McMaster University
OT and SLP Program
"For Students By Students"
Guide for Virtual Placements

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Devices

There is a range of devices you may choose to use during placement. Most students use laptops or desktop computers, with their phone or iPad as a secondary device. The most common suggestion provided by students was to invest in a second screen, which is beneficial in completing multiple tasks at once. Your phone can also be really useful in situations where you need to call into a meeting if you are having difficulties with audio/video on a video conferencing app.

Regardless of device, there are some common tips that apply to all:

- If you are able, get a second screen to help maximize screen space (i.e. completing online sessions on one screen and documenting on another).
- Keep a back-up plan in case primary technology fails (e.g. use phone to join meetings).
- Make sure all updates have been installed – you do not want unexpected updates to initiate in the middle of a session.
- Back up documents in Cloud or Google Drive in case your device malfunctions.

Laptop

Pros	Cons
• Portable - can relocate if there are issues with connectivity or noise level • Easy-to-use • Camera and mic built in • Can be attached to a larger screen, if needed	• Difficulty with laptop placement for home visits • Limited screen space (e.g. viewing video, sharing the screen, documenting simultaneously) • Limited battery life – keep your laptop plugged in whenever possible and charge it the night before!

Desktop

Pros	Cons
• Multiple screens are beneficial • Large screen size • Easier ergonomic set-up	• Not portable

Tablet

Pros	Cons
• Can be used to take notes during a session	• Limited features on Zoom • Touch screen functionality may not work consistently

Phone

Pros	Cons
• Easy backup option if there are issues with laptop • Portable - can walk with phone to observe the client's environment (i.e. on a video call) • Can call clients ahead of a session to set up Zoom • Phone option for clients who may not prefer videoconferencing (i.e. more convenient, does not need to be scheduled in advance) • Easy to stay connected with preceptor/CI and peers (i.e. immediate notifications)	• If using as a phone, cannot see client and make observations (i.e. non-verbal communication, assessing mental status) • Privacy issues (i.e. need to block number before calling a client) • If using as a phone, can take longer to build rapport with client as you cannot actually see them • Over-reliance on phone when communicating with team members (i.e. greater chance of being distracted by personal notifications) • Hard to separate work from personal life (i.e. getting personal message when talking to clients or preceptor/CI)

Tips:

- Dial *67 to block your number when calling clients or caregivers for privacy reasons
- Check for apps that you can download for different platforms you might be using as these are optimal for phone use
- Use a headset if you will be on the phone for teleconferencing frequently
- Turn off personal app notifications during work hours.
- Communicate with team members using your computer if you are getting distracted when using your phone.

Platforms: Team Meetings and Client Appointments

Zoom and MS Teams were the most frequently used platforms by students on placement. Note that many platforms can be used on different devices but may work differently on each type of device. Be sure to learn all the functionalities of the platform you are using, as you never know when you might be given co-host capabilities! Join webinars, seek training, and learn about unique features you can use with your clients. Some clients are extremely tech-savvy and may cause distractions during the session, such as muting someone else or changing backgrounds. Make sure you know the technology you are using so that you can address these issues as needed. Familiarize yourself with the process of contacting IT for help. Also, features change frequently, so ensure you keep your feature knowledge up-to-date and aren’t caught off guard.

Ontario Telemedicine Network (OTN)

Pros	Cons
• Is one of the largest telemedicine networks in the world • OTN enables teaching and learning at a distance via videoconferencing and webcasting • Increased privacy (safe and confidential) • Easy to use	• Poor sound quality • Issues with internet connectivity • Limited features • Works best on a laptop, does not work as well on tablet or phone

Zoom

Pros	Cons
• User-friendly (i.e. easy to set up meetings, easy to use features) • Many features (e.g. screen share, whiteboard, virtual background, emojis for correct/incorrect responses during groups, chat feature for troubleshooting, speaker and gallery view options, ability to create breakout rooms for debriefing, closed captioning, polls) • Security features (e.g. password, waiting room) • Useful to establish rapport through video chat • Helpful for holding team meetings • Increased accessibility- allows people to call in if they do not have access to a device or internet • Can record meetings • Unlimited minutes through McMaster student accounts • McMaster student accounts are PHIPA compliant	• Need to create password to avoid unwanted guests joining new links • Blurry screen when screen sharing videos • Background/surroundings can be distracting • Some clients may not be agreeable to or have access to Zoom • Unstable internet connection • Some clients may have issues with audio and video • May be difficult to coordinate links • For free version, must re-login in after 40 minutes with sessions contain more than 2 people • Free account is not PHIPA certified • Limited ability to share documents through chat • Due to Zoom's selection of primary speaker, can be difficult to fully hear client if doing simultaneous speech or you try to provide cueing/coaching while client is speaking

• May be able to "see" the client in their natural environment • Has a low light setting if you are struggling to get sufficient lighting • Works well on computers, mobile devices and tablets	• McMaster student accounts do not offer toll-free numbers with meeting invites

Tips:

- Call in on your phone if you are having video difficulties on your laptop.
- Use a portable battery charger.
- Ensure you can share videos over Zoom:
  - Click "optimize screen sharing for video clip"
  - Select "share computer sound"
  - Disable "suppress intermittent background noise" and "suppress persistent background noise" in Advanced Sound Settings to prevent sustained sounds from being compressed and becoming inaudible
  - Deselect "automatically adjust volume"

MS Teams

Pros	Cons
• Easy to stay organized due to multiple features (i.e. project work, calendar, chat, to-do lists, document sharing, closed captioning, raise hand option) • Accessible • Option to continue conversations outside of meeting times • Good option for call with healthcare practitioners • Waiting room option • Can store password encrypted documentation • McMaster Teams accounts are PHIPA compliant • Allows for recording • Larger gallery and Together mode allow you to see up to 49 participants at a time	• Poor internet connection and lag • Poor video quality • Limited creative options • Can be difficult to navigate • Unable to access all features if you are outside the organization (e.g. giving screen sharing permissions to your client, sharing documents) • Need Windows 8.1 or higher on PC

Tips:

- Organize the Teams website ahead of time
- Use the downloadable apps to supplement the basic templates.

