

7 Expert Tips for Building Culture Conscious Online Courses



Dramatically improve participation & retention
in your borderless online trainings with our
quick-apply set-up advice.



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Introduction

In a world of over **7 billion people** and **6,700 languages**, multinational organizations have a growing challenge...

How can companies successfully communicate with & train employees across the globe?

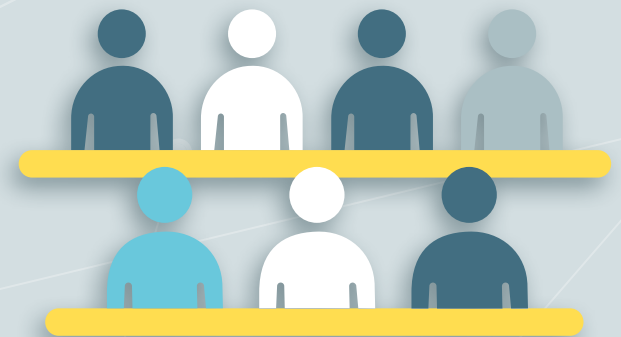


Online training with virtual classrooms has made such widespread training possible. It's far more cost efficient than in-person training, and with the leading platforms designed to engage, many organizations enjoy very successful programs.

Did you know common phrases can unnecessarily challenge multicultural audiences?

Avoid these simple mistakes for better retention!
Learn how idioms can leave your audience puzzled and effect how learning curriculum is received.

Read the full article!



Often times, not all cultural preferences are considered when building online classes.

With English being the **“language of business,”** learners around the world are expected to conform to the language and Western styles of learning. **Western ideas for training do not always suit international teams and their learned cultural expectations, resulting in unsuccessful training sessions for many participants.**



7 Expert Tips for Building Culture Conscious Online Courses

These tips have been collected over more than a decade of working with organizations around the world to meet the challenges of training multicultural learners in virtual classrooms.

Learn and use them to strategically optimize your virtual classroom experiences for a global audience.



Missed the webinar?
Watch it On Demand!

**TIP
#1**

Adjust your session timings

The timetables for your trainings need to be defined by the assumption that you are working with people whose first language is NOT English.

The simple fact is that learning in a 2nd or 3rd language involves a greater cognitive load. Therefore, your learners need more time to process everything.

Session times should be about **1.5 times longer** than you'd normally allot for a native English speaking audience. This gives you extra time to explain things, and provides your learners more time to process information and explain their thinking.

There are other factors to consider as well. In the U.S., our business-oriented culture encourages us to get right into a training session. Being so hasty may be seen as impolite by certain groups. So, depending on your learners, it may be good to allow time for sharing pleasantries.



Keep these four time adjustment strategies in mind:

1

Allow for **extra time** when teaching skills or explaining ideas, **about 1.5 x more time** as you would for a native English speaking audience.

2

Ease the weight of **heavy cognitive loads** by giving learners this additional time to **process information and concepts**.

3

Use extended time to allow learners to **explain themselves or debrief** about information presented at greater length.

4

Allow time at the start to **share pleasantries & connect** to your audience at a more **personal level** if they choose to participate.



Overcome the hurdle of transitioning trainers into dynamic online facilitators with our easy to read complimentary eBook!

Get the eBook



TIP
#2

Adapt Activities for the Audience

Know your audience when you plan out your training's activities. Not every audience will be enthused by collaborative tasks that involve a lot of verbal communication. There are several reasons for this.

The most prevalent fear facing participants in global online trainings is that they will embarrass themselves if they respond inappropriately.

Anxieties can also arise if learners do not understand a question, worry about giving the wrong answer or talking over someone else, or don't know which tool to use to respond (e.g. status update features, chats, or microphones). They may also be all too inclined to lean on one person's opinion rather than strike up group conversations.

If your audience may struggle with oral collaboration, try providing a way to participate through a collective anonymous chat or short answer polling.

