

# Preparing to Teach During Inclement Weather



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# Introduction

During times of extreme weather, the University may decide to transition classes to a remote format. While the university teaching community has a strong grasp of a variety of teaching modalities from previous COVID-prompted transitions to online, hybrid, and flipped teaching modalities, we have prepared this document as supplemental guidance to ensure this brief shift to remote instruction remains as smooth and effective as possible for faculty members and students alike.

Remember to refer to the University of Miami's [Emergency Preparedness website](#) as well as the UM Emergency Management social media accounts [www.facebook.com/UMiamiENN](https://www.facebook.com/UMiamiENN) and [www.twitter.com/UMiamiENN](https://www.twitter.com/UMiamiENN) for important updates and additional information.

## What should I do to prepare for a loss of power or Internet connectivity?

With inclement weather, there is a chance the area can lose power or Internet connectivity for a period of time (e.g. several days or weeks). It is important to prepare for this scenario and prepare an academic continuity plan for your courses. Here are some suggestions on how to prepare for a loss of power.

- Review [UM's Emergency Preparedness](#) website to receive the latest updates and guides on what to do before, during, and after an emergency.
- Ensure you and your students are able to receive notifications from [UM's Emergency Notification Network](#).
- Communicate with your students on next steps or how they should prepare. You may wish to send an e-mail or post a [Blackboard announcement](#).
- Make sure you and your students download any necessary materials from your course on Blackboard to your personal device (e.g. slides, gradebook, recorded lectures, etc.)
  - If needed, you can [download your Blackboard Grade Center](#) to your computer for reference.
- Download [the Blackboard app](#) on your mobile device, and encourage your students to do the same.
  - With the Blackboard app, students can:
    - View updates to your courses and content
    - Get notifications on course events and changes
    - Take assignments and tests
    - View grades for courses, assignments and tests
  - Instructors can:
    - Manage course content and assessments
    - Get alerts on submissions ready for grading
    - Mark assignments
    - Send course announcements

- Create discussion boards threads and reply to comments
- Review your syllabus and reschedule major exams and assessments to a later date if possible.
- If you are using any Google Suite products, [you and students can access them offline](#).
- Be mindful that not all areas regain power at the same time, therefore not all of your students may have equal access to the Internet. It is recommended to remain flexible and adaptable to students and provide additional support if necessary.

## How do I share materials with students (e.g. course syllabus, presentation slides)?

Your course content including the syllabus and presentations can be shared with your students at any time via the Blackboard Learning Management System.

- [Add your syllabus](#) on Blackboard through the Course Content page if you have not already. You can browse for your syllabus files in cloud storage or on your computer and add them or use the syllabus builder to create your own in a modular format.
- [Add content](#) such as online lectures, presentations, multimedia, tests, assignments, and links to websites and social media.
- [Create containers](#) such as folders or modules to present the content in an organized and engaging way.

## Should I record my class sessions?

It is recommended to record your class sessions. Since some students may not be able to travel to campus due to inclement weather, the recordings will cover important topics (class expectations, policies, and introductions) that students can refer to throughout the duration of the course.

- If you intend to record a class session, let all the students know at the beginning of class. Although synchronous meetings in Zoom can be recorded for future reference, session recordings may constitute protected educational records per FERPA. For more information, refer to [Virtual and Other Classroom Recording and Student Privacy \(FERPA\)](#).
- Session recordings can easily be shared with students in Blackboard.
- If you are teaching a class that deals with sensitive topics, and the possibility exists that students will be uncomfortable sharing their perspectives because of the session recording, disable recording. While recording is helpful for students, don't sacrifice the learning experience for the sake of the recording.

# How do I ensure students feel involved and engaged in the classroom online?

In a remote environment, students can sometimes feel isolated and less involved, so it's important to create opportunities for students to engage with one another.

