Guide to Remote Learning

Modern technology provides some powerful tools for staying musically connected, even when we cannot be face-to-face.
In this guide you will find tips for how to set up for effective video conference lessons and classes.

- **Communication is key.** For students under age 18, we ask that a parent or guardian participate in the first one or two lessons so they can discuss goals and expectations with the teacher. This will also enable the teacher to evaluate the student's home-learning setup and recommend adjustments if applicable.

- **Use a device with a camera and microphone.** This can be a laptop, smartphone, tablet, or a desktop, but Chromebooks are not recommended.

- **Check your Internet connection.** Look for download speeds of 3-4 mbps and upload speeds 1 mbps or higher. You can quickly find out your Internet speed by doing a Google search for "Internet speed test" and clicking the blue "Run Speed Test" icon.

- **Set up in a quiet room.** Background noise, including fans, television, pets, and siblings can interfere with call quality.

- **Plug in your devices!** Video conferencing drains the battery quickly. Fully charge your device before the start of your lesson, and you may even need to keep it plugged in during your lesson.

- **Gather your musical equipment:** Instrument, sheet music, assignment sheets/lesson notebook, pencil, metronome/tuner, music stand. Your teacher may have particular required and recommended materials for their students, so be sure you have those on hand as well.

- **Get ready early.** Leave ample time to get your technology set up, take out and tune your instrument, use the restroom, etc. Ideally, you want to be set up and ready for your lesson about five minutes early.

- **Enjoy your lesson! We can't wait to see and hear you.**

Guide to Technology for Remote Learning

Below are the basic types of technology you'll need for remote lessons, as well as some commonly-recommended accessories. Check your individual teacher's Remote Learning Guide for particular required and recommended items. These Remote Learning Guides are emailed to all private-lesson students before the semester begins, and will also be accessible by a link on each teacher's faculty bio page on the WCMS website.

Equipment Basics

Laptop/Desktop/Smartphone/Tablet with Camera/Mic: You will need a device with a camera and microphone. A laptop or desktop with a built-in or external webcam offers the biggest viewing window and most versatile platform support. Smartphones and tablets have cameras and microphones that support video conferencing. **Chromebooks are not recommended.**

Reliable high-speed internet connection: Cable, fiber, and high-speed DSL are the best options, but a cellular network can work as well. For home internet, you will need a Wi-Fi or ethernet cable connection. Do a Google search for "speed test" and run a speed test to check the speed of your connection. Look for download speeds of 3-4 mbps or more and upload speeds of 1 mbps or more.

A video-conferencing account if needed for the platform you and your teacher select. Some of the most common platforms are Zoom, Google Hangouts Meets, Skype, and FaceTime. See below for details on these platforms. It's also a good idea to **practice using platforms in advance** either with a friend, family member or your teacher. Most platforms are relatively easy to use once you try them out a few times.

Equipment Upgrades

External speakers can enhance sound quality. A Bluetooth speaker is one of the most common external speakers. Sometimes external speakers can create audio feedback issues, however.

External cameras can provide more flexible camera placement, wide angle shots and higher resolution.

Headphones can help with the audio quality, similar to external speakers. Check with your teacher to see if they recommend a specific type.

A device mount can be very helpful for getting the right camera angle and keeping your device steady without having to keep adjusting it.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Before Your Lesson

Connect your Device to a Power Source. Make sure your computer/device is plugged in. These things take a lot of battery power!

Update Your Computer. Make sure that your computer/device is up to date on software. Installing any updates helps prevent glitches and problems with video conferencing software.

Disconnect other devices from the wireless network if you are using one. This includes cell phones, Wi-Fi TV, amazon Echos, etc. Ask other people on your network not to stream videos to help maximize the quality of the video conference stream. Using an ethernet cable will also help with a higher quality stream.

Do Not Disturb. Set device settings beforehand to "do not disturb" to avoid distracting alerts.

During Your Lesson

Use mute for meetings with more than one person. In meetings of three or more people, turn off your mic when you are not talking by clicking 'mute'. This helps keep the audio clear for everyone. Remember to unmute yourself when you want to talk again.

Wear headphones if you're experiencing a lot of audio cutting out. When the software hears sound coming from your speakers, it may think that you are talking even when you are silent. This can create unwanted cutting in and out of sound.

Keep your volume only as loud as you need to clearly hear if not using headphones. This minimizes the audio cutting in and out caused by your microphone hearing sound from your speaker.

After Your Lesson

Take notes of any issues that need troubleshooting.

Reach out if you're having trouble! Don't hesitate to ask for help. Email our Registrar, Samara Martin, at smartin@winchestermusic.org with questions about remote learning.

FREE PLATFORMS FOR VIDEO STREAMING

WCMS supports the use of Zoom through the purchase of an organizational license, but students and teaching artists are welcome to use whatever platform(s) work best for them. Here are a few of the most popular ones:

Zoom
- Go to zoom.us to create an account and download the software. (It works best to use the program on your device instead of via a browser window.)
- If using MacOS, you may need to go through a few extra steps to get your microphone working with Zoom: https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/360016688031-Using-the-Zoom-Client-and-Zoom-Rooms-with-macOS

Skype
- Here's a comprehensive article on setting up and using Skype: https://mashable.com/2014/07/09/skype-for-beginners/
- For those of you who prefer videos: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tQpltHBztB0
- Both the student and teacher must have the software or application downloaded and an account set up to use.

Google Hangouts Meet
- Accessed via your Google Account. If you have Gmail, you have a Google account. If you don't have Gmail, it's easy to get. Go to gmail.com to set it up.
- Directly access Google Hangouts Meets at meet.google.com (You'll have to log in, use the same login info you use for your Gmail account.)

FaceTime: Only available on Apple products (iPhone, MacBook, iPad, etc.) Both individuals have to have an Apple product for this to work.
- https://www.imore.com/how-place-facetime-call-your-iphone

Duo: similar to FaceTime, but available on Android AND iPhones (and some computers) via the PlayStore, Appstore, or wherever you get your apps.

Basic Tutorial: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W1iqNioVhno