Keep these questions in mind as you plan your online activities:

Virtual Class Activity Assessment

- Is my audience likely to be **collaborative**?
- How will different groups **react** when I present various activities?
- Have I provided **alternative ways to participate**? Ex: chat, phone line, anonymous Q&A or polling.
- Have I adequately explained how my participants should **respond to or ask questions**?
- Is it essential to have named interactions, or can I provide ways to interact **anonymously**?
- Is my activity too **region specific** to be understood by all of my audience? If so, provide adequate instruction.

Learn modern methods of promoting
online participant engagement:



[Download the Infographic](#)

TIP
#3

Ensure Audience Comfort in the Virtual Classroom

It is critical participants be comfortable in the environments we expect them to learn in for maximum retention.

First experiences in virtual classrooms can be a bit uncomfortable or impersonal for participants who've only ever been in face-to-face training environments. Add in a multicultural audience who is learning in a non-native language, and the setting can be off-putting.

Avoid uncomfortable online environments! Make sure you:

1

Incorporate more slides with **written language** to help non-native speakers better understand.

2

Use simpler tools for the first session:

Polls, Chats, and phone lines to begin with, whiteboards, mics, and breakout rooms for later sessions.

3

Supply **quick-start guides** that outline virtual classroom tools & troubleshooting to all attendees before the session.

4

Find opportunities to supplement lecture-heavy topics with **time for Q&A**.

Learn 5 ways to make virtual training as effective as face-to-face, in person sessions!

Get the eBook



TIP
#4

Create Alternative Response Mechanisms

Verbal communication is not always the surest method to drive interaction – for both your participants and you.

Requiring responses to questions or activities in a second or third language can cause anxiousness for some learners.

Also, consider that your credibility can come into question if you struggle with accents and require statements to be repeated multiple times.

Depending upon your audience assessment, it is advisable to plan for and create alternative response mechanism. In particular, these options should be visual or written.



Here are some alternative response mechanisms you can provide:

Virtual Classroom Response Options

- Give everyone a chance to respond with **multiple chats**.
- Provide **anonymous short answer polls** to collect answers without names displayed.
- Use **set multiple choice/answer polls** to provide a pre-set selection for participants.
- Encourage the use of **in-room icons** such as Hand Raising, Agree, Disagree, and more.
- Relieve pressure by using **breakout rooms** to segment participants into smaller private discussion groups.