- Consider building time for students to check in with you and their peers. You can set up break-out rooms for students to connect and discuss course content or develop opportunities for reflection at the end of class. Additionally, some faculty members build time before class for students to chat and socialize on Zoom.
- Invite students to engage in class by using built-in Zoom tools such as the [“raise hand” feature](#), [nonverbal feedback](#), or [polling](#).
- Remember that if a student's webcam is disabled, that doesn't always mean they're not paying attention. Some students might have an unstable internet connection and may have disabled their cameras to optimize limited bandwidth. Authentic participation is a better indication of engagement than having a webcam on.
- At the end of class, confirm that the session is over and that students can exit the Zoom session. Before ending the session, check to see if any students want to stay after class to ask any questions (and if so, turn off recording).

# How do I encourage collaboration and teams among all the students in class?

Collaborative learning opportunities, or assignments where students work in groups toward a common goal, can lead to greater academic achievement and more positive attitudes toward learning, and teaching remotely creates unique challenges and opportunities for assigning group work.

- Instructors can create student groups using the [Blackboard Groups](#) tool. This is an excellent strategy for semester-long formal group projects or for large-enrollment courses that want to build community through smaller groups. Groups in Blackboard have access to their own discussion board and other tools.
- For informal group work, faculty can use Zoom [Breakout Rooms](#) to facilitate activities such as think-pair-share, jigsaw, or other discussion-based interactions.
- Students can use Blackboard or Google Docs to work asynchronously (not at the same time), or their own Zoom rooms to hold live meetings outside of (or even during) class time. Students may also share work digitally or collaboratively take notes using specific tools (see Collaborative Tools in the Appendix).

## How can I share board work or handwriting?

If you rely heavily on writing out work on the board while teaching (math or science problems, sentence diagramming, etc.), you can use the following [collaborative digital whiteboards](#):

- You can use the [whiteboard](#) or [annotation tools](#) in Zoom to share handwritten content for remote teaching and learning.
- [Google JamBoard](#) is another option that enables students and instructors to write, sketch, and share resources on an interactive canvas in real-time and asynchronously.
- For more information about sharing written content, refer to the guide on how to [demonstrate math, diagrams, and graphs](#) in a remote environment.

## How do I accommodate students with disabilities?

Some students may require accommodations to tests or other aspects of their remote learning experience because of a documented disability, such as extended time on tests and quizzes.

- If you have any students who require accommodations in your course, you are encouraged to work with the Office of Disability Services ([disabilityservices@miami.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@miami.edu)) in the [Camner Center](#) to ensure that they are engaging in equitable learning opportunities.
- Disability Services has issued [specific guidance](#) to University of Miami faculty members regarding the accommodation request process, the types of accommodations, and engaging in communicating with students regarding their accommodations.
- To share transcripts on recorded lectures, [Zoom Cloud Recordings](#) provide machine-generated audio transcripts, and [live transcripts](#) on a video or audio recording. [Google Slides](#) and [PowerPoint](#) presentations also have real-time captioning features you may use in a screencast or synchronous video lecture.
- As you prepare online content for students to engage with, guides like [EDUCAUSE's ADA Compliance for Online Course Design](#), or [CAST's Universal Design for Learning](#) share principles and practices to ensure inclusive and equitable course design.
- [Blackboard Ally](#) is a feature in Blackboard that creates alternative and accessible files from the original documents in your course (e.g., readable text for screen readers, pictures with captions, and easy-to-navigate content). Contact the [learningplatforms@miami.edu](mailto:learningplatforms@miami.edu) to enable Blackboard Ally in your course.

## How do I (and my students) find additional support?

For additional support, these teams are ready to help you or your students:

- The University of Miami [Office of Emergency Management](#) provides the latest updates, information, and guidance related to major emergencies and disasters.
- The [Learning Platforms Team](#) supports faculty with the use of Blackboard, and a variety of teaching-related technologies.

