. How can I incorporate new music online teaching activities and potentially increase the frequency of lessons without further overwhelming them?

Try to introduce new activities in small increments so that students can get comfortable and adapt to what you are presenting. Ensure that you keep families in the loop with adjustments to lessons, activities, and timing, and clearly explain the reasons for any shifts. This can be accomplished by regularly sending group emails to families. Check in frequently to see how things are progressing with students and how lessons are being received so that families feel that they are a part of the change process.

How can I teach important music techniques and concepts online such as what students feel when they are playing (e.g. arm weight, wrist lift, etc.)?

Use metaphors, gestures, and mimicry in an online video session whenever possible to communicate what students should feel when they are playing.

Do you have advice about teaching music history in the lesson either to individuals or groups?

Infuse elements of history into repertoire study and techniques you are instructing for students to draw more connections to music history. The Royal Conservatory also offers online History courses that you can guide your students through. [Click here](#) for more info.

Most of my students have previously been enrolled in orchestra, band, or ensemble. How do I give them hope for their future playing?

Promote community within your classroom to continue the sense of an orchestra/band/ensemble setting and encourage collaborative work whenever possible.

I am finding that students and parents are getting fatigued from online schoolwork and this is causing them to lose their motivation for music practice. How can I continue to motivate my students?

Provide some opportunities for fun interactions with other students to help bolster student morale and motivation. You can introduce a performance challenge that all students can participate in. This can include them posting videos of their performance submissions to YouTube with private links so that only your students can see them. Have reasonable but close deadlines and offer a small prize so that they can work towards something that takes them away from the pressures of their daily school and learning schedule and offers a fun and low-risk competition. Alternately, you can have them join in an online recital that offers them the chance to share their progress with other students and families. This can be accomplished with a live, online performance approach or have students submit videos to you in advance of the recital for you to share.

Session 3: Online Community and Classroom Management FAQ

How do I teach fingering technique more efficiently online? It seems to very hard to show proper hand shape or position.

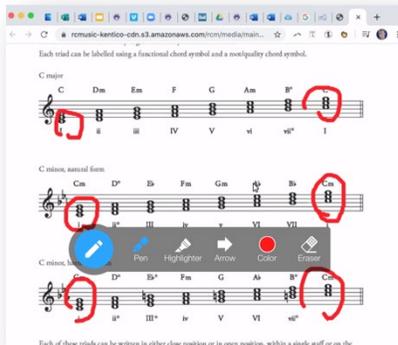
Using a small piano or cardboard mock-up indicating the keys allows you to get close up to the camera and more easily show technique, including hands and fingering. You can also make a video that shows side and top hand positions as well as fingering views to indicate better technique for your students. You can share screen and show this video to your students in multiple lessons as needed.

How are both students and teacher able to annotate scores in real-time online? What software are you using?

Collaborative annotation can be done using the Annotate option in Zoom when you share your screen. [Learn more about annotation in Zoom](#). You can also invite your students to work together on the same document or whiteboard through tools such Google Docs, Google Slides, or [Mural.co](#) (a digital workspace for visual collaboration).

Annotation is good for older learners but how do we help younger students?

Screen sharing relevant documents and scores and having your students annotate them allows you to check for understanding, especially for music theory concepts. Annotation on a score in Zoom can be difficult as it takes a certain amount of hand-eye coordination to write with the computer mouse or track pad. If the student is working on a tablet or iPad, they can draw with fingers using the annotate function in Zoom. If these devices are not available, you can ask for assistance from an adult to support sections of the lesson where annotation can be accomplished on screen. Students can also mark on a physical copy of the score that can be held up to the camera to check for understanding.



What resources are available for teaching theory online?

You can use notation apps like [Noteflight](#) and ear training apps like the [RCM Online Ear Training Tool](#) or [Auralia](#) to get your students interacting with music theory. The RCM also has resources on how to teach Celebrate Theory 5-8. Log in to [rcmusic.com](#) and navigate to Access Teacher Portal > Theory Resources to find instructional theory videos, melody writing supplements, sample theory exams, and worksheets. For free webinars on how to teach Celebrate Theory 5-

8, check out [The Art of Teaching Theory](#) with Maria Case (Chief Examiner Emeritus, The Royal Conservatory) or the [RCM Online Theory Study Guides](#) (Levels 5-8).

Are there any copyright issues if showing YouTube videos or scores during online teaching?

Sharing YouTube videos is acceptable in your online lessons. You are keeping the integrity of the video and the person who posted it.

For more information on copyright law, please check out this article published by MTNA:
https://www.mtna.org/MTNA/Learn/Copyright_FAQs.aspx

For ear tests and training, chord identification and especially their position/inversions are very dependent on the audio quality in the video conferencing platform. Are there any tips for students who are not having issues identifying chords in broken form but a very hard time when in solid form due to the distorted audio?

Due to the lower audio quality in video conferencing software, ear training can be challenging. Chords played in solid form may have unnatural colouring as compression is added and certain frequencies in the spectrum are rolled off. Pre-recording any ear training exercises and sharing with your students during the lesson would be the most ideal way to maintain the original audio integrity.

How do you motivate parents and students who have little to no faith in the effectiveness of online instruction? What resources do you provide to help address this issue?

You are continuing to offer an important music education opportunity for your student by providing lessons online. You are quite likely having to put even more time and energy into your online lessons than when you deliver them in person. Remind parents and students that the format of the lessons has changed to accommodate for online delivery, but the value is no less.