Create custom learning environments with
Adobe Connect Virtual Classrooms



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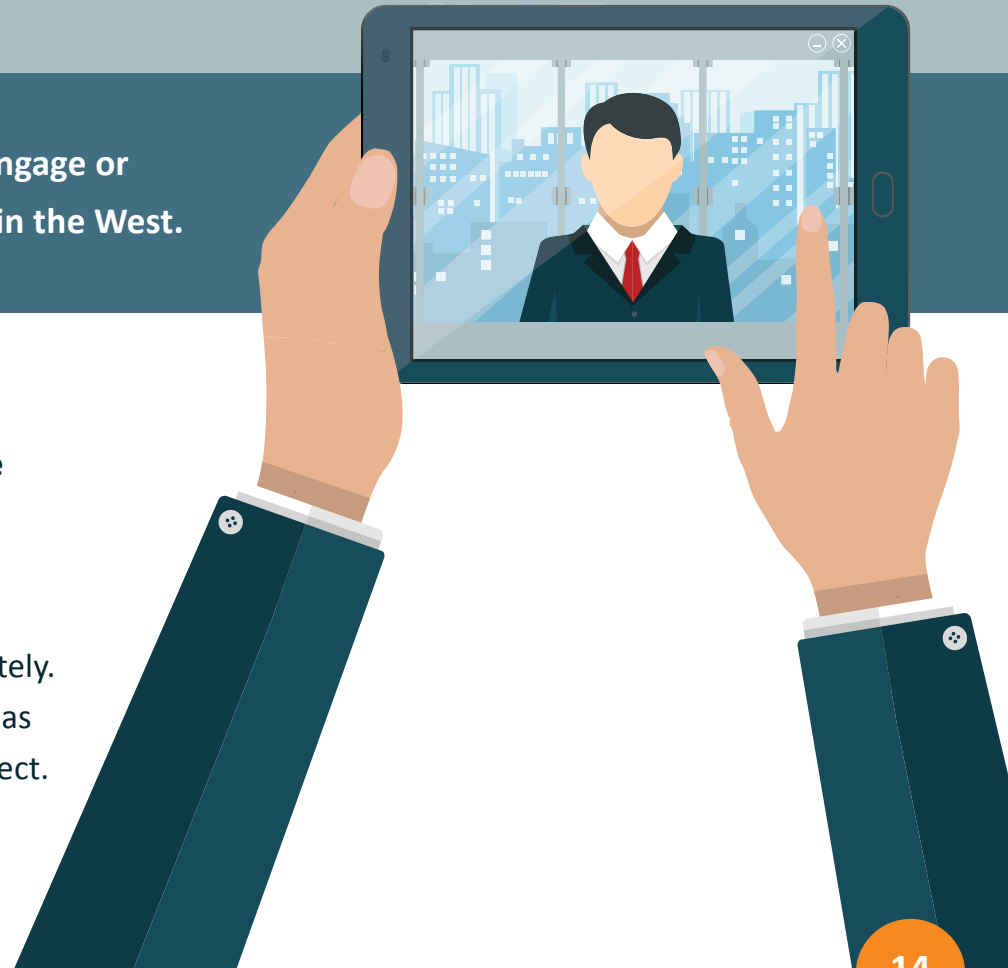
**TIP
#5**

Understand Participant Expectations of You (The Instructor)

Not all cultures share the idea that learners should engage or question their instructors, as learners are allowed to do in the West.

Certain peoples in the Far East view instructor and pupil relationships in a strict hierarchy: **The expert teaches, and the student listens and learns.**

Think of all the terms we've incorporated from the East that reflect this idea: guru, sensei, and Sifu come to mind immediately. In most Eastern cultures, the teacher is seen as the one who has the credentials and credibility to share knowledge on the subject. Input from fellow students isn't as large of a part of Eastern learning expectations as we see in the West.



Assess your multicultural audience with these observed trends:



Western learners expect to learn **with you, the facilitator**. Dialogue and discussion are important, so make sure to use breakout rooms and lots of chats.



Eastern learners may expect to learn **from you, the expert**. Include your credentials during your introduction and place more emphasis on lectures and anonymous polling during the class.

When blending both cultures, provide alternative options to allow for learners to participate and learn how they prefer to do so. You can also opt to run separate sessions.

Building bridges between virtual teams doesn't happen overnight - but you can certainly make it easier!

[Read the Blog](#)

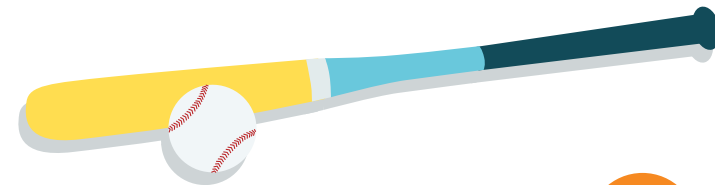
TIP
#6

Avoid the Use of Slang & Idioms

Even though baseball is a commonly known USA sport, saying “You hit it out of the park” might seem very confusing to a participant from a culture inexperienced with the sport.

Slang, common expressions, and idioms can slip into our daily conversations all the time. It’s inevitable they’ll pop us during your training.

Be mindful of the fact other cultures will not necessarily understand what you are saying if their region doesn’t practice them!



Culture-specific expressions and phrases you should avoid:

Sporting Expressions: Non-US learners may not understand American Football references, in the same way US learners won't likely grasp cricket or backgammon references.



Different Backgrounds: Idioms are not always shared by people who speak the same language. An American and an Australian may both speak English, but they both have phrases the other won't understand.