Google Meet

Pros	Cons
• Live captions option • Screen sharing capabilities • Chat feature • Breakout rooms for smaller group discussions • More than one way to connect to the call (a link or a phone number) • Allows for file sharing • Allows for recording of sessions (additional cost) • Can use on computer, mobile devices and tablets	• Unable to see everyone in the meeting/call • Need to have access to Gmail account to access video conferencing • Difficult to re-add individuals who have been removed from video • Cannot share only a portion of the screen • If connecting to the call using the assigned phone number, the participant incurs charges • Does not work efficiently for more than a group of 10 participants

Skype Business

Pros	Cons
• Can be linked to the company email • Can be used on computers, tablets and phone • Easy to use • Can support large meeting numbers • Contains a chat feature, whiteboard feature, polling • Free version works well for small teams • Allows for document sharing • Can be integrated into Microsoft Teams	• Slow screen sharing • Poor internet connection and lag • Poor video quality • Limited features

Platforms: Documentation and Scheduling

There is a range of platforms used for documentation and scheduling purposes. The most commonly used platforms were Email, MS Teams, shared drives (e.g. Google Drive, OneDrive), and Google Calendar. For documentation, most students wrote a note on a document on MS Teams, Word, or Google Drive, and their preceptor/ Clinical Instructor (CI) would review their note and add an electronic signature. Feel free to discuss options with your preceptor/CI at the beginning of placement. Note that typing can be heard over Zoom and may be distracting for others so consider exploring other alternatives (i.e. second screen, iPad, notepad) for notetaking during a session.

	Documentation	Scheduling	Pros	Cons

Email	✓	✓		Difficult to keep track and navigate
MS Teams	✓	✓	Organized Easy-to-follow Can debrief after meetings	Not confidential, needed to use identifiers
Jane	✓	✓	Can be used for billing Documentation can be saved as a draft, signed after reviewing with preceptor/CI Ability to amend documentation	
Citrix	✓		Shared account with preceptor/CI	
Shared drive	✓	✓	Can store resources, organize tasks, and collaborate Shared document on Google Drive	Not confidential
Word document	✓		Easy to provide comments and get feedback	
Google Calendar		✓	Preceptor/CI provided access to their calendar Automatically linked to Zoom meeting invites	
Electronic Medical Report	✓		Accessible 24/7	Privacy for clients
Personal calendar/ notebook		✓	Keep track of schedule in case online calendar can't be accessed	

Trello		✓	Useful for project management	
Dovetale	✓		Neat layout Customizable features	Can be difficult to navigate

Strategies to Reduce Bandwidth

- Connect with an Ethernet cable if Wi-fi is not reliable
- Sit closer to the router. Use a wi-fi extender to ensure a strong signal.
- Close tabs, webpages, windows, and applications that are not necessary for your meeting/session.
- Take notes using pen and paper.
- For videos, email video links to clients ahead of time. In case of an event where a video needs to be shared in a session, the link can be sent via a chat for the clients to view on their own screen.
- Turn off your video camera. Allow the speaker to leave their video on.
- Make sure your computer has all the necessary updates.
- Connect to the meeting using your phone for audio, and your computer for video.
- Exit the meeting and log in again after a couple of minutes if problems persist.

Technologies to Support Effective Participation

- Use a headset with a built-in mic to optimize sound quality. Noise-cancelling headphones are great for this because they reduce background noise! If you are using AirPods, be sure to fully charge them in advance and have a back-up plan in case they malfunction. Note that wireless headphones may not produce as crisp of an audio signal. This will also help ensure privacy and voice clarity.
- Use a separate device or paper during assessments to track data more efficiently.
- Print out resources to “show” in front of the camera during sessions (e.g. visual schedule, prompts.
- Have a team member or colleague point out to you if someone has question.
- A second camera may be beneficial to change the view/angle.
- A second monitor or screen will be helpful for notetaking and research. You can also video call from your phone and take notes during the meeting on your laptop. Alternatively, you can take notes on a notepad next to you during meetings if you do not have a second screen.

Managing Screen Fatigue

Screen fatigue is the WORST! In an online placement where you are constantly on your devices, screen fatigue can affect everything from your eyes to your sleep hygiene. It may take a while for you to adjust to all the screen time - remember to be kind to yourself. It is possible that screen fatigue can be made worse by underlying vision challenges. It might be beneficial to check-in with your eye doctor to confirm that your vision is as good as it can be.

Here are some tips to help manage your screen time:

- Establish boundaries! Know your limits and work within them.
    - If a project doesn't have a specific deadline, spread out tasks throughout the day
- Take breaks! Aim for about 5-minute breaks for every hour of work.
    - Take 5-10-minute breaks after sessions before documenting
    - Stand up and stretch between meetings to reduce fatigue
    - Engage in hobbies/self-care activities that aren't screen related
    - Take screen-free snacks and lunches; stay hydrated by keeping water with you
- Follow the 20-20-20 rule: for every 20 minutes of screen time, spend 20 seconds looking at something close by (not on a screen), and 20 seconds looking at something far away
- Blink frequently to "refresh" your eyes; take "eye breaks" away from screens
- Turn off video for observation-only sessions; use phone for audio-only sessions
- Use "Hide Self View" on Zoom to reduce tendency to shift visual attention to look at yourself
- Reduce eye strain by applying blue light filters and dimming brightness on devices
    - Blue light glasses (though not evidence-based) may also help to reduce eye strain
    - Turn on night mode/dark mode on devices so the screen is less straining
- Set your computer screen up so that it is arm's distance away from you. Enlarging the font size on your screen can reduce eye strain.
- Do what you can to reduce glare on your computer screen and/or glasses.
    - Clean your screens and lenses regularly to get rid of dust or fingerprints
    - Try "anti-reflective" coatings on your eyeglass lenses
- If possible, print documents to read on paper or take notes on paper to limit your time spent looking at a screen.

Additional Technology Tips and Troubleshooting

Successful virtual sessions rely on maintaining adequate audio and video quality during appointments. *It is important to be mindful of how you can decrease the risk of audio and video issues for both yourself and your client.* Several tips to ensure good quality sound and video have been summarized below, as well as tips to ensure accessibility for clients who may not have access to technology.

