Star Academics

Adobe Connect

Student Tutorial

2011–2012
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Welcome:

Biola Youth Academics is pleased to offer the latest in audio-conferencing technology to enhance the quality of your online academic experience. Online students will have the opportunity to interact "live" with their instructors and peers and experience some of the benefits of a classroom-like setting in their own home.

Discussions occur in an instructor-moderated audio class. Biola Youth Academics offers these classes using Adobe’s Connect software, an industry leader in online conferencing.

Please take a few moments to review the system requirements and the following tutorial to familiarize yourself with the classroom atmosphere.

System Requirements:

Hardware

- A unique computer for each student enrolled in online classes
- Windows running XP, Vista, or higher; or Macintosh running OS X 10.5 or higher
- Computer-compatible microphone and headphones (not computer speakers) OR
- Headset with built-in microphone

Software

- Adobe Flash Player
- Adobe Acrobat Reader
- Mozilla Firefox, Google Chrome, or Safari

Network

- DSL, Cable, or FiOS Internet Connection
- A parent e-mail account
Logging in:

Before you begin, take a quick moment to ensure that everything is plugged in and turned on properly (i.e. internet, speakers, microphone, etc.).

You will receive an invitation email with a link to your class. **Click** the link or copy and paste the link into your internet browser. It might be a good idea to add this page to your bookmark/favorites, but also save the email.

Log-in screen:

Your Login is your Biola ID, and your password should have been emailed to you. Enter your login and password as directed.

**Click** [Enter Room]
If your ID and password are properly entered, you will see a temporary screen that indicates Connect is loading. On your first login, you may be asked to install Adobe plug-ins on your computer. Simply install the recommended components.

A new window will open, taking you to the classroom, which will look something like this:

The various boxes are called “pods.” The arrangement of the pods and what each one will be used for specifically will be determined by your instructor. The following is a description of some of the standard pods and how to use them.
Camera and Voice:

From this menu at the top of the page you will activate your microphone (Biola Youth Academics does not use cameras at this time). **Click** the second button from the left containing the icon of a microphone. You will be presented with the following prompt:

![Macromedia Flash Player Settings](image)

**Click** [Allow]

The Microphone icon will then turn green, letting you know it is working.

![Microphone icon turned green](image)

As long as this icon is green, you will be able to talk. If for any reason you do not want to transmit audio, simply click the microphone icon again, and it will turn off the audio from your mic into the classroom. **NOTE:** If you encounter problems with feedback, please only leave the microphone on when reading from a longer passage or when giving a class presentation.

You will notice that when you talk a flashing microphone appears by your name when you speak. This will give indication that the class is receiving your audio, and if you are too soft or too loud.

*Helpful hint:* Talk freely and clearly, with your microphone a consistent distance from your mouth. (If you are too close or your microphone does not have a windscreen, it may be difficult to hear you clearly.)
Chat:

Many of you will be familiar with the basics of chat as it is similar to programs like AIM, MSN Messenger, and Google Talk. Simply click in the type area. Type, and then hit Enter or click the speech bubble button. Then your message will appear and be visible to the class.

NOTE: The chat feature should only be used to clarify what was, to indicate problems with your mic or audio, or as otherwise directed by your instructor. Please do not use the chat pod to conduct ongoing side conversations as this is distracting to the main audio conversation.

You may send a private message to your instructor by clicking the list icon on the upper right, clicking “Start Chat With,” and selecting your instructor’s name from the list. NOTE: Please get your instructor’s permission before using the private message feature to have side conversations with other class members.

Attendee List:

This pod displays a list of all those currently attending the class session and their status. Your instructor is the “Host” of the classroom and all students are “Presenters.” If any guests enter the room they will be “Participants,” unless promoted to Presenter by the Host.
Click the last button on the menu bar to reveal a dropdown menu by which you may place one of the listed icons next to your name on the Attendee List. This is a quick way to communicate with your instructor and the class. Your instructor may give more specific instructions on how your class will use these icons. Click “Clear My Status” to remove the icon.

Notes:

Think of this pod as the classroom blackboard. Once again, it will be up to your instructor’s discretion as to the use of this pod, but generally, these are used to write notes, questions, page numbers, etc.

To use, simply click in the Note Pod writing area and start typing. If more than one person attempts to type or click in this area at the same time, the cursor will jump around and it will be difficult to write. Thus, if your instructor or another student is typing in a Note Pod, avoid clicking or typing there until they are finished.
**Whiteboard:**

Your instructor may choose to open a whiteboard for diagramming, drawing, or other purposes.

This pod functions similar to Microsoft Paint style programs, allowing you to draw, create shapes or type. Use the menu on the top to choose your writing utensil.

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**Poll:**

This pod enables students to vote or answer a multiple-choice question that the instructor proposes.

Simply **click** next to the answer you choose and
your vote will be added to the tally.

**Status Indicator:**

This little light in the upper right-hand corner of your screen gives indication of your current connection speed. Green is good. Orange is OK. Red means you are lagging behind the class.