- [University of Miami Information Technology](#) (UMIT) supports faculty with the use of Zoom and any hardware that is used in the classroom to support teaching and learning.
- [Student Technology Help Desk](#) (STHD) supports student technology needs.
- You may need to check in with the following student support services on whether or not they will be available/remote during inclement weather.
  - The [Camner Center for Academic Resources](#) provides online tutoring support to students' academic achievement.
  - The [Writing Center](#) provides online help to students working on papers for a course, theses and dissertations, personal statements, business letters and resumes, grant proposals, articles for publication, and personal writing projects.
  - The [Math Lab](#) provides specialized online math tutoring to any student enrolled in an undergraduate math course.
  - The [Modern Languages Lab](#) supports undergraduate students with online help for assignments and essay projects from courses in Spanish, French, Portuguese, Arabic, and Chinese.

## Appendix: Technical Guides

This appendix includes some helpful technical guides to accompany the teaching advice provided in the previous sections.

### Zoom

University of Miami faculty members have access to multiple video conferencing platforms that can be used in the course. [Zoom](#) is the recommended tool for teaching purposes, which features screen sharing, chat, breakout rooms, annotation, file sharing, and more. University of Miami Information Technology continually updates resources on using Zoom on [their service page](#). The following are highlighted resources for teaching using Zoom.

### Getting Started

To activate your Zoom account, sign in to [zoom.miami.edu](https://zoom.miami.edu) using your CaneID and password. You will also need to download the Zoom Desktop client onto your device by visiting [zoom.us/download](https://zoom.us/download). For a comprehensive tutorial engage with the tip sheets below.

- [Get Started with Zoom at the U](#)
- [Zoom Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Join a Zoom Meeting](#)

### Creating a Remote Class Session

You can schedule all upcoming classroom sessions within Blackboard. If you create a meeting with Zoom within the desktop app, you can also use Blackboard to post the link so that it is available for all students.

- [Learn How to Use Zoom in Blackboard](#)
- [Learning Platforms Team: Zoom Playlist](#)
  - [Create a Zoom Meeting Link](#)
  - [Create Recurring Zoom Class Sessions](#)

## Recording a Session

Zoom allows you to record all sessions and download them either on a computer or through the cloud. You can also pre-record lectures for students to watch at their own pace. Recordings may take up to 24 hours to process. Although synchronous meetings in Zoom can be recorded for future reference, session recordings may constitute protected educational records per FERPA. For more information, refer to [Virtual and Other Classroom Recording and Student Privacy \(FERPA\)](#).

- [Zoom Recording](#)
  - [Recording a Meeting Locally](#)
  - [Recording a Meeting to the Cloud](#)
- [Automatically Transcribe Cloud Recordings](#)

## In-Meeting Video Conferencing Guidance

Once you have launched your Zoom session, you can leverage various features to facilitate learning for your remote students. You may wish to also inform students how you will share information through Zoom.

- [Video Conferencing Tips and Suggestions for Faculty](#)
- [Resource Guide: Zoom Meetings](#)
- [Recommendations for Using Live Captioning in Zoom](#)
- [Student Tips for Participating in Zoom](#)

## Screen File Share

During a class session, you can use Zoom to share content with your remote students. **Keep in mind that your other tabs, bookmarks, or applications not related to your presentation might serve as a distraction—or expose personal materials to students that you'd rather them not see.**

- [Zoom Screen Share](#)

## Chat

You can use the chat function in Zoom to allow students to ask questions in real-time during class. You can also download the chat and review unanswered questions at a later time or send them to students as notes.

- [Zoom Chat](#)

## Polling

You can use the polling features to ask questions, start classroom discussions, assess student knowledge, or allow for anonymous feedback. You can also set up polls prior to class start time and also download them to see remote students' responses.

- [Zoom Polls](#)

## Breakout Groups

Breakout groups can be used to foster student-student interaction through discussion, group projects, or review sessions. You can drop in at any point to monitor progress or provide guidance to each group.

