

## Teaching Online- Suggested Guidance

As a result of COVID-19 many schools and teachers have had to move their work online. Here are some suggestions for those who have, or are thinking about teaching online. This information has been drawn from various sources including RIAM, Musicians Union, and ISM.

### Preparation- equipment

Phones and tablets are likely to be limited to their built-in cameras and microphones, which can be basic. A laptop or desktop PC or Mac may be preferable to allow you to use an ethernet cable, which can offer a more stable internet connection than WiFi. Laptops often have a mic and camera built in, while desktop users may need buy these additionally. A larger screen or monitor is of benefit when teaching.

Experiment with positioning your microphone and speakers (if you have independent versions), and input levels to avoid feedback. There are two audio settings to adjust – your computer’s basic input level and the app’s own settings.

Headphones will eliminate feedback, but they may affect how you hear your own instrument- try to use Bluetooth to avoid being tethered by a cable.

You can improve the quality for both you and student if you can make your own set-up as stable as possible. Your students may only have access to a phone on WiFi.

If you don’t have access to a sophisticated set-up, use whatever you can. WhatsApp video, FaceTime for example.

### Video- software

[Zoom](#) is a widely used software that offers a good picture and sound. Its settings allow you to suppress persistent and intermittent background noise and cancel echoes. You may need to experiment with its advanced settings to prevent it trying to suppress non-speaking noises, including musical instruments. Like Skype, its advanced settings are reduced on tablets and phones, so a desktop or laptop may give better results.

[Skype](#) has been a tried-and-tested option for online teaching for many years, and like Zoom offers good sound and picture. It also gives you the ability to blur the picture background, which could be helpful for safeguarding purposes (see below), although this may also blur some detail on your instrument.

[WhatsApp video](#) and [Facebook Messenger](#) offer a more basic functionality. Other apps that you may wish to explore include [Microsoft Teams](#), [Adobe Connect](#), [Discord](#), [Google’s Hangout and Duo apps](#), [Slack](#), and [Viber](#). Over time your preference will become clear, informed by sound and picture quality, ease of use and reliability.

## The Lesson

Take 15 minutes before the first online lesson with each student to test your set-up. Ask the student to play, and experiment with the sound levels for the best result. A tech-savvy parent can help if needed.

After that first lesson, still allow time before each subsequent lesson for any necessary soundchecks or connection fixes. This extra time will also stop you feeling rushed if there is a technical glitch mid-lesson. For this reason, avoid teaching students back to back if possible.

Both parties need copies of the music. Many publishers offer PDF downloads so that scores can be read on a tablet while you teach via a desktop or laptop. Make notes as you teach so that you can email these to the student after the lesson.

Avoid using the messaging function on your chosen app for sharing lesson notes, as this could normalise social media messaging between teacher and pupil, which should be avoided for safeguarding reasons. Similarly, switch off or mute notifications on all devices being used for the duration of the lesson.

Send lesson reminders via email or through an integrated lesson management software if you use one. If online lessons are new for your students and everyone is at home and distracted, it might be easier than normal for them to forget their lesson times.

At the end of the lesson it is fine to chat to parents and siblings within good safeguarding practice. Online lessons may be a new way of working for you and your students, but they can still be a human experience.

If you are an employed teacher working for a school or music education hub, decisions about software and lesson management may be made for you. It is important that employed teachers follow any guidance given by their employers. If employed teachers are asked to teach online without being given any guidance, they should urgently request it.

### Privacy and security guidance whilst using Zoom

Zoom is a popular platform used to host meetings and online instrumental lessons and has increased in popularity during the pandemic. Unfortunately there have been some reports of "Zoombombing" - when unsolicited and inappropriate content is shared during the call. This can be avoided by ensuring that the following settings are used:

- Use a unique ID – you can do this by selecting generate ID automatically
- Use a password – and share this privately with the students
- Create a waiting room – this allows the host to choose who to let in
- Turn off screen sharing – this is in advanced sharing settings
- Lock your zoom meeting once it's started – you can find this in participants > more > lock meeting
- Turn off DMs (Direct Messages) – admin > account settings > disable private chat. Individuals can also personally block any uninvited attendees and can send the moderator names for removal

- Block gifs and file-sharing – to disable go to admin > IM management > IM settings

If someone joins the zoom who was not invited:

- Remove them from the call immediately
- If you can, keep a record of what the invited person wrote or did before you removed them as this can help Zoom deal with future issues For video tutorials on using zoom please visit their website
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### **Accessibility in video conferencing and remote meetings**

Drake Music have issued guidance about how you can improve the accessibility of your video conferencing, online meetings and online teaching. [Read Drake Music's advice on their website.](#)

## **Safeguarding for music teachers giving lessons remotely**

Many music teachers have successfully used Skype, FaceTime, Zoom and other audio-visual software to give music lessons for several years.

Before and during lessons

- **Ideally set up a separate Zoom (or equivalent) account for your online teaching.** Keep it separate from your personal online profiles. Make sure you use an appropriate image for your profile picture, and do not share any personal information about yourself eg personal telephone number, email accounts, Facebook and other social media links.
- **Discuss the offer to teach online with the parents** or guardians of pupils under the age of 18. You should also discuss this with your adult clients as online lessons may represent a change to your current contractual provisions.
- **Use the parents' or guardians' own account if possible** rather than a child's, to deliver lessons. Alternatively, ask them to set one up in their name and under their control.
- **Set out a clear policy in writing:** tell people that your Skype (or equivalent) account will be used exclusively for the purpose of lessons and only during music lessons.
- **Get the agreement of the parents or guardians for teaching online in writing.** Consider drawing up a simple agreement to cover online teaching.
- **Test your set-up before you go live:** are the camera and microphone working properly? Is the camera in the correct position for optimum teaching? Make sure you are working against a neutral background.

- **Be business-like when giving lessons:** always present yourself as professionally as you would if you were giving a face-to-face lesson, in dress and in manner: remember that while social media applications can encourage informality, you need to observe your usual high professional standards at times.
- **The pupil must take lessons in a room with an open door** and parents/guardians must provide that one of them or for a trusted adult shall be in the same premises as the pupil while the lesson takes place.
- **Set standards for your pupils and their parents or guardians:** pupils are expected to dress and behave appropriately. If there is inappropriate attire, you should explain that you are going to terminate the lesson and give the reason for doing so. The lesson can resume when the pupil is suitably attired. You should also explain that you will suspend a lesson if any of the provisions of your policy are not complied with. You should also state that pupils should not send any material sent to you by whatever platform. Only parents of the children you teach are permitted to send anything to you, and it must strictly related or connected to the provision of music lessons.