You are now familiar with the major pods that make up the Connect classroom. Soon you will feel quite comfortable with these components. If ever you have any questions, please feel free to ask your instructor. The next section will introduce some common difficulties and some helpful hints to ensure a smooth experience.

**Troubleshooting:**

**Audio**

Biola Youth Academics encourages students to use a headset with a built-in microphone and earphones. This serves to maintain a consistent distance between the microphone and the student's mouth and helps to eliminate background noise—both for the student and for the class listening to the student. Adequate headsets are relatively inexpensive.

If you are not hearing anything in Connect through your speakers/earphones or the class is not able to hear your voice, try following the steps listed below.

- Ensure that everything is plugged in properly and turned on. It may sound silly, but it happens. Some headsets/microphones/speakers have mute buttons; make sure the one on your device is not on. Also, check to make sure your computer's sound is on as well.
• Check your microphone or speakers in other programs (i.e. play some music).

• Run the Audio Setup Wizard in Connect.

From the [Meeting] tab on the Toolbar, click on [Audio Setup Wizard…].

Simply follow the prompts on the screen to setup your speakers and microphone.

This is also the first place to go if your class indicates that you are too loud or too quiet.

• If problems persist, try restarting Connect (closing the program and logging in again) or restarting your computer.

• If problems still persist, there is likely a problem with your microphone or speakers.

**Sluggishness**

Connect uses a lot of your computer’s power (memory, processing abilities, etc.), so it is best not to have other applications running while in the classroom as this will slow down your experience (plus, other applications can be rather distracting when attempting to follow a discussion 😊). It will probably not affect your computer if you have a word processing program open to take or review notes while in class, but if you are in class, taking notes, playing solitaire, instant messaging your friends, playing a CD, etc., your computer is likely to freeze.

Another cause of sluggishness is the unpredictable nature of the internet. Sometimes the internet just has a bad day. This could be due to anything from snowstorms, to power outages, to too many people in your neighborhood using the internet.

If the classroom is running especially slow for you, try the following:
• Check to ensure you are connected to the internet properly. Try loading a few web pages (if other web pages have trouble loading, the issue is likely with your computer or internet service).
• Let your instructor know you are having connection issues and they can change the connection speed of the classroom if needed.
• If problems persist, try restarting Connect (closing the program and logging in again) or restarting your computer.
• If problems still persist, it could just be poor internet performance. If it is so bad that you cannot follow the discussion, let your instructor know (by instant message in Connect or by email), and they can record the session for you.
• If this sluggishness is a consistent issue, contact your internet service provider to ensure that you are receiving the proper bandwidth.

Recordings:
If you miss a discussion, for technical or other reasons, your instructor might give you the option to make up the missed discussion by viewing a recording of the session. If you know you will be absent and wish to make up a session in this way, please contact your instructor ahead of time so they will know to record the session.

After the session, your instructor will email a URL to you by which you can access the recording. First, log in to your Connect account online. Then double click the URL, or copy and paste the link into your internet browser. A Connect session should automatically load and begin. If not, find the recording from the meetings lists. You will then be able to watch and listen to the recorded session unfold just as it occurred. There is an option to pause and resume playback, but you should plan on viewing the session fully without any interruptions.

Conclusion:
This tutorial has introduced some of the key components of Adobe Connect that Biola Youth Academics students will use. In our experience with this online conferencing program, we have found that it does not take very long for most students to feel completely comfortable using all the necessary features. In fact, after a few weeks, you may even forget that you are discussing and sharing ideas with other students across the country and even across the world! One thing to keep in mind, to alleviate unnecessary stress, is that we at Biola Youth Academics fully understand that sometimes technology can be a little intimidating and occasionally a bit fickle. As long as we all are patient and flexible, a smooth classroom experience will be had by all.
Appendix – Uploading Content:

Some classes may require students give presentations as part of their class requirements. Many students choose to create PowerPoint slideshows to accompany their presentations. This is especially helpful (and easy) for online classes. The following describes how to upload and share a PowerPoint slideshow on Connect.

Your instructor will configure your classroom to include a Share Pod. Click the arrow on the right of Share My Screen and click Share Document.

A dialog box will open, then click Browse My Computer on the bottom. Find your file, double click or single click and click [Open].

Your slideshow will upload from your computer and will soon be ready to view (larger files obviously take more time to upload).

NOTE: Please arrange with your instructor to arrive in the Connect classroom 10 to 15 minutes before class begins on the day of your presentation. Be sure to preload and test your PowerPoint presentation before class begins.

Helpful Hints: Large files tend to slow the Connect classroom down. PowerPoint slideshows with many large pictures, graphics, animations, or audio clips tend to diminish the performance of the classroom. Thus, try to keep your slideshows simple. Smaller file sized pictures and simple text can be very effective to aid in your presentation.

Also, be aware that not all font styles are supported when Connect displays PowerPoint. Ornate fonts, such as Old English, will be converted to a simpler one such as Arial. You may want to do a trial run of your slideshow prior to your presentation day; coordinate this with your instructor.

Finally, remember to turn on your microphone for the classroom when presenting.