Video

- Use the hide self-view button so that you can only see the other person in the meeting.
- Ensure you have a strong WIFI connection. This may involve talking with others in your household to ensure they avoid downloading files during your sessions.
- If it is too difficult to demonstrate something over video, you can send pictures or pre-made video instructions through the chat or via email
- Turn off your video if you are having connection issues. Maintaining audio still allows you to gain relevant information and reduces bandwidth.
- On Zoom, 'Pin' the video of the person you want to see largest (by using the 3 dots in the upper right-hand corner). Have your client do the same.
- On most teletherapy platforms, the video directions are flipped (i.e. moving your left hand looks like you are moving your right hand). Some platforms allow you to adjust this setting (i.e. the option to use an original or mirrored video of yourself). Consider this when preparing for sessions.
- Speak directly to the camera. Although it is hard not to and you tend to look at the person on the screen, looking directly at the camera helps imitate a more in person interaction with the eye contact. If you don’t need full screen, consider reducing the video window to be at the top of your screen where the camera is so that even if you focus on one of the participants, your eye gaze is still close to the camera.
- Position yourself so that you are visible from the shoulders up. Supervisors in the past have recommended maintaining an arm’s-length distance from the computer screen, so that clients can see gestures and facial expressions more clearly. This also allows for a more balanced Zoom frame and prevents you from getting too close to the camera.
- Use positive non-verbal communication (e.g. smiling, nodding) to show interest and encouragement.

Audio

- Hold down the space bar to temporarily unmute yourself while on zoom if you just need to say something quickly.
- Use a quiet space for sessions to ensure that you can adequately hear the client and they are not hearing unnecessary background noise.
  - If this is a challenge and you are using Zoom, consider using the function ‘Suppress Background Noise’ under Audio settings
- Speak clearly and slowly if needed
- If you are going to sneeze/cough or anticipate any other loud noise that can be distracting, you can try to mute yourself very quickly.
- Expect that there might be slight delays and you may end up talking over someone at some points.
- Mute yourself while others are speaking to avoid echo or unnecessary background noise.
- Ask client and/or preceptor/CI about whether there is background noise interference (i.e. fans, air conditioning) if you aren’t sure.

- Words or expressions used to express affirmation (e.g. ummhmm, yes, right, ok) may interrupt the speaker, particularly when there are audio issues. Try to avoid these; if you are on video, replace these affirmations with positive body language (such as nodding, smiling, etc.).

Preparing Beforehand

- Communicate in advance of the session what the client will need.
- Assist the client in problem-solving alternatives if they do not have the exact materials detailed.
- Send a telepractice tip sheet prior to initial virtual visit to make expectations clear and to ensure technical difficulties are minimized
- These recommendations may include:
  - Ensuring video bandwidth is at least 10mbps to optimize Internet connection. If this is not possible, brainstorm alternative solutions (i.e. an audio call) with the client in advance.
  - Ensure others are not streaming/playing video games anything during session.
  - Close any unnecessary programs or windows to minimize distraction and reduce bandwidth.
  - Ensure a facilitator (e.g. family member, friend, staff) is close by in case troubleshooting is needed, or to ensure client has heard test stimuli or instructions properly.
- Remind clients at the start of a session what to do if technical issues arise.
  - For example, make sure they will let you know if the sound/video cut out so you can repeat yourself. You may let the client know you will follow-up with them over email if a call is discontinued due to connection issues.
- Make sure that they can see and hear you well enough before you begin the session. Some clients may not feel comfortable speaking up if they are having technical issues and this can impact the appointment.

Have a Backup Plan

- Prepare a troubleshooting plan or steps to try if challenges arise.
- Make sure you and the client both have a phone number (if appropriate) to call in case the audio and video go out

Section 2: Pre-Placement Preparation

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There are many things to think about before starting any placement, let alone a virtual placement! First, you might want to think about how to set up your work from home environment for comfort and success.

Create a Comfortable Workspace

There are a number of strategies you can use to set up your workspace in a way that is going to be most comfortable for you. Here are some tips and strategies that you can try:

- Use a wireless mouse and keyboard to help with posture and avoid strain; consider an ergonomic keyboard or mouse to improve posture and reduce strain on your body.
- “We’ve gOT Your Back: The Ergo Minute Podcast Series”
- If possible, access to a comfortable and supportive chair with an adjustable height can be very beneficial. Ideally, you should be able to sit all the way at the back of the chair with your feet resting flat on the ground.
- Adjust the height of your desk such that if you are sitting comfortably, your forearm-to-upper arm angle should be between 70 and 135 degrees.
- Set your computer or device up so that it is at eye level directly in front of you. The top of the monitor should be at or slightly below (up to 20 degrees) eye level. You can do this by using a desktop computer, propping your device up on a stack of books, or using a laptop stand.
- If you have access to multiple devices (i.e. desktop, laptop, tablet, etc.), many find it helpful to use multiple screens when working from home. If you are using multiple screens, it is recommended that you arrange them on your desk side-by-side to avoid neck strain.
- Use of a headset, or headphones, when on conference or phone calls can minimize neck strain.
- If there is a window in your room, ensure it is slightly off to the side or in front of you for optimal camera lighting. You may need to close curtains/blinds during a meeting if it is bright outside, but open them up when the meeting is done - the natural light can help to improve your mood during the day!
- If possible, try to change your position at intervals throughout the day. Consider standing while on a conference call or going for a walk on your lunch break. Incorporate stretches into your routine.
- Try to stay organized and consider adding things you enjoy to make your workspace more inviting (e.g. photos, a plant, calendar).

Ensure Privacy and Confidentiality

A unique concern in telepractice is privacy/confidentiality within the space that you are working from. Working from home presents challenges and we know that it can be difficult to ensure a private space to work without disruptions. We recommend that you are transparent with your preceptor/ clinical instructor about any concerns you may have and do what you can to minimize interruptions. Here are some tips for how to set up your space to adhere to standards:

- Avoid screen sharing something that is inappropriate or meant to be kept confidential (i.e. software with client's names)
    - Make sure your wallpaper is not a personal photo
    - Mute chats on your laptop
- Have a designated "work room" with a door you can close
    - Sit with your back to the wall so no one can see your screen if they walk by. If this isn't possible, make sure that your screen is pointed away from the eyesight of others.
    - Use headphones so audio remains private
    - Lock the door to the room that you are in if possible
    - If possible, consider setting your workspace up on a different floor than others in your household.
- Be aware of your background in videos; move to a neutral background or upload one. You could try a practice call with a peer to recognize what is visible in your surroundings and to try out different backgrounds before placement begins.
- Have a plan to ensure others in your home know when you are in a meeting; consider posting a sign/or schedule on your door.
- When stepping away from your computer, ensure that you are logged out of platforms that you use to interact with your placement site. It is also recommended that you password protect your devices.
- Some programs are both web-based and app-based; using web-based versions ensures that client information is not stored directly to your device using the app
    - You may require training to ensure your device is properly encrypted
- If you are keeping handwritten notes, do what you can to de-identify these notes. Make sure that they are kept in a safe and private space.