- [Zoom Breakout Rooms](#)

## Annotation/Whiteboard

Zoom has basic annotation tools (text box, free form drawings, shapes, and highlighter) that you can use to guide students or explain a concept. Access these tools by selecting the Annotate option when you're sharing your screen. You can also use the Whiteboard feature to have faculty and students annotate on a blank page. This feature allows you to incorporate "board work" that in-person and remote students can see.

- [Zoom Annotation Tools](#)
- [Zoom Whiteboard](#)

## Collaborative Tools

During classroom activities where students work in groups, students can use and work synchronously on online documents, presentations slides, or whiteboards. The following highlighted tools are available to students to login and engage with using the CaneID and password.

### Google Drive Guides

- [Google Drive](#) (Docs/Slides)
- [Google Docs](#)
- [Google Slides](#)
- [Google Jamboard](#)

### Office for the Web

- [Office for the Web](#)
- [Word Online](#)
- [PowerPoint Online](#)
- [Microsoft Whiteboard](#)

# Blackboard

Blackboard Learn, available at [courses.miami.edu](https://courses.miami.edu) is the University of Miami's Learning Management System. Here is where you will be uploading course materials, scheduling Zoom sessions, creating synchronous or asynchronous activities, and communicating with your students. [University of Miami's Learning Platforms Team](#) has a [YouTube channel](#) with multiple quick guides and sessions on using Blackboard Learn for your courses. The following are highlighted resources and tools for teaching using Blackboard.

- [Blackboard's Announcements](#): Send class-wide notifications to students.
- [Blackboard Assignment](#): Collect assignments online.
- [Blackboard Discussion Boards](#): Assign (non)graded or graded discussion forums.
- [Blackboard Users and Groups](#): View the course roster in Blackboard.
  - [Blackboard Group Discussion Boards](#): Create a special group discussion board available only to the members of a course group.
  - [Blackboard Group File Exchange](#): Students can share files with members of their group.
- [Blackboard Groups](#): Create multiple groups at once for projects or semester-long groups for large-enrollment courses.
- [Kaltura Capture](#): Upload or screen-share presentations, audio, or videos and share with your students.
- [VoiceThread](#): Annotate slides with voice, text, audio, or video comments.
- [Blackboard Blogs](#): Assign (non)graded reflected individual, course, or group blogs.
- [Blackboard Tests, Pools, and Survey](#): Create a graded quiz, exam, or a non-graded anonymous survey.
- [Blackboard Ally](#): Ally provides guidance and tips for lasting improvements to your content accessibility. Contact the [learningplatforms@miami.edu](mailto:learningplatforms@miami.edu) to enable Blackboard Ally in your course.

# Checklist to Prepare for Teaching in Inclement Weather Events

## Before Class

- Refer to the University of Miami's [Emergency Preparedness website](#) for important updates and additional information.
- If you haven't already, ensure that your Blackboard course is available to students.
- If necessary, reschedule any exams or major assessments for a later date.
- Schedule your upcoming classroom Zoom sessions within Blackboard.
- Use the Announcements feature on Blackboard to communicate updates to students
- Prepare for possible loss of power by downloading necessary materials from your course as well as downloading the [Blackboard App for Instructors](#).
- Encourage students to download the [Blackboard App for Students](#).
- Optimize the lighting and other room conditions for the Zoom session.

## Starting Class

- Start the class early to ensure everything is working and your camera and microphone are connected.
- After the first few students connect, make sure they can see and hear you.
- If you are recording the class session, remind all students that the session will be recorded before starting to record.

## During Class

- Integrate polls or give students sufficient time to utilize reactions, ask questions in the chat, raise their hand, or be unmuted to ask questions live.
- Incorporate a low-stakes activity, Blackboard discussion, or breakout room related to the course content.

## Ending Class

- Refer students to any materials hosted in Blackboard in preparation for the next session.
- Before ending the Zoom session, check to see if any Zoom students want to stay after class to ask any questions. If so, disable recording.
- Use the Announcements feature on Blackboard for any relevant updates.