SFU Faculty of Science
Science in Action: Virtual and Online Programming Best Practices

To help make your virtual and online programming opportunities engaging and safe, we have compiled some recommendations and guidelines that we hope you will find useful as we ride out this pandemic.

We have found that not all events and activities translate well to a virtual format. Some demonstrations do not pack the punch of an in-person demo while some group activities are not as fun to do alone. Keeping these points in mind will ensure that your online event is engaging and educational.

Live online events work well for:

- Guest speakers and presentations with Q&A sessions
- Career or other panel research discussions, special topics, etc.

Static Content works well for:

- Activity Demonstrations
- In-class workshop kits/lessons
- Other instructional content on activities to do at home
- Guest speakers and presentations without Q&A sessions

General Guidelines:

- All presenters must wear appropriate personal protective equipment at all times and should not be left alone with minors, even virtually i.e. school hosts/teachers are expected to stay present with students during any live online event.
- For demonstrations, a disclaimer such as “Ask an adult for help and permission if you’d like to try this at home” should be added.
- Ensure content aligns with the SFU Communications Guidelines. Our Communications team is available to help with logos, messaging, proofreading, etc.
- All presenters and volunteers must wear appropriate attire (SFU branded preferred) and maintain a neutral disposition. Remarks that are defamatory, political, religious, controversial or age inappropriate are not acceptable.
- All participating presenters and volunteers should introduce themselves as part of SFU’s Science in Action program.
- Organizers and presenters should contact sfuscienceoutreach@sfu.ca for promotional and logistical support.

Live online events are a great way to offer a similar level of interactivity for participants as an in-person event. In this style of event, participants interact with the host as they are presenting,
allowing for discussions and questions throughout. Challenges associated with live online events include ensuring the online safety of youth participants and the technical support required to run an event, in addition to some of the same unpredictability that comes with in-person activities.

**Live events:**

- **SFU** has an enterprise Zoom account that you can use. Please contact sfusscienceoutreach@sfu.ca for assistance in setting up a Zoom meeting for your event.
- **SIA** will ensure the settings are as secure as possible for you and your specific participants/target audience (including appropriate settings for sharing audio, video and chat comments).
- We suggest ensuring one adult (who is not hosting/presenting) moderate attendance, chat boxes and assists with muting/unmuting as needed.
- Test the platform you are using (if setting up with Zoom, a short training call can be arranged) with your co-hosts/moderators and familiarize your team with all settings and functions.
- When working with youth, begin every live session with an online safety check (audio/video quality, participant names, safety reminders, materials, PPE, adult supervision)
- School participants must have an SFU Science Outreach Project Agreement signed by their school host/teacher in order to participate in the event.
- Remind students not to share personal information beyond their first name (in Zoom the host can rename a participant to remove last name if needed). This includes their school, address, email address, phone number, or other personal information.
- Events cannot be recorded unless there is a written recording consent between SFU and the school/host and previous arrangements have been made. Following are some reminders if such recording consent is secured:
  - Ensure all participants (including guest speakers) know in advance that it will be recorded (with a reminder at the start of the session) and ensure individual videos remain off.
  - The host should be the only one to record the video and it must be saved to a local computer (not the Zoom server).
  - Check the video carefully to ensure no personal information was accidentally disclosed before sharing more broadly.
- If participating in an event managed by another organization (for example, a community group has requested you to join their online meeting), ensure the educator of the group is always in attendance. Defer to the educator to manage the behaviour and expectations of the participants (similar to an in-class workshop).
Static Online Content

An option for providing virtual engagement with fewer concerns about online safety for youth is to create static content online. This includes pre-recorded videos, photo tutorials/walk-throughs, or downloadable educational materials.

When creating static content (in addition to the general guidelines):

- Ensure content includes background information and a clear explanation of what you are presenting.
- Consider who your intended audience is (educators, parents, or direct to youth) and where you plan to share your content (such as your local outreach website or social media platforms).
- Choose a platform that is appropriate for your audience and can track viewership (i.e. Instagram or YouTube) so that we can more easily understand its impact.
- Static online content should be age appropriate, household friendly, delivered with sufficient adult supervision, safe for minors to do from home with proper PPE on hand, and with identified risks explained and understood.