Ask Your Preceptor/CI Questions

Here are some questions that can be helpful to ask your preceptor when you first meet them. It may be helpful to schedule a meeting with your preceptor before your placement begins to talk through some of these points. This allows you to know what to expect on placement and can set you up for success!

There are many other questions you may want to ask that don't relate specifically to virtual practice (e.g., recommended readings, student responsibilities and anticipated progression of supervision over the placement, organizational templates for documentation and referrals, educational resources for clients, etc.). TIP: If your preceptor/CI emails templates and resources, they may be password-protected – remember to ask about passwords. Preparing for placement and knowing what to expect can go a long way in helping you feel organized and comfortable in a new space. You will quickly learn your online work style, so don't be afraid to embrace it and keep open dialogue with your preceptor/CI about future changes.

General Preparation

- What platform are you using and how does it work?
    - What features does it have that you should know about?
    - How will you be trained on the platform(s) you will be using?
    - How do you access the platforms (e.g., McMaster account, organization's account) and/or remote servers?
        - TIP: It can take a while for administration to set up student accounts; however, not having access to documenting and scheduling platforms can significantly impact student participation on placement so get this started as early as possible!
    - What are confidentiality standards specific to this workplace and online medium?
        - If you do not have an account, discuss how to code patient identifiers when sending documentation over email (i.e. using initials, password-protecting documents)
- Are you to use your own device or one supplied by the organization?
    - If using your own device, are there encryption standards beyond those included in the platforms being used?
    - If using an organization device, do you have an account to access it?
- How do clients book appointments? (i.e. directly or through someone else)
    - TIP: If an administrator is setting up your videoconferences, you may need them on hand to perform host functions (i.e. letting people in from waiting room)
- What are the requirements/tips for your workstation? (i.e. privacy, background, ergonomics, screen fatigue, dual screens, etc.)
- Where can you access virtual practice resources pertinent to this placement? (CAOT, COTO, OSOT, OSLA, SAC, CASLPO, ASHA, etc.)

Contingency Planning

- What are potential challenges that may arise during this placement?
    - What kind of technological problem solving should you be prepared for?
- What is the back-up plan if the technology fails?
    - For you? For your preceptor? For the client?
- Swap phone numbers with your preceptor for non-internet-based communication
- What are your expectations when you are not directly connected with your preceptor/CI? (i.e. for independent work)

Scheduling

- What should you expect on the first day?
- Are there specific hours that you need to be on your device?
    - Are you working on a *work hours model* (i.e. 9-5) or a *work completed model* (i.e. finish these tasks today)?
    - Will you have regular check-ins with your preceptor?
        - When will these be?

  - Are these consistent from day to day?
    - Are your work hours flexible or fixed?
    - How should you adjust for “overtime”? (i.e. if you put in extra hours one day)
  - Are there specific times that you need to be available for video calls?
  - When do you take breaks?
  - How can these be broken up to prevent screen fatigue?
- What is a typical workday like? (i.e. client sessions, project work, etc.)
- Where will you keep track of your projects, appointments, and responsibilities? (i.e. Google Drive, Microsoft Teams, etc.)
  - How will you access your schedule?

During Sessions

- What does a typical telehealth visit look like?
- How do you engage different clients over video calls?
- How can you implement traditional face-to-face activities (books), online activities (videos), and personalized activities (PPTs) over videoconferencing?
- How can you demonstrate your clinical reasoning skills in sessions that your preceptor is leading? (i.e. how to give your opinion before they make a decision)
- How can you communicate privately with your preceptor during sessions? (i.e. sending private messages over the platform)

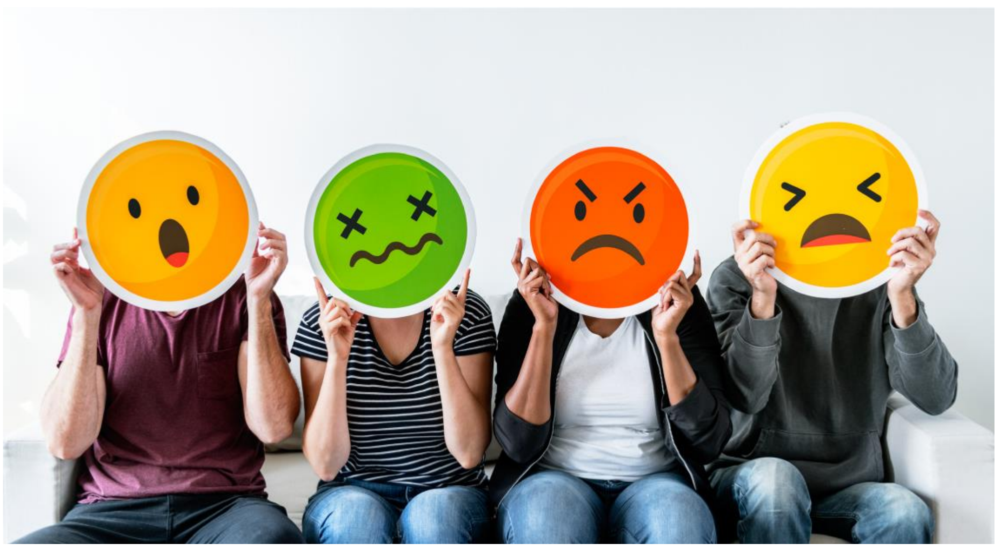
Documentation and Communication

- What should your session notes include?
  - How should these be formatted?
  - How much detail is needed?
  - Where and how are these submitted?
    - What precautions are taken to protect client information?
- How do you respond to clients returning calls to your personal phone outside of business hours? (if applicable)
- What are the expectations for email/communication?
- How will your preceptor/CI send you updates?
- What is the expectation for responding to these? (i.e. If a message comes in over your lunch break)

Feedback

- Should you schedule regular meetings with your preceptor/CI and/or the team for updates and feedback?
- What is your feedback “schedule” with your preceptor/CI?
- How will you receive feedback? (i.e. written, oral, ask for it, etc.)

