IATSE ENTERTAINMENT & EXHIBITION INDUSTRIES
TRAINING TRUST FUND
PROVIDING TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE IATSE WORKFORCE

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL DISTANCE TRAINING

Due to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, many IATSE local unions have sought out online education tools to meet their local training needs. The general terms "Remote Learning," "E-Learning," and "Distance Learning" can refer to a few different approaches.

- **ONLINE TRAINING**: For the purposes of this document, *Online Training* means digital curriculum courses that can be viewed by students on the Internet. These courses are usually preprogrammed and do not involve direct interaction with an instructor or other students. There are advantages to this type of training. Students can access the material on their own schedule and review it at their own pace. It may also be possible for students to navigate back-and-forth within the course as much or as little as they feel necessary. For locals, this type of training is often easier to organize and may be free (or less costly) to provide.

- **VIRTUAL INSTRUCTOR-LED TRAINING**: This approach is more like traditional, in-person group classes. One or more trainers meet with students at a prescheduled time, and the whole group works through the course materials together. This is accomplished in a "Distance Learning" context by using virtual platforms such as Zoom, Skype, GoToMeeting, Google Meet, and others. The advantages of *Virtual Instructor-Led Training (vILT)* are similar to the benefits of any group class: students interact directly with the instructor; they have an opportunity to ask questions; and they can share their personal experiences and learn from the insights of their peers.

Both Online Training and vILT have been valuable tools for local unions seeking to provide safety and craft skills training during the pandemic. Some locals may find that these techniques continue to be an important part of their training programs, even after in-person courses can be safely resumed.

This tip-sheet focuses on Virtual Instructor-Led Training, but you should also be aware that the TTF provides access to many Online Training resources. To learn more about Online Training, you can view our Guide to Free Online Training.

WHAT IS VILT?

Virtual Instructor-Led Training (vILT) refers to training that is delivered through a virtual conferencing platform, such as Zoom, designed to simulate the traditional classroom or learning experience. vILT provides an engaging experience in which participants can connect with the content and interact with both the instructor and other classmates.

The IATSE Training Trust Fund does not endorse or recommend a specific virtual conferencing platform. There are many services available. Each service offers unique features, and all of them have limitations. You should carefully consider the needs of your local, including the cost of access, before deciding which tool to use.

One of the biggest challenges during a vILT session is ensuring the participants are as engaged in the session as they would be in a classroom. Therefore, engagement strategies are designed to encourage active participation from all students.

VILT ENGAGEMENT FEATURES

Virtual conferencing platforms can provide connected environments from almost anywhere. Each virtual conferencing service offers different features that enable you to create highly engaging online spaces for students to interact and learn. We put together a course learning path on LinkedIn Learning to demonstrate some of these platforms and help you explore their features. You can access it by using the link below or by searching for the learning path title when you log into your LinkedIn Learning account. If you do not already have a LinkedIn Learning subscription, you can request your free account by downloading the application from the TTF website.

Click here to view the "TTF Distance Learning Platforms and Resources" learning path on LinkedIn Learning.

Information about virtual conferencing platforms is also available from the platform providers. The Zoom links below are intended as a convenient reference to explain some of the key features. If you are using a platform other than Zoom, you can research your chosen platform to find out if equivalent features are available.

BREAKOUT ROOMS

As the instructor, you can split people into virtual breakout groups to conduct discussion activities just as you would in a real classroom environment.

Click here to learn how to manage breakout rooms in Zoom.

VIRTUAL WHITEBOARDS

Instructors may also have the ability to share a whiteboard with the participants. Depending on the platform, participants may be allowed to write on the whiteboard too. With this tool, you can draw, write text, or brainstorm together.

Click here to learn how to use whiteboards in Zoom.

CHAT

The chat feature allows instructors to send a private message to a student or the entire group. As the instructor, you can choose who the participants can chat with during the training session. Use the chat feature to ask attendees to post their questions to be answered live during the session, provide important links, or share files.

Click here to learn how to use the chat feature in Zoom.

POLLS

If available, polls are an engaging activity that allow instructors to create single or multiple-choice polling questions for participants to answer during live training. Polls can be used to ask participants questions relating to the topic, gauge how much your audience is paying attention, and learn how much they are learning.

Click here to learn how to use polls in Zoom.

VILT PRE-CLASS CHECKLIST

It is normal to encounter technical issues when presenting courses in a vILT format, especially if you are using this technology for the first time. You can minimize issues on the training day by anticipating and preparing for common challenges. Before class, instructors should consider the following questions to have a successful vILT training:

◉ Will there be a single instructor or dual instructors? If more than one person is presenting, are permissions set so that both hosts can access necessary functions like screen-sharing?

◉ Have you done a practice run with all instructors?

◉ Will there be a moderator to help monitor discussion in the chat box while the instructor is teaching? How will the moderator communicate with the instructor when necessary?

◉ Have you familiarized yourself with the layout and features of the virtual conferencing platform you are using? (Note: There may be training content available from LinkedIn Learning.)

◉ Are your screens set up in the best way to present the class? If you have multiple screens, it is recommended to designate one for screen-sharing while using the others to track chat activity, view student cameras, and access platform controls.

◉ Are the audio settings configured so that the course narration (if any) can be broadcast from the instructor's computer to students?

◉ Do the videos (if any) play as they should?

◉ Do you have any supplemental notes or links you wish to share? Are they stored in an easy-to-access format? It can be helpful to keep an open text document with these items, so they can be copied/pasted into the chat box when needed.

◉ What are the appropriate settings and permissions for students entering the class? Can they unmute their microphones at will? If they leave the class, can they reenter?

◉ Are you prepared to help students with any technical issues they encounter? It is a good idea to provide advance instructions for logging in. You can also have web links handy, to refer students to your virtual conferencing platform's support page if needed.

◉ Do you have a student roster with contact information for all participants? This will help the instructor and/or moderator keep track of attendance, and it allows you to reach out to students who are having trouble logging in.

◉ Have you allocated time at the beginning of class for explaining how the virtual conferencing platform works, and answering student questions about the features they need to use?

◉ Do you have access to a second device, which can be logged into the class as a participant? This allows you to see the presentation from a student's point of view to identify and correct any technical issues.

◉ How will the sign-in sheets be circulated for digital signature?