

VIRTUAL OFFICE HOURS

A hallmark of a liberal arts education is one-on-one interaction between faculty and students. Office hours typically facilitate much of this impactful interaction between students and their professors. While the pandemic has caused many challenges for connecting with students, the strategies and tools described here can help create opportunities for interacting with your students (and/or colleagues) virtually.

STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE VIRTUAL OFFICE HOURS

Outlined below are strategies that will help you create and maintain effective virtual offices hours throughout the semester.

- 1) **Communicate early and often:** Make sure your students know how to schedule an appointment with you. Reminders throughout the semester (via Blackboard, in-class announcements, or emails) will ensure your students know how to schedule a time to meet with you.
- 2) **Use your Personal Meeting room in Zoom:** Using your personal meeting room in Zoom ([more info](#)) simplifies the process of creating multiple meetings over time (pro tip: [customize](#) your personal meeting zoom link to your name for easier access).
- 3) **Take advantage of your Outlook calendar:** Having an organized calendar will enable you to have a better sense of when you are available and enable you to use a scheduling tool (see Tool section).
- 4) **Use a scheduling tool:** Scheduling tools reduce the logistics required to match your availability with your students/colleagues.
- 5) **Have students sign-up for set times:** If you have set office hours, you can use a GoogleDoc or a BoxNote to have students sign-up for appointment slots in advance. You can share a link to this document in your syllabus and/or within Blackboard so that students can quickly access the document when they need to make an appointment.

TOOLS TO ENABLE VIRTUAL OFFICE HOURS

Calendar. It's important to note that faculty and students have different calendar services (faculty: Outlook and student: Google). This means that faculty cannot use the scheduling feature in Outlook to see if students are busy (and vice a versa). Scheduling tools, like the ones below, help mitigate this challenge.

Zoom. Zoom is an essential tool for having a virtual "face-to-face" meeting with colleagues and students.

Scheduling tools for individual meetings. These tools use your Outlook calendar to create an online portal for your students and/or colleagues to schedule a time to meet with you. Some of these tools allow for you to create multiple appointment types and customize your availability. For many of these tools, there is a cost associated for the more advanced features but a basic digital sign-up sheet in a GoogleDoc or Box note is free

- [youcanbookme](#)
- [whenworks](#)
- [10 to 8](#)
- [GoogleDoc / BoxNote](#) ([example](#) sign-up sheet)

Scheduling tools group meetings. These tools allow multiple individuals to vote on a time that works for their individual schedules. After individuals have had a chance to share their availability you can find a time that works for everyone.

- [Find Time \(Outlook plugin\)](#)
- [Doodlepoll](#)
- [Whenisgood](#)