

COVID-19 Transition to Online: Quick! Bring the Fun!

Cheryl Moore-Beyioku
Indiana University Kokomo
cbeyioku@iu.edu

Abstract: The need to quickly transition from face-to-face teaching using engaging, content-based activities to a new, online platform in just two weeks during the 2019 coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, made it necessary to try to migrate familiar activities that the students enjoyed into a virtual classroom. The activity that proved to be the most successful in maintaining a sense of community, engaging students, and reviewing content was playing Quizlet Live while in Breakout Rooms in Zoom.

Keywords: online teaching, gaming, pandemic, student participation, active learning, learner engagement, collaboration, educational technology, Distance Education.

With the abrupt transition from the traditional, face-to-face format to an online format in the middle of the semester due to the need to social distance to reduce the spread of the 2019 coronavirus disease (COVID-19), students needed a sense of security provided in continuing to follow the course syllabus. They also needed to maintain a sense of community while isolating at home away from their classmates. It was found that a “Low sense of community, which is related to feelings of disconnectedness and isolation, is believed to adversely affect student persistence in online courses” (Rovai, 2003). In addition, these students impacted by the pandemic needed to continue to engage in the course content until the end of the semester since research noted that when students engage in meaningful learning activities, they experience improved student attitudes (Bleske-Rechek, 2002) and performance on examinations (Yoder & Hochevar, 2005).

Transition to Online

Based on those perceived student needs, all of my face-to-face classes continued as synchronous weekly meetings in Zoom (60 to 90 minutes) featuring a brief social-emotional sharing time, then a brief teacher-directed lesson with PowerPoint slides, short videos, Breakout Room discussions, and follow-up activities for points in Canvas. Attendance was no longer tallied for points toward their final grade, but was instead taken in Zoom as an indicator to follow-up on who was struggling with the new online format. For their final projects, instead of doing face-to-face PowerPoint presentations, students were required to insert narrated recordings into their PowerPoint presentations and were given extra credit for presenting them live using Zoom during the synchronous sessions.

Adapting Quizlet Live for Online Instruction

In face-to-face classes before social distancing, to review chapters from the required text for exams, students were given 10 minutes to independently practice concepts that would be on an exam in Quizlet Learn. They would then log in to Quizlet Live to play for 15 minutes in teams. With this activity, the instructor facilitated a collaborative learning experience. Using the course content put into the online program, this popular game supported instruction while helping to build a sense of community as students rearranged their seats to collaborate in competitive, face-to-face teams. Similarly, to engage students in learning and to create a sense of community in online classrooms,

Paloff & Pratt (2007) advocated for intergroup collaboration, such as virtual teams. However, two questions arose. Would the game be as engaging to play online as it is in person? Would the instructor be able to manage Zoom and the game at the same time? Recognizing the need to immediately create a safe yet engaging online learning community outweighed the cost of appearing less than masterful in managing this activity. I will outline a method to bring this familiar, fun activity from the face-to-face class into an online format necessitated by the pandemic.

Before the Online Class

Send an Announcement

If you have asynchronous learning, make an announcement stating the day and time that the class will play Quizlet Live. In one section of my freshman classes, after this announcement was made, there was full attendance for that online session.

Create a Study Set

Create a group of terms with matching definitions with the following steps:

- List terms from your lessons (at least 12 are required to play a game) in Excel or Word with the terms in Column A and their definitions in Column B.
- In your Quizlet Teacher account, go to the *Create* a new Study Set tab, highlight both Excel columns at the same time, and copy and paste all of the terms into the *Import from Word, Excel, Google Docs, etc.* tab.
- Enter a title for your Study Set, then choose a language under the term and definition.
- Select *Create* to save and publish your Study Set.

Create Breakout Rooms

It will save time during the online class to set up the number of Breakout Rooms in Zoom to correspond with the number of Quizlet teams. Usually Quizlet creates teams of approximately four students. When the class size is between 16 to 19 students, Quizlet will likely set up four teams. Therefore, regardless of the class size, it is recommended to have four students per Breakout Room. However, no matter how well you structure your Breakout Rooms, there is always the possibility that Quizlet will set up teams a little differently, and adjustments will need to be made to the Breakout Rooms after students enter the Quizlet teams. Create the Breakout Rooms with the following steps:

- Log in to Zoom, go to the *Meetings* tab, and then go to *Schedule a New Meeting*.
- In organizing the Breakout Rooms, if there are Wednesday and Thursday sections of the same course, the group names can be edited to 'Wednesday 3,' or 'Thursday 5.'
- Have the class email roster ready since students are added to Breakout Rooms according to their email addresses. Up to 200 students can be assigned to up to 50 Breakout Rooms in Zoom.
- In the *Meeting Options* section, select *Breakout Room Pre-Assign*, click *Create Rooms*, and then click on the name of the room to edit the name of the group.