Section 3: Professionalism



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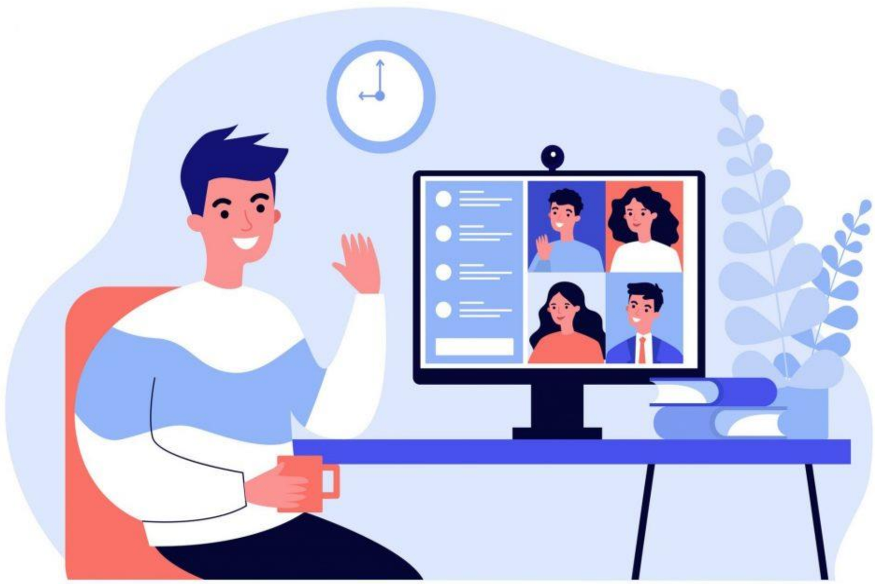
Professionalism may look a little bit different in a virtual setting than it does when you're working with clients in person. Many different factors that need to be considered when working virtually that you may not have thought about while working in person. Here are some useful tips to help ensure that you are remaining professional in a virtual setting. If you are going to share your screen during a meeting or an appointment with a client be mindful of what is open on your device.

- **Consider what you will be sharing:**
    - If you are sharing one tab, ensure other personal tabs are closed and that your folders or "book-marked" items at the top of the browser are appropriate to be shared.
    - If you are sharing your entire screen, ensure personal files are closed. In addition, make sure that items saved on your Desktop are appropriate to be viewed and/or are hidden prior to the session.
    - Make sure that you are prepared prior to sharing your screen by practicing ahead of time (i.e. calling another classmate or friend to practice)
    - Turn off any notifications that might come through during a session (i.e. disabling text, email, and Teams messages during that time).
    - If you intend to play video during the session, ensure that 'audio sharing' is enabled on the platform you are using.
- **Ensure that your clients can pay attention to you and not be distracted**
    - Limit unnecessary movements and noise, such as dangly jewelry, moving around in your office chair or extensive gesturing with your hands.
    - Be aware of your environment. Try to keep your visual background plain to limit distractions for the client. This allows for anything you are showing through the camera to become more clearly visible.
    - Try to keep a professional background, such as a single wall. If possible, avoid having your bed or kitchen in the background (i.e. sitting with your back to the door, or against a plain wall).
        - You can also change your background on certain services for teletherapy (i.e. Zoom) if you are not able to change your physical environment.
    - Make sure that you are in a room with adequate lighting so that the client can see you. Try to sit perpendicular to any windows, instead of in front of or across from them to avoid glare from natural light.
- **Maintaining proper meeting etiquette is still important even in a virtual setting**
    - Dress professionally: present yourself the same way you would during an in-person appointment or meeting.
    - Make sure that your device is charged, and that video and audio are working prior to entering a meeting.
    - Continue to be on-time for meetings; plan to arrive 5 minutes early to ensure there are no connection difficulties.
    - Mute yourself when not speaking to avoid creating distractions
    - Avoid eating during sessions and meeting to reduce background noise
    - Consider keeping your webcam on to show your engagement, unless otherwise directed to have it off.

    - Use the chat box to notify others if something does occur that you cannot say out loud.
- **Consider your camera angle during appointments**
    - It can be more difficult to appear engaged in the conversations with clients over a virtual call. Be mindful of your camera angle. Does it look like you are looking at the client? Does it seem like you are looking above or below them or at a second screen? Try to maintain a good camera angle so that the client feels like they have good eye contact with you. It may be useful to practice this with a friend prior to leading teletherapy sessions.
    - Angle the camera so that your face, neck and upper body are visible. This more accurately simulates a natural appointment. Try not to have the camera too high or too low.
- **Stay focused during the meeting**
    - You might be tempted to do work while in meetings, but this can appear unprofessional and distracting to others. Others might perceive that you are not interested, and this can come across as unprofessional.
    - Stay seated during meeting. If needed, take stretch break and change positions or locations after completion of the meeting so that you can stay engaged and not distract others. If you do have to move around during a meeting, consider turning your camera off and letting team members know.

Section 4: Working with your Preceptor/CI and Team Members



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Establishing and Maintaining Rapport

Getting to know your preceptor/CI when you may not be able to see them face-to-face can be challenging. But, not to worry! There are many ways to facilitate rapport building with your preceptor/CI, including those falling outside of clinical interactions. Some of these include:

- Have daily meetings to discuss clinical work and project-related activities and ideas
- Attend team meetings and/or huddles that take place virtually
- Meet with your preceptor/CI (virtually) prior to the placement start date to introduce yourself, discuss the placement and get to know one another
- Engage in ongoing communication via text, email, phone calls, video calls, and/or WhatsApp helps to check in, receive feedback, or just have a casual chat (more on this below!)
- During virtual check-ins with your preceptor/CI, introduce your pets or show your space if you feel comfortable
- Take some time before the start of a meeting or client appointment to check in to see how each of you are doing
- Schedule time to have casual conversations (i.e. Friday Fun Fest) and discussing non-clinical activities/interests when possible (e.g. pets, favourite TV shows, food etc.)
- Debrief before and after client sessions
- Don't be afraid to ask questions
- Try to schedule meeting with your preceptor/CI at the start of the day
- Schedule ice breakers with your team
- Be clear about expectations with one another
- Be aware of your body language and speech (tone, speed, pronunciation). Establish a communication style prior to the beginning of placement. When communicating online, it can be harder to read nuanced non-verbal communication so being straightforward about communication preferences can help the interactions run smoothly.
- Be aware of instances when people are joining by a mix of phone and audio, as we often continue to rely on non-verbal communication such as head nodding, but that can leave people out of the loop. Consider verbalizing to keep everyone included in the conversation.