Here are a few points to make and strategies to use to encourage parents to see the value:

- Provide the students with feedback on performance recordings that they send to you. These can be very short clips of sections of pieces that they are working on. You can provide feedback during your lessons if responding outside of sessions is too time-consuming for you.
- Consider holding a regular, open online session for all your students to join in on. Students can play for each other, develop a supportive community, and prepare for exams or recitals. Parents can observe and see the level of engagement and value.
- Create fun performance competitions with challenges for students to record themselves playing a particular piece and post to YouTube or other online sharing sites with a private link.
- Create a growing online library using a cloud-based file sharing space (e.g. Dropbox or Google drive) of resources that may inspire your students to try to perform new pieces. This could include scores that your students can try to play or video and audio files of

inspiring performances that may spark them to become better in their playing. You can start with just a few items in this resource library and continue to expand it over time.

Session 4: How to Make your Online Teaching Interactive and Multimodal FAQ

Could you use Cadenza even with young students (between ages 6-10)?

Many young learners are gaining experience using virtual classroom platforms such as Google Classroom due to the fact many school boards have adopted the functionality in daily instruction. Cadenza functions very similarly as the teacher can share documents with the student and communicate. Adopting any platform may require additional help from their parent/guardian.

Will you be providing a list of potential apps for us to explore?

The following apps were mentioned by attendees in the chat of this session. We recommend that you research each one to ensure that it will work for you before downloading or purchasing it:

Note-reading apps:

- Note Rush
- Flashnote Derby
- Music Tutor
- Tenuto – [musictheory.net](https://www.musictheory.net) (for ear training and theory)
- Note Quest – piano flashcards

Sight-reading apps:

- Piano Maestro
- ABRSM Sight Reading
- Tabs (by Ultimate Guitar)
- Piano Adventures Player App

Ear training apps:

- [RCM Online Ear Training](https://www.rcm.org.uk/online-ear-training)
- [Tonedear.com](https://www.tonedear.com)
- [Musictheory.net](https://www.musictheory.net)

Many of these apps/tools are also mentioned by The Curious Piano Teachers in [this article](#) if you wish to learn more about it.

Others:

- Prodigies Bells (prodigiesmusic.com)
- Quizlet – learning tools & flashcards
- Soundtrap – music making, audio editing, loops, autotune, beat maker
- Susan Paradis (susanparadis.com) – free piano resources
- SproutBeat – worksheets
- Cadenza Practice App – music practice app

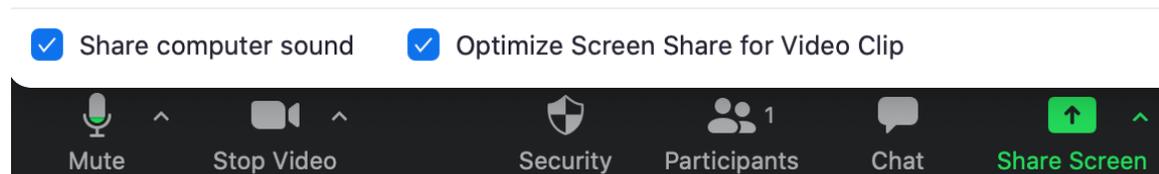
Free video-editing software:

- Hitfilm Express
- Shortcut
- VSDC Video Editor
- Lightworks
- iMovie (Apple devices)
- Final Cut Pro – Apple is offering a [90-day free trial](#) for Mac computers

Session 5: Successful Communications with Students and Parents FAQ

When I use the Share Screen feature in Zoom and play a YouTube video recording, I can hear it but my student cannot. What can I do to have the sound come through for both of us?

When screen sharing with a video or audio file, ensure that you have checked the “Share computer sound” box in the bottom left corner of the Share Screen dialogue box. If you are sharing a video, you should also check the “Optimize Screen Share for Video Clip” box.



When teaching vocal groups, we normally play games in person. How do we make it more interactive, interesting, and fun online?

Instructing a vocal class is naturally very dynamic and requires games and fun activities to promote engagement. Some suggestions to explore would be breaking the class into smaller groups and creating interesting and fun group performance activities they can record and share with the class or a virtual open mic session. Don't be afraid to try new activities as you may be surprised with what you discover.

How should I do side coaching in an online piano lesson while the student is playing?

It's tough for students to hear your voice while they're playing. We suggest asking the student to set up the device they are using for the video call in a place where they can easily see you.

While they perform, you can use body language, hand gestures, and facial expressions to help indicate how you are responding to their playing and what you would like them to do to improve. After they play a section, you can have them stop playing for a quick debrief and a demonstration from you. You can also explain elements of your non-verbal communication in case it needs clarifying.

Do you have any suggestions on how to get families to accept other forms of communication besides text and email? Parents often seem overwhelmed by shared docs, blogs/websites or social media.

To help parents/guardians become more comfortable with new forms of online communication or digital tools that you might introduce into your teaching practice, make the transition as easy as possible for them. Here are a few suggestions:

- Provide links that explain the product or process. These are usually available online and can be found with a quick Google search.
- Offer an online teaching session for parents where you demonstrate how to use these tools. Record the session and make it available for parents who were not able to attend or who want to review the information.
- Provide some incentives for using these other forms of online communication, e.g. post learning resources there for the students. These wouldn't be available in a text or email communication.
- Don't expect that all parents will accept these new forms of communication at the same rate. It will take time to help them see the value of these tools and to transition to using them regularly.