During the Online Class

Log in to Zoom

Load the Zoom site, and then use the following steps to begin class:

- While in Zoom, wait for all the students to arrive. Make sure to note how many students are in attendance that day.
- When all the students are carefully admitted from the *Waiting Room* into your virtual class to avoid unwanted guests, share the Breakout Room list of names.

Log in to Quizlet

Students who use their computers to play Quizlet while in Zoom usually have a better experience than students who use their mobile devices since computers have a greater capacity to switch screens than some mobile devices. Set up Quizlet Live using the following steps:

- Share the Quizlet screen with the class.
- Select the *Study Set*. Select the *Live* tab to the left of the screen, and then click *Create Game*.
- You have a choice as to the type of game you would like your class to play, i.e., *Teams* or *Individuals*. At least four students are needed to play in collaborative *Teams*. Your students can also play as *Individuals* where they individually race to be the first person to correctly answer 12 questions in a row, which does not require collaborative Breakout Rooms but needs at least two students to start the game. This is a great option for when you just want a quick game.
- Once the *Team* selection is made, you will then be asked to select whether the *Term* should be the prompt, or if their *Definition* should be the prompt. Based on experience, students prefer to have the *Term* as the prompt. Therefore, select *Term* (usually the choice on the left).
- Quizlet will then automatically assign a six-digit code to your game. Students must go to <https://quizlet.com/live> and enter your code while still in Zoom.

Adjust Breakout Rooms

Wait for all your students in attendance in Zoom to be listed in Quizlet Live before beginning the following steps:

- Click *Start Game*.
- Instead of allowing Quizlet to automatically assign teams, click *Create your own teams*. Students are then prompted to enter their Breakout Room number, which places their name under a Quizlet team with their Breakout Room members, allowing them to verbally collaborate over their responses.
- If the number of spaces on a Quizlet team does not align with the number of students in the corresponding Breakout Room, go back to My Meetings in Zoom and click on the class link to move students to the Breakout Rooms that match their corresponding Quizlet Teams.
- Make sure to click *Save*, and then *Refresh* the page for the changes to immediately take effect.
- Once the names of the students in the Breakout Rooms match the names of the students in the Quizlet Live teams, click *Open Breakout Rooms* in Zoom.

Start Game

During the game, only one student at a time per team will have the correct answer to the question that is presented to the team, creating a blend between collaboration within teams in their Breakout Rooms and competition among teams. The object of the game is to be the first team to correctly answer 12 consecutive questions in the shortest amount of time, which requires speed and accuracy in answering questions since making an error would mean having to go back to a score of zero. Quizlet meets the criteria for a well-designed game to engage and to teach students, according to Gee (2008), by having (a) structured rules, (b) making students think, (c) giving immediate feedback, (d) generalizing knowledge and skills to play in future games, and (e) giving students an opportunity to learn from their peers.

Conclusion

During a time of uncertainty and isolation with the transition to online instruction due to the pandemic, students commented that they had fun reviewing course content in Quizlet Live. Adapting this familiar game for online instruction helped to maintain a sense of community and facilitated active and collaborative learning, as the instructor successfully managed Breakout Rooms in Zoom.

References

- Bleske-Rechek, A. L. (2002). Obedience, conformity, and social roles: Active learning in a large introductory psychology class. *Teaching of Psychology, 28*, 260-262.
doi:10.1207/S15328023TOP2804_05
- Gee, J. P. (2008). Learning and games. In K. Salen (Ed.), *The ecology of games: Connecting youth, games, and learning* (pp. 21-40). The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Series on Digital Media and Learning. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
doi:10.1162/dmal.9780262693646.021
- Meirose, C. (2020). Remote learning and Quizlet Live: Everything you need to know [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://quizlet.com/blog/remote-learning-and-quizlet-live-everything-you-need-to-know>
- Palloff, R. M., & Pratt, K. (2007). *Building online learning communities: Effective strategies for the virtual classroom* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Rovai, A. P. (2003). In search of higher persistence rates in distance education online programs. *The Internet and Higher Education, 6*(1), 1-16. Retrieved from https://cmappublic2.ihmc.us/rid=1150160110784_1923299501_2758/rovai%202003%20persistence%20in%20de%20and%20online%20ed-%20theory.pdf
- Yoder, J. D., & Hochevar, C. M. (2005). Encouraging active learning can improve students' performance on examinations. *Teaching of Psychology, 32*(2), 91-95.
https://doi.org/10.1207/s15328023top3202_2
- Zoom Help Center. (n.d.). *Pre-assigning participants to breakout room*. Retrieved from <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/360032752671>