Lost in Translation: Not all expressions have an exact translation. Many will leave listeners on the other end confused. Consider the common Russian expression "I'm not hanging noodles from your ears" which basically means, "I'm not trying to fool you."



Avoid cultural mistakes!

Optimize your training programs for a global audience with culture-conscious program coaching & virtual classroom creation.



[Learn More](#)

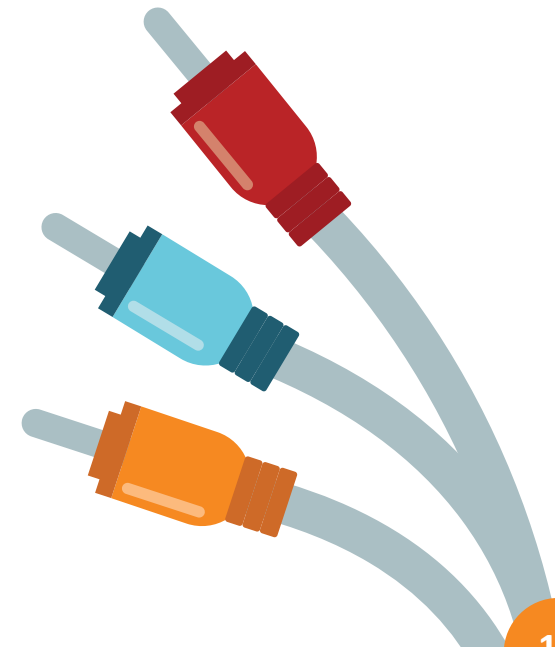
TIP
#7

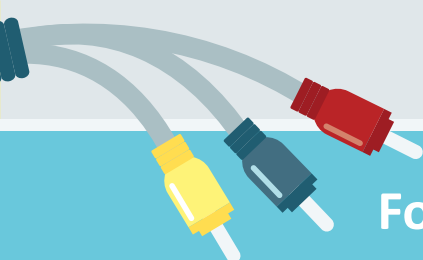
Test the Tech before Roll Out

As with all online training in virtual classrooms, you should always test the technology before leading a session.

It is essential to keep in mind that technological capacities vary between countries. Internet connectivity is not always good, especially for learners who may live in rural regions. Know your audience's locations beforehand to better predict any technical issues that might arise.

Beyond this, virtual classrooms are fairly complex. The technology may not feel as intuitive to a new user as, say, a basic gaming app. **Learners from backgrounds with limited access to technology might not be as quick to grasp how to navigate the interface.**





Follow these technology testing strategies for your virtual class:

1

Run full **technology audits**, including connections and bandwidth, **before** the session begins.

2

Provide **quick-start guides** that explain all the features and **how to trouble-shoot on their own**.

3

Always **have your learners arrive early** so any problems can be sorted out **before start time**.

4

Provide **alternative audio options**; VoIP (Computer speakers), and land lines with **integrated audio**.

Upgrade your audio! Get the #1 rated integrated audio for virtual classrooms with MeetingOne.

[Learn More](#)



These 7 tips have helped many organizations improve their international training.

The benefits can be diverse, and using these techniques has produced:

- Higher productivity & reduced attrition.
- Better efficiency across global branches.
- Increased acceptance of corporate messaging & goals.

You can enjoy the same successes too!

Keep in mind that the ultimate goal of accommodating multicultural audiences will, in turn, improve the success of your programs. If some content cannot be adapted easily, we encourage you to hold off on those virtual trainings until the material can be modified to meet learners' needs.

Leave no learner behind!



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These methods have been practiced and perfected over the years by MeetingOne's partner, Virtual Gurus - a company set on making the best virtual classroom possible.



Learn more from the experts at Virtual Gurus!

Learn More

If you're looking to deliver successful online trainings to multicultural audiences, our expert team can help you every step of the way!

Download the eBook:
Turning Classroom Trainers into Online Facilitators



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