

FACILITATING A LANGUAGE TUTORIAL ONLINE

LIVE ONLINE CLASSES



If you have not facilitated an online language tutorial before then **preparation and optimising student interaction are key to success**. The first step is to make yourself familiar with the platform that your institution uses or recommends. However, don't feel pressured to have to use all the functionalities: a simple live tutorial can still be a good interactive tutorial.

PREPARING THE TUTORIAL

Have a **teaching plan** and **objectives** for your online tutorial.

Send **preparation work** to your students and a link to your tutorial with meeting time. Remind your students what equipment they need to attend and participate in a live tutorial.

Make sure you have the right **equipment** and a good connection well before your tutorial starts so that you have time to resolve any technical problems.

Prepare a **welcome screen** to show students that they are in the right place and they know what time you will start. You can encourage students to do their **sound checks** as they are waiting (see Example 1).

BEFORE THE TUTORIAL BEGINS

Log in to your room in **good time** to **upload** your teaching materials, **test your sound**, and try the **functionalities** you intend to use in your tutorial.

As students arrive, **check their sound and microphone**. You can do this by asking them 'what's the weather like with you'/'have you had a nice day so far?'. Or you can ask them if they have done the preparatory work or if they have the right materials in front of them. This encourages students to respond to you so that you know they can hear you and they can speak. Welcome the late comers through the text chat and make sure they can hear you.

Give **relevant instructions** to students who have sound problems if necessary. For late comers, do this preferably via the chat to avoid disrupting the tutorial. It may be that you need to speak to a student in a separate room to take them through the issue or send them to the IT services if the issue cannot be resolved, while the other students get on with a simple introductory activity.

Use a visual to **outline** what you are going to do in the tutorial, ask students if they wish to cover something that is not on your list (see Example 2).

Think about **recording** the tutorial (and follow appropriate protocol, regarding asking students' permission, if necessary).

DURING THE TUTORIAL

Always begin your tutorial with a **warm-up** activity.

Prepare short, task-based, problem-solving types of activities which are varied and which can lead to a bigger activity at the end of the tutorial.

Make sure your activities are designed so that students can get engaged. Focus on interactive activities with the board (gap fill, drag and drop, write, etc.), with you (questions and answers, etc.), with fellow students (questions and answers, role-plays, cards with missing information, etc.) but also allow for time for individual reflection and personal work.

For activities developing speaking skills, make sure your visual teaching materials include prompts (see Examples 3 and 4). Send materials via email before the tutorial, if necessary.

In language tutorials, the emphasis is on practising **speaking** skills but do not hesitate to do **grammar revision, reading** or **writing** activities if relevant to the objectives of the tutorial.

Make sure your **instructions are clear** and that students understand what they have to do. It can be helpful to give task instructions **orally** as well as to write on a slide in advance, so that students don't forget what you've said (see below, Example 5).

Encourage students to communicate with you regularly through **emoticons and text chat** so that you know they are engaged during the tutorial: this is one way to make up for the loss of physical cues. Be aware, too, that **silences** can be more common when teaching online and do not necessarily mean that students are not engaged - sometimes they just need more time to process instructions and questions.

Practise **error correction** the same way as you would face-to-face: choose a technique and let students know how you will proceed.

During the tutorial, allow for **discussions** and **plenaries**. Choose your preferred method and let students know how they should take turn to speak (raise hand, etc.).

If you deliver a **lecture** type of tutorial, set students a task as you present your content so that they **remain active** while you speak.

Tip: Be aware that not all students will feel comfortable participating orally. If you can, work in **small groups or pairs**. This can encourage peer learning as students with better speaking skills or more confidence can help their peers without the pressure of a large group. You may even find it useful to allocate a group leader to each group who will encourage their peers to take part. In order to work in smaller groups you may need to use **'break out rooms'**, which you will need to familiarise yourself with in advance. It is useful to have visuals for break-out rooms too (see Examples 6, 7 and 8).

END OF TUTORIAL

Recap what you have covered and ask students if they have any **questions**.

Inform your students of the **next meeting time** and give them the **preparation** work for next tutorial.

Encourage students to **communicate** with you and with each other in between tutorials, using the course forum preferably, or by email.

If possible, allow some time at the end for students to **reflect** on their learning (i.e. completing a learning log or thinking about: was the tutorial useful? what have I learned? Was I sufficiently prepared? What will I do differently for next tutorial/during next tutorial?). They can also give **feedback** on the tutorial: what worked well/not so well for them and what would they like to focus on in the next tutorial.

EXAMPLE SLIDES FOR TUTORIALS

If you have not used slides for teaching before, the key is to keep them simple until you build up your knowledge of their capabilities. These slides have been created using PowerPoint, but there are also other options for creating slides.

