

USGS Virtual Classroom - What Remote Students Need to Know

Attending a live, virtual class, broadcast from the USGS National Training Center (NTC) extends the reach of your learning. As you know, avoiding travel also has its advantages. As a USGS employee, you have taken multiple classes in the classroom setting and your learning skills are just as important in the virtual classroom. There are a few significant differences for virtual class participants and they are best handled with a bit of advance planning. The information in this document is provided to identify those differences, allowing you to maximize your learning.

What is a Live Virtual Classroom? Attending a class virtually, as it's being taught from the USGS NTC in Denver, CO. provides the same access to learning as for those sitting in the classroom. As a virtual participant, you will see/hear the instructors, presentation slides and classroom questions. Although the Instructors cannot see you, they can respond to your questions via chat or conference phone. You will also have the opportunity to work on any classroom exercises. The NTC staff will ensure that your experience is as similar as possible to sitting in the actual classroom.

How does it Work? OED uses "USGS WebEx" to live stream courses. Before any online streamed course, OED schedules several testing sessions. Our goal is to familiarize remote students with the online tools and work out any video or audio bugs. The test takes no longer than 10-15 minutes. To access a live course online you simply go to "usgs.webex.com." From the home page you can view the current days schedule. Navigate to your training and click "Join" on the far right. Enter your name and email address, and click "Join." A few plug-ins need to be loaded, so click "yes" to load. Once you have joined the class your name will appear on the far right and the slides will appear on the left. For audio, OED uses "Reston Talk" audio conferencing bridge. This information will be sent to you prior to the training via email and will also be included in the "WebEx" chat window at the bottom right of your screen. You are now ready to take your class!

Responsibilities of Remote Participants: Registration and pre-class preparation are the same for all attendees. If there are hardcopy course materials, NTC staff will ship them to you in advance. If the materials are digital, you will be provided time to download them and print to hardcopy if you wish. OED will provide an "FTP" site. As always, all participants should familiarize themselves with the course outline and materials before the class. It's also important to login at the requested times. We ask that you login 30 minutes before the class is scheduled to start on the first day so we can address any last minute questions. You are highly encouraged to ask questions during the class. You might need to practice a little patience when you ask a question via the chat screen, as that instructor may be simultaneously answering questions from other virtual participants.

If possible, we recommend that you team up with another person from your office to take your class remotely. Also, make sure your supervisor understands the course duration, start/end times and your need to stay on the computer each day while the class is in session. Just so you know, we encourage instructors to call on remote participants by name. Active participation helps keep you engaged and learning!

For multi-day classes, at the end of the first day you will be invited to attend a debriefing with your instructors to provide feedback. This allows instructors to make minor changes, if necessary, for the following class day.

Virtual Participants - What's Needed:

-Computer

-2 GHZ processor speed minimum

-Minimum of 512 kps network connectivity

-Minimum of Windows SP-3 Install (all Windows updates must be current)

-A test of the video stream in advance of the class

-Access to a second computer if your class involves any software instruction

-An informed and supportive supervisor

Technical Assistance: During your class, NTC technical support is available in real time via a provided phone number.

Associated Costs: The advertised class tuition indicated in DOI LEARN applies for all virtual participants.

Your NTC Staff are committed to making your experience in the Virtual Classroom as close to sitting in the actual classroom as possible.

Good Learning! *The NTC Staff*