Methods of Communication with Preceptor/CI and Team Members

When you aren't in the same physical location, you can maintain communication with your preceptor/CI through:

- Email
- Text
- WhatsApp, Signal

- Phone Calls
- Video Calls (Zoom, Microsoft Teams)
- Chat features on virtual platforms, such as Zoom chat
- Google Drive/Shared Drive

Most students who recently had virtual placements found email to be an effective method of communication. However, for more urgent matters, updates, or quick changes (e.g. if preceptor/CI wanted to make a suggestion mid-session), text was preferable. *Video calls were the preferred student communication method for feedback, evaluations, planning for sessions, and having meetings*. *If you encounter challenges using the above methods (e.g. late responses, limited availability to chat, etc.), try to discuss alternatives with your preceptor/CI as early on in your placement.* Finding the best method earlier on can set you up well for the remainder of your placement.

Navigating Projects for Virtual Placement

Many virtual placements may involve working on a project for the placement site or preceptor/CI. Often, these projects will require you to be self-directed and complete work independently. The following section will offer advice on how to manage your time and maintain regular and transparent communication with your preceptor/CI/placement site.

Time Management

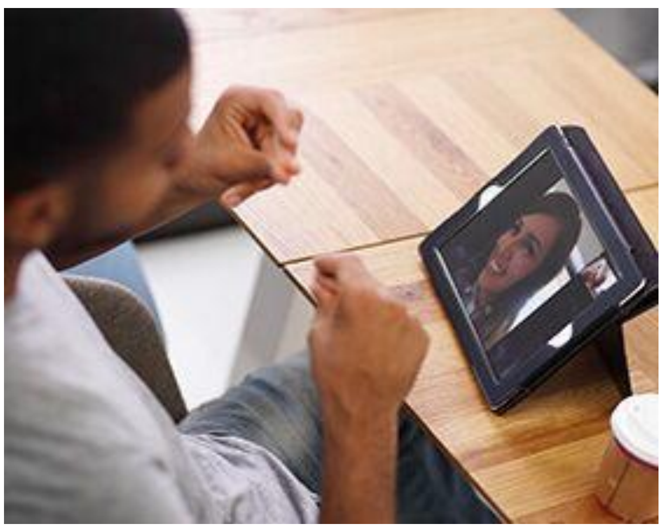
- Schedule your time such that you have a consistent start time, end time, and break schedule. Do your best to respect your time and don't work beyond these set hours, even if there is still more work to be done.
- It is helpful to divide your larger projects into smaller tasks and set reasonable goals and deadlines for yourself.
- Keep a daily and/or weekly schedule or to-do list to keep track of the projects and tasks that you are working on. Build in time to work on projects just as you would schedule time to meet with a client.
- It can be helpful to set reminders in your phone or on your computer to complete time-sensitive tasks.
- Create a working document (i.e. Google Doc, Word document, Excel file) that allows you to keep track of how you have spent your independent time, the work that you have accomplished, and the next steps that you are needing to accomplish.
- Be compassionate and patient with yourself and recognize some days may be more productive than others. This is normal!
- If possible, meet and/or collaborate with fellow students when working independently on projects.

Communicating Project Updates

It is best to communicate directly with your preceptor/CI and/or placement site to determine what is going to work best for your placement. Here are some strategies that other students have found helpful:

- Email is quick and convenient for sharing documents and resources.
- Consider creating to-do lists, time logs, or schedules to keep track of projects and share with your preceptor for transparency about how you are using your time.
- Consider using a Google Drive to organize and compile project-related documents into one place that can be easily shared with your preceptor/CI and fellow students on the placement. Using Google Docs allows for comments directly on the documents which can be a quick way to ask questions or receive feedback. Ask the preceptor/CI to check in on the shared drive throughout the day to see what is being done.
- Brief check-ins with your preceptor/CI throughout the day, whether via messages, phone calls, or video calls, can provide you with time to share what you are working on that day.
- If possible, setting up regular meetings to discuss project progress and related questions can be helpful.
- Microsoft Teams is a beneficial platform because it allows you to share and work collaboratively on files, video call, and instant message.

Section 5: Conducting Virtual Sessions



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Ensuring Accessibility of Services

Health equity concerns have been further amplified with the transition to virtual services. Poverty, inability to access or limited access to digital devices, limited knowledge of how to use technology, and poor engagement with technology are some of the many barriers to accessing telehealth services. Some methods that have been reported by students to assist in reducing the impact of these barriers include:

- Mailing educational materials and resources to clients who report not having access to a printer.
- If in the same geographical area, delivering resources may be an appropriate option. This option may depend on organizational policies and can be further discussed with the clients to ensure no-contact, low-risk delivery options are in-place.
- Having flexible hours to support individuals who have strained Internet service during the day due to other learners and workers in the home.
- Booking more time for sessions when it is known the client experiences technology access challenges, will be using a phone, and/or has unreliable Internet connection.
- Integrate enhancing technology knowledge into therapy goals, when appropriate and applicable for the client.
- Continue to offer translation services in telehealth and virtual practice for non-English speakers
- Provide a toll-free number when using the Zoom platform. This is only available on zoom accounts that have been purchased.

Consider the impact of social determinants of health and health inequity for those who have intersecting barriers to technology access. Talk with clients about how you can best support their access to teletherapy services. This may involve discussing some of the options presented above, as well as others introduced by the client. Below is a resource that can assist in identifying barriers to virtual health. This resource could be used as a discussion point with preceptors/ CIs and organizations for students who identify technology barriers to teletherapy services within their placement.