All the slides below are examples from tutorial materials © The Open University.

Example 1: Here is an example of a welcome screen for a beginner's German tutorial, with suggestions for what you can include:

Welcome greeting

If possible, you can also insert a photo to represent the culture of the language you are teaching (i.e. a German pretzel if teaching food in German)



Encourage students to do a sound check

You could also ask a 'warm-up' question to get students thinking about the tutorial topic

Give day and time that the tutorial will begin (perhaps using the target language).

Example 1

Example 2: Below is an example of a plan for a first tutorial in beginners level German, practising speaking. Please note that in the first tutorial(s) you may find it useful to make time to go over the basics of the online learning platform that you are using.

Tutorial Plan

- Using our online room
- Saying hello and saying your name
- Saying where you live
- German towns
- Interviewing each other and exchanging information
- Your questions – anything you would like to cover?

Example 2

Example 3: illustrates an example of the sort of prompts you may wish to give for a pair of students to engage in a fairly sophisticated dialogue. Clues and prompts will help students maintain the dialogue going.

Chronodrive:
vous faites vos courses en ligne
vous venez les chercher au
magasin une heure plus tard

Conversation téléphonique

Client/e:

- commande ce matin à 8h en ligne
- confirmation 8h04
- il est midi
- attend les courses au magasin depuis 1h
- numéro de commande: chrono010713_8:00
- insatisfaite
- réclame annulation de la commande

Employé/e:

- demande au client/à la cliente de patienter un instant
- demande le numéro de client/e
- demande l'heure de la commande
- problème avec la commande, client/e doit attendre encore

Example 3

Example 4: illustrates an example of the sort of prompts you may wish to give students to engage in debating ideas, practising giving opinions. Prompts giving the language structures they need to use will support students and help them practising the correct structures.

Qu'est-ce que vous pensez de:

- l'homéopathie?
- la réflexologie?
- la sophrologie?
- l'acupuncture?
- l'ostéopathie?
- la phytothérapie?
- du termalisme?

À mon avis, c'est...

Je trouve ça....

J'y crois/ Je n'y crois pas

Je suis d'accord
Je ne suis pas d'accord

Je suis pour/contre

Je pense que c'est...

Giving opinions

Example 4

Example 5: Below is an example of some written instructions which can be given on slides as well as orally. It is also an example of a 'drag and drop' exercise, in which students match up two words. Depending on the platform, the 'drag and drop' can be done in different ways. Students can work in small groups and bring their answers back into the main room, or students can be asked to take it in turn to answer. If 'drag and drop' is not possible, they can write the answers in the chat.

Reflexive verbs


Below are a list of pronouns (in red) and reflexive pronouns (in blue).
Drag the reflexive pronouns up to match the correct pronouns.

ich du er/sie/es wir ihr Sie sie


sich
uns
euch
sich
sich
mich
dich

Example 5

Examples 6 and 7: Here are two examples of activities that can be done in smaller groups, in order to encourage everyone to participate. You should be able to 'monitor' these groups in their rooms and give them guidance and feedback.

 **And now practise this conversation in pairs**

- Guten Abend! (good evening)
- Guten Abend!
- Wie heißen Sie? (what is your name?)
- Ich heiße ... / Mein Name ist ... Und Sie? (my name is...and you?)
- Ich heiße ... Wo wohnen Sie? (my name is...where do you live?)
- Ich wohne in ... Und Sie? (I live in...and you?)
- Ich wohne in ... (I live in...)
- Auf Wiedersehen! (Goodbye!)
- Tschüss! (Bye!)

Keep swapping roles! 

Example 6 and 7

Perfect tense: regular verbs

In small groups, discuss the following questions:

- How do we 'build' the perfect tense?
- Can you think of any example sentences using the perfect tense?
- Try pronouncing these sentences and give each other feedback on intonation and pronunciation.

Example 8: Here is an example of material to practise speaking French at beginners' level. Students can be split in small groups. With the help of a team leader, students in turn ask a question and the rest of the group respond with a tick or a cross, in turn. Students write their name in the blank boxes next to 'Qui joue?' Then each student says a whole sentence to specify when they undertake the activity.

Qui joue ...?					
Quand?					
	✓	✗			
Qui joue... ?					
échecs					
bridge					
instrument de musique					
ordinateur					
Scrabble					
loto					
boules					

Example 8

IMAGE REFERENCES

Examples 1, 2, 5, 6 and 7

The Open University (2018). 'German tutorial slide produced by Kim Richmond'. L193: Rundblick: beginners' German (restricted online access).

Examples 3, 4 and 8

The Open University (2017). 'French tutorial slide'. L112: French Studies 1 (restricted online access).