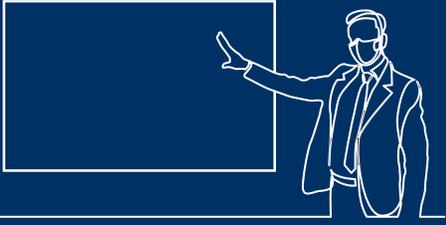


KEEP TEACHING



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CAL MARITIME



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Tricks and Tips for Teaching with Masks*

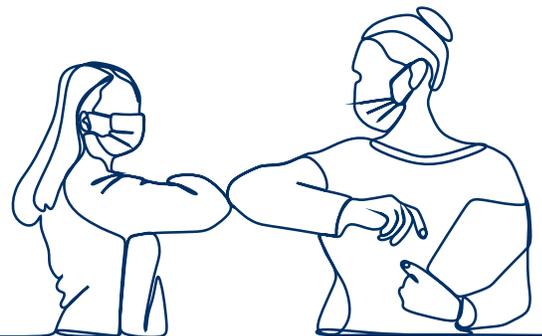
Teaching with a mask presents a number of challenges, especially if the instructor has back-to-back courses or multiple sessions on a single day. Here are some tips for teaching with masks:

- 1 Wear a mask that allows you to move your mouth and lips easily while remaining protected. You may want to consider a [sport cage insert](#) that creates more room under the mask, but make sure your mask fits well over the cage and doesn't have gaps.
- 2 If you plan to use a microphone or voice amplifier, don't place the microphone head against the mask material as that may distort the sound quality.

If you don't have a microphone or voice amplifier, speak just a little bit louder than you normally would. Without a microphone, you will also want to avoid talking while facing the board -- practice writing on the board and then speaking. Some may find the silence awkward, but with practice it will feel more normal. Don't be afraid of short silences.
- 3
- 4 More important than volume are speed and clarity: slow down just a little more than you normally would speak and enunciate carefully to help the students process what you're saying.
- 5 Remind the students to do the same: regularly ask them to project their voice so that you and others in the classroom can hear.
- 6 Some research indicates "Surgical masks offer the best acoustic performance among all masks tested. If those masks are not available, loosely woven 100% cotton masks perform well acoustically, although they may offer less protection against small droplets than medical masks. Tightly woven cotton and blended fabrics are less porous but also transmit less sound. Multilayer masks made of loosely woven cotton may offer a reasonable compromise between droplet-blocking efficiency and acoustic performance." See full article [here](#).



- 7 Protect your voice: slowing down and using a microphone will help, but it is also important to avoid straining your voice. Some suggest [diaphragmatic breathing](#) to project your voice and avoid strain.
- 8 If you teach for a long segment of time or teach multiple courses on a single day, schedule regular voice breaks throughout the day and drink water whenever possible.
- 9 Consider images to supplement your lectures and lessons (images, charts, tables, bullet points) to help reinforce content. This could be in PowerPoint, document camera, or whiteboard.
- 10 Add body language and facial expressions and consider vocal tone to help get your message across. Smile under your mask -- a smile is reflected in your eyes and in your tone of voice.
- 11 Check with students to verify that they can hear and understand. Pay particular [attention to students who are hard of hearing](#). Encourage them to contact the Office of Accessibility and Disability Services if they need assistance.
- 12 Introduce yourself to the class in a short video of you without your mask and share the video with them before the first day of class. Also consider using video to run through class expectations and other syllabus tasks can also reduce the number of times you need to explain something during the first two weeks as students drop and add.
- 13 Some instructors may find it useful to create connections between instructor and students, as well as between students, by assigning a short “introduction video” to each student and then having students practice discussion tools by asking questions and commenting on each other's videos.
- 14 Ask your students to interrupt or wave, if they can't hear you. Consider asking students to raise a hand if they have a question or comment, as it may be difficult to read facial cues.
- 15 Check in with your students more regularly and ask for in-class feedback: ask for a thumbs-up or a head nod;
- 16 Consider more regular check-ins and anonymous mini-surveys. Or a [one-minute paper](#) at the end of each class. Perhaps even start of each class with “How's it going? What would help?” questions.
- 17 It will be more difficult for students sitting in the back of a crowded classroom to hear their peers, particularly those in the front of the classroom. Consider repeating students' questions to the entire class after someone asks a question.
- 18 Consider flipping your class by putting longer lectures and demonstrations on videos and then using class time for questions and discussion. Adding more active learning and student-centered teaching techniques will also give you and your voice mini-breaks throughout the class session. Some faculty on campus are already doing this and YFDT can connect you with them if you would like to learn more.
- 19 Hold some online office hours over Zoom where you and your students can talk without masks.
- 20 Be patient with yourself and with your students. Ask your students to be patient with you. We're all going through this together.



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21 Encourage “active listening” where students confirm what they heard before adding the next point. It may be necessary to remind students that listening is all the more important when there aren't visual cues to rely on. They've been wearing masks for months and months, but not everyone has taken an in-person class with everyone wearing masks. The listeners will have to engage more, as well as the speakers working to connect more.

22 You may want to consider having the members of the class [create their own community guidelines regarding how they will care for each other and create a caring community.](#)

23 If you see a student not wearing a mask, it is best to begin with a polite reminder of the policy. In the unlikely event that a student refuses to comply after being reminded politely, instructors can ask the student to leave the class. If the student refuses, the instructor can leave and cancel class. Please note that these steps should be taken only as a last resort, and instructors should report to their department, school, or college if a case such as this does arise.

Sources and Resources:

- Masking in the Classroom [UM Dearborn] <https://dearbornhub.net/?p=938>
- <https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2020/08/26/effective-ways-teach-person-mask-opinion>
- <https://news.iu.edu/stories/2020/08/iupui/inside/17-tips-for-instructors-professors-teaching-with-masks.html>
- <https://theconversation.com/7-tips-for-making-masks-work-in-the-classroom-164777>
- Video from Tri-County Technical County <https://vimeo.com/444695728/5a6b9e9aee>
- <https://coe.uga.edu/news/2020/10/from-the-expert-tips-on-lecturing-with-a-mask>
- <https://www.tes.com/news/school-march-8-masks-classroom-pupils-teachers-advice>
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7417296/>
- <https://asa.scitation.org/doi/10.1121/10.0002279>
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*Adapted from LSA Technology Services at the University of Michigan

 [Visit the Faculty Development page for more resources](#) 