- Crawford, A., & Serhal, E. (2020). Digital health equity and COVID-19: The innovation curve cannot reinforce the social gradient of health. *Journal of Medical Internet Research, 22*(6), e19361.

Safety Procedures during Virtual Sessions

What do you do if a client appears to require medical support during a video session? What if someone appears uncomfortable or agitated? *These situations can be stressful when engaging in virtual practice, but there are many ways to ensure yourself and your clients' safety in these* *circumstances.* Here are some of the measures and procedures that students had in place to prevent and manage these situations:

- Having quick access to your phone and having the client's phone number in case the Internet cuts out
- In the event of an emergency, it may be important to have the client's home address and emergency contact information, as well as contact information for support personnel. Speak with your CI/preceptor prior to independently leading sessions about where this information can be found, if needed.
- Attending client appointments with the preceptor/CI present as needed, particularly with clients for whom there was greater concern
- If clients are supported by family members (e.g. parents, children) and other support personnel (e.g. PSW) during appointments, ensuring they were available prior to booking and beginning the session

Different settings may have different policies and procedures in place related to ensuring the safety of clients and clinicians. Ensure that you are learning about the measures at your specific placement, and if you have any questions/concerns be proactive in asking for clarification from your preceptor/CI.

Virtual Assessment and Treatment Resources

Below are examples of online learning tools, activities, and websites that can support client engagement and goal attainment during virtual sessions.

Tool	**Overview**
Online Activity Resources &Tools	
PowerPoint/ Google Slides	• PowerPoint can be used to create a series of therapy activities. For example, specific scenes can be used as green-screen background images. Transitions can be used to draw attention to images or objects. Since PowerPoints are customizable, you can easily insert images (i.e. those off LessonPix) and use a similar activity for multiple clients. • Note: On Zoom, it is often not possible to share a PowerPoint screen as a background. Therefore, it may be necessary to screenshot images and manually enter them as Zoom displays, if needed. • Example: You can create activities and give screen control to the client (or move the objects yourself). For example, you could put a picture of a dump truck and a stop sign, before saying "move the dump truck to the stop sign".
Green Screens	• Using a virtual background/ green-screen can help engage clients. • It may be necessary to use a green sheet or green shower curtain (can be purchased online or at a local store if needed) to create a clear virtual background image.

	• With a green screen, you can create a slide show of images that are cycled through Zoom. You could also make pockets on the greenscreen to create games where items disappear.
	• Here are some great YouTube videos on green screens:
	  o How to Create a Green Screen
	  o Examples of Green Screen Activities
	  o Using Worksheets as Green Screens

Educational Game Sites	• ABCYa!: https://www.abcya.com/ • PBS Kids Games: https://pbskids.org/games/ • Toy Theater: https://toytheater.com/
Boom Learning	Link: https://wow.boomlearning.com/ • This website has numerous “Boom Cards” that focus on different areas of learning across many domains. • After creating an account, you will be able to search for free activities on the platform and save them to your personal page.
Lesson Pix	Link: https://lessonpix.com/ • LessonPix is very useful for creating materials for PowerPoint. There is a LessonPix add-on for PowerPoint that provides the option to use a dice and a spinner. You can also create many activities on this platform that can be printed or emailed to families for use at home. • LessonPix has short YouTube video tutorials that explain different features you can use. The "layering" option using a magnifying glass can be useful so that clients have to look for items in PowerPoint.
Reading Resources	
Reading Level Conversion Chart	Link: https://education.scholastic.ca/category/GR_CHART • Many schools use different reading systems, which makes it useful to have an accurate conversion chart. • This shows the conversions for Grade Level, LPEY, Fountas & Pinell Levels, DRA Levels, Reading Recovery Levels, Lexile Level, and PM Benchmarks.
PM Readers	Link: https://app.pmecollection.com.au/book/9780170327718 • Includes a free 30-day trial • The website has stories for all “PM Benchmarks” (1-30)
Raz Kids	Link: https://www.raz-kids.com/ • Includes a free 14-day trial • The website has stories for “Letter Levels” (A-Z)
Oxford Readers	Link: https://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/library-page?view=image • Includes free 14-day trial • The website has stories for “Oxford Reading Levels”
Online Games (Useful for reinforcement in sessions)	
2-Player Games	• Connect 4: https://www.cbc.ca/kids/games/all/connect-4 • Jenga: https://keygames.com/jenga-game/ • Monopoly: https://poki.com/en/g/monopoly

Music Video (Popular YouTube Channels)	• The Kiboomers – Kids Music Channel: https://www.youtubekids.com/watch?v=2UcZWXvgMZE • Super Simple Songs: https://www.youtubekids.com/watch?v=yCjJyiqpAuU • Little Baby Bum – Nursery Rhymes & Kids Songs https://www.youtubekids.com/channel/UCKAqou7V9FAWXpZd9xtOg3Q
Additional Resources	
Tools	• Customizable Spinner: https://wheelofnames.com/# • Customizable Word Search: https://thewordsearch.com/puzzle/1459078/word-search-puzzle/ • Nearpod: https://nearpod.com/ (interactive presentation tool where resources can be printed/used in sessions, such as visuals and paper assessments) • Story Champs: A virtual language intervention curriculum program designed for preschool and school-age children. Link: https://www.languagedynamicsgroup.com/story-champs/ • H5P: An online resource to create, share, and use interactive HTML5 content in sessions. Link: https://h5p.org/ • Social Thinking: A website with resources for building social competencies, such as self-regulation and perspective taking. Link: https://www.socialthinking.com/social-thinking-methodology • Canvas: A drawing app that can be easily accessed on the Google Chrome browser. Link: https://canvas.apps.chrome/ • Visible Body: A virtual anatomy site that provides visuals and information about different body systems. Link: https://www.visiblebody.com/ • CaseWORKS: A virtual integrated caseload management software that can be used for client documents, intake forms, and data tracking. Link: https://www.coyotecorp.com/caseworks/ • Zoom whiteboard features • Enabling Zoom "remote access" for the client to interact with the screen • Consider having worksheets displayed through pdf or having the client type on the screen. When working with adults, many activities involve worksheet-type or functional activities, which require few extra tools.
Therapy Resources	• Ultimate SLP: https://www.ultimateslp.com

Planning and Implementing Joint Sessions

Clearly defined roles and expectations are important to establish prior to conducting a joint therapy session. Some helpful tips include:

- Assign one person to take the lead and the other will act in a supporting role
- Share the session plan with therapist ahead of time to allow for opportunity to troubleshoot and to discuss any concerns/questions before starting the session.
- Use a script to make things smooth and easy.
- Discuss what aspects of the session each person is doing and then plan stops between each section to allow the other partner to add comments/ask questions if they have any.

