Prepare for the session

Open the session at least 10-15 minutes prior to the start with a session overview slide confirming the session details.

Follow the Collaborate prompts to check the video and microphone are in working order.

Upload documents that you intend to share to the Collaborate session beforehand. This will give you time to troubleshoot if there are any issues.

Make it meaningful

Remember that you should only use Blackboard Collaborate for tutorial-type sessions. Avoid reading to students from PowerPoint slides. If a session is used purely to transmit information, students are unlikely to attend more than once. If your purpose is a lecture, or mini lecture, you should be creating a series of short video clips instead.

- Aim for many-to-many communication. This means that as well as you talking to the students, they should be talking to you and to each other.
- Make frequent ‘eye contact’ with the camera to help to make the remote participants feel more part of the session.
- Facilitate student input, as you would in a tutorial session
  - This requires more than asking questions such as “Is that clear? Any questions?” during the session. Instead:
    - prepare a set of questions that require considered responses from students, and make these available well in advance so students have time to prepare their responses;
    - give students a task to complete and report back on during the session;
    - clearly explain your expectation that as many students as possible will be asked to provide input.

Live online sessions can be challenging for some participants and it takes some skill to orchestrate interactions in larger groups.

- At the start of the session, ask for volunteers to answer specific questions or report back on specific tasks.
- If none are forthcoming, call on specific students, but avoid putting them on the spot. If you know who your high-performing students are, or which ones are not shy in f2f classes, call on them first.

Also see [https://help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Moderator/Moderate_Sessions/Session_Best_Practices](https://help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Moderator/Moderate_Sessions/Session_Best_Practices)

Set clear protocols

Some standard protocols:

- Allow at least 10-15 minutes at the start of the session for students to check their setups (or allow access to the session early – you can select this option in the session settings);
- Ask students to check their microphones at the start of the session by saying “Hello”;
- Ask participants to keep their microphones muted when not speaking (background noise and feedback can spoil the interactions for everyone);
- Ask students to raise their hands using the Collaborate tool to ask a question (verbally) or to use the chat function to post their questions;
- Allow private chats only with the moderator to avoid ‘back channel’ interactions that can distract participants.

Visual resources

Keep PowerPoint slides to a couple of bullet points each slide, and upload them before the session.
Browse to web resources you want to share and keep these tabs on standby for when you share your screen. Open applications that you intend to share. (Applications can only be shared via Chrome)
https://help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Moderator/Moderate_Sessions/Share_Content

Troubleshooting and limitations

Check out the instructions for audio and video setup here:
https://help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Moderator/Moderate_Sessions/Audio_and_Video

Audio
Poor audio quality will have the biggest effect on synchronous sessions. Recommend students use a headset or earbuds to avoid feedback loops and background noise. Remember to request that students mute their microphones when they are not speaking.

Whiteboard
It is not possible to save a whiteboard in Collaborate Ultra, and it is not possible to open an additional whiteboard. The whiteboard content does not persist – it disappears if you stop sharing. **If you want to save your whiteboard, you need to do a screen capture.**

Tunnelling
Collaborate Ultra can produce an infinite-window effect if you share an application or your screen under certain circumstances (typically when *sharing the screen that is running the session*). To avoid this:
- open web content for sharing in a separate window (and stop sharing before returning to the session window);
- use two monitors and separate windows, and keep the window with the Collaborate session on a separate screen to the one you are sharing (you will be able to select the screen you want to share);
- sharing an application rather than the screen usually avoids this effect;
- open content for sharing in a different browser (but definitely a separate window).

For your students

Provide a link in Blackboard to the guidance provided here:
https://help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Participant/Get_Started

Create a slide with pertinent starting information, upload it to the session, and have it on display as students join the session, along with any other up-front information you would like to share.