- Turn the camera off during the session (when you are not leading the session) and turn it back on at the end to give the clients a summary of main ideas and next steps.
- Have the preceptor turn off their camera so student clinician and clients can focus on each other, similar to preceptor sitting off to the side of an in-person session.
- Discuss in advance the expectation and plans each clinician has and be explicit when passing off leadership in the session (e.g. “Now I'm going to ask ___ to share the next activity").
- Be sure to discuss with your preceptor/CI prior to the session in order to divide up tasks, as doing so in the middle of the virtual session is quite difficult.
- Always mute when not participating. When you unmute, this can be a signal that you have something to add.
- Make sure the client is aware of the role of preceptor/CI and student so that muting microphone and/or video is expected

If conducting the session independently, it is important to provide your preceptor/CI your session plan before the visit and ask the preceptor/CI to observe. With the client’s consent, you may also ask your preceptor/CI to record the session.

Recordings of Sessions

Viewing recorded sessions can provide you a sense of the different types of online activities used during telepractice. Some students may be provided access to view these recordings during a video call with their preceptor/CI. For example, in SLP placements, students may be provided with recordings of a language sample for re-assessment of a phonological disorder. In some instances, session recordings are required for transcription purposes.

Facilitating Virtual Therapy Groups

If you are given an opportunity to facilitate a virtual group session, below are a few tips on how to manage these sessions effectively.

- Discuss rules/expectations ahead of time. Practice skills such as muting/unmuting, how you will have clients participate (thumbs up/down, holding up icons close to your face that you send by email to be printed etc.), staying on screen, etc. Review rules/skills at the start of every session. For example, stay muted when it is not your turn to talk so that everyone can hear the speaker, turn your mic on when you speak, raise your hand if you want to say something (either physically or by using the 'raise hand' button). It is important to model these expectations for clients in sessions.
- Incorporate a quick yoga/follow the leader/movement break part way through your session. There are several short YouTube videos that you can use if you do not want to lead the movement yourself.
- Encourage children to take breaks as they need it.
- Call on quieter people, encourage people to repeat themselves if their audio is choppy or quiet, help clients troubleshoot individually, use the chat function on Zoom to communicate with clients individually if needed.
- Set clear expectations required for the group, plan for 2 clinicians (one to present materials and 1 to monitor group attention, understanding, focus etc.).
- Mute oncoming participants (if necessary) when joining the session.
- Encourage clients to turn on their video to increase engagement with others.
- Be very clear about group norms and expectations prior at the beginning of the group session, including that people should not interrupt, have their microphones muted when others speak etc.
- Be sure to send out the virtual group's details well in advance, including the details clients would need to call in and/or the Microsoft Teams link to join the session.

Resources Clients May Need at Their Homes

- Laptop, desktop, or tablet / iPad
- Phone (if computer is not available)
- Personal email address (or caregiver's email address)
- Headphones (individual choice)
- Printer
- Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and/or another teletherapy platform
- Other therapy specific props (e.g. straw and water for 'cup bubbles')

Other Helpful Tips

- Be prepared to be flexible.
- Personalizing materials really help increase client engagement and focus
- Sometimes clients may be typing other things on their computer or texting during session – it is important that we notice when this happens and give a break or guide the clients back on track to let them know that we notice their attention is elsewhere
- Consider the use of an e-helper (for example, some children found it more helpful when a parent or sibling was there to help, whereas others found it more distracting). Create

an e-helper tip sheet to address things like environment, camera angle, using the mic/mute, giving time to think/allowing the clinician to prompt, and how to ask for help. For some students, it may be possible to talk to their e-helper in between sessions to give direct feedback or find solutions (such as sending phrases to be programmed into an AAC device that would help to increase participation).

Section 6: Virtual Supervision

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For a teletherapy placement, students are not only seeing clients online, but they are also interacting with their supervisors and receiving feedback in an online format. This may require more planning and being more intentional about scheduling evaluations - both formal and informal. Discuss how you prefer to receive feedback and whether your preceptor/CI would like to receive feedback from you. Discuss the level of support needed from your supervisor and continue to re-evaluate that support as you become more independent throughout the course of the placement.

Methods of Live Feedback During Sessions

- Feedback may be given by supervisor in a written format (i.e. Zoom chat (private message), WhatsApp, text, personal chat on Microsoft Teams)
- Student can tell the client in advance that their supervisor may jump in to correct or switch the approach so that the client is prepared for a switch in facilitator
- A supervisor may use the camera and mic to signal that they would like to make a comment or answer a question (for example, they may be muted with their camera off, and then turn on camera and mic when they want to add something)
- Nonverbal communication, such as facial expressions or gestures can be used to signal if things are going well or if a different approach should be taken

Methods of Feedback After Sessions

- Stay online after the session or after final session of the day to debrief
- Schedule feedback time on a separate call (avoids the risk of client accidentally joining in on the conversation)
- Written feedback through email or Google Drive
- Weekly debrief calls can be beneficial if the preceptor and/or students have a busy schedule or prefer a screen time break rather than a daily debrief

Midterm and Final Evaluations

- Schedule feedback sessions well in advance
- It can be helpful for documentation to be provided before the actual feedback session so that preceptor and students can review prior to meeting
- Online using screen sharing so preceptor/CI and student can see the grades that the preceptor entered into the document
    - Some preceptors/CI scored live while the students were online, some had the evaluation forms scored in advance
- Student read through comments and preceptor/CI gave verbal feedback
- Similar to other placements except over video rather than in-person

Conclusion

As one student surveyed commented:

"This was a very smooth and easy process – it went much better than I anticipated, and I was surprised to learn how much I enjoyed telepractice!"

While there is a lot of new learning involved in implementing virtual placement skills, we think you'll be very pleasantly surprised at how enjoyable it can be! We hope this guide provides you with helpful tips to make your experience successful!

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