

Council for British Archaeology

A guide to online presentations



What is the purpose of this guide?

This guide has been created as part of the CBAs ongoing effort to improve the quality of the **Festival of Archaeology** and ensure online presentations are accessible and engaging.

Following sector research and conversations with members of the CBA Festival organiser community, this guide includes key considerations, tips, content ideas, and resources you can use and adapt to your local contexts. Whether you are brand new to delivering sessions online, or you have more experience, you can explore the guide from start to finish, or visit the content section to explore key areas you would like to focus on.

We have included a number of links to other helpful websites and resources.

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Part 1 - Consider what type of session you are hosting



We live in a time when many of us have needed to turn to online events and activities as a means of sharing and collaborating – either as hosts or participants. For many, this can be a new challenge and it might be hard to know where to begin. For others, you may have some experience, but need a little support with accessibility or finding engaging content to share during online presentations.

"Know your audience and build around them - and make sure it is there from the beginning and not an add on."

- Online guide research participant

Wherever you are in the process, when hosting an online session of any kind, it is likely you'll be working with a range of needs and interests, as you would face to face.

- **So how do you ensure that as the session host, you cater for everyone's needs?**
- **How do you keep people engaged throughout?**
- **What kind of additional tools could you use?**
- **How can we use them in an accessible way?**

To begin consider what type of session you might be hosting. Depending the type of session, you can adapt your approach.

Below we have outlined some approaches for you to consider while planning:

Format	Format	Online considerations
Lecture	One-way sharing of knowledge – often with visuals	How scripted should you be? How much attention does your audience need to pay to the screen?
Presentation	Almost always with slides – often with embedded photos, video, other multimedia content	How much text to use? How much time to fill with talking?
Seminar	Some level of delivery of content, followed by interaction and discussion within and across the group	How to enable full participation and discussion? Breakout groups?
Workshop	Skills development, exchange, co-learning	Timing is very different in online space. Size of groups very important for meaningful learning outcomes

Part 2 - Planning and designing the session



Once you know what type of session you will run, consider the following factors:

What do you want people to take away from the session? What are the three main things you want people to remember or come away with?

What is the **visual experience** you want people to have. At times it is useful to see others, at times it is useful to focus on a shared screen – this should be planned in advance, and built into the flow of the session.

Make it human. We're all aware that the online space is more awkward. Think about adding time for introductions and check-ins more than you might in a physical space. Acknowledge awkwardness and make people at ease as best you can.

Enable but don't force participation. You can use additional apps and sites as needed, but keep it simple and with clear instructions, remember your audience will probably have mixed abilities in the online space.

Think about session length. The online space is more tiring than real life

What might be the opportunities for doing shorter session using Facebook/Instagram rather than full hour (or more) on Zoom/Teams?

Part 3 - Delivering the session



When delivering sessions online, there are 7 steps to remember:

1. Practice makes perfect.

It's a cliché, but it's important to run through the content of your presentation to check the timing, and to ensure that all the technology is working as it should be. Ideally this can be done on the same day and with colleagues or peers who can check connectivity and functionality online in a different place.

2. Think of it as a (natural) performance.

This means deliberately slowing down your speech and speaking clearly. It also means bringing the content alive by highlighting what is interesting, adding anecdotes and varying your tone.

3. Be clear about the structure of the session and levels of participation expected from the audience.

It's always good to share an outline of what will be covered in the session, especially if there are key moments that further participation will be required. Online audiences are more likely to be distracted by things going on in the background, phones, notifications on other apps and so on. So let them know which parts are really unmissable or require their attention.

4. Keep it structured, but not overly scripted.

Our interviewees said the best presentations have a clear structure (i.e. a beginning, middle and end, three clear 'takeaways'), but are not someone sitting reading a script, which can be very dry and boring. Practicing and knowing the content of your presentation very well will make you more comfortable working from notes than from a script and engage the audience more.

5. Work with a co-host/co-moderator.

It can be nerve-wracking presenting online, especially if there are people joining at different times, you are facilitating a discussion, or you are sharing screen to show examples. Asking a colleague/peer to act as a co-host means they can support on the technical side while you focus on delivery, or you can share responsibilities between you. It can also create a more conversational dynamic.

6. Keep discussion group sizes manageable.

Don't make breakout groups too large (e.g. no more than 8), and if you are facilitating a discussion with a large audience use the Q&A feature (in Zoom), or ask people to write their questions in the comments section rather than 'opening the floor'. If the full group is not too large, ask people to use the 'raise hand' feature so you can ask for contributions in the correct order.

7. Allow a generous pace.

Don't try to fill every last minute with content and discussion. Allow comfort breaks, screen breaks, tea breaks etc. Especially if asking the audience to come up with questions, it's normal for this to take a bit of time, so allow it.

Part 4 - Content ideas for your session



Our consultees said the best online presentations were based on storytelling.

This means **bringing the content alive** as best you can and being clear about the key story or narrative that the presentation contains. Communicating excitement and passion wherever possible.

The online space also allows you to easily **link to and embed photo, video and audio** as a way to break up long sections of speech. This can help to keep people's attention, by shifting the tone and the pace a bit.

Think about engaging your audience in a **creative task**. If using more of a lecture-style approach you can encourage the audience to do some doodling or modelling in the background and share their work at the end of the session. You can listen to a colleague describe this approach in the audio clip below.

If possible **share a PDF of the slides** (if you are using them), key findings, or even a simple summary of the content of your session. This can be shared in advance, or during the session, but means that people can keep up with the content if they have connection issues or other distractions.

You can feature video and multimedia in your online presentations. This can include pre-recorded videos, live-streams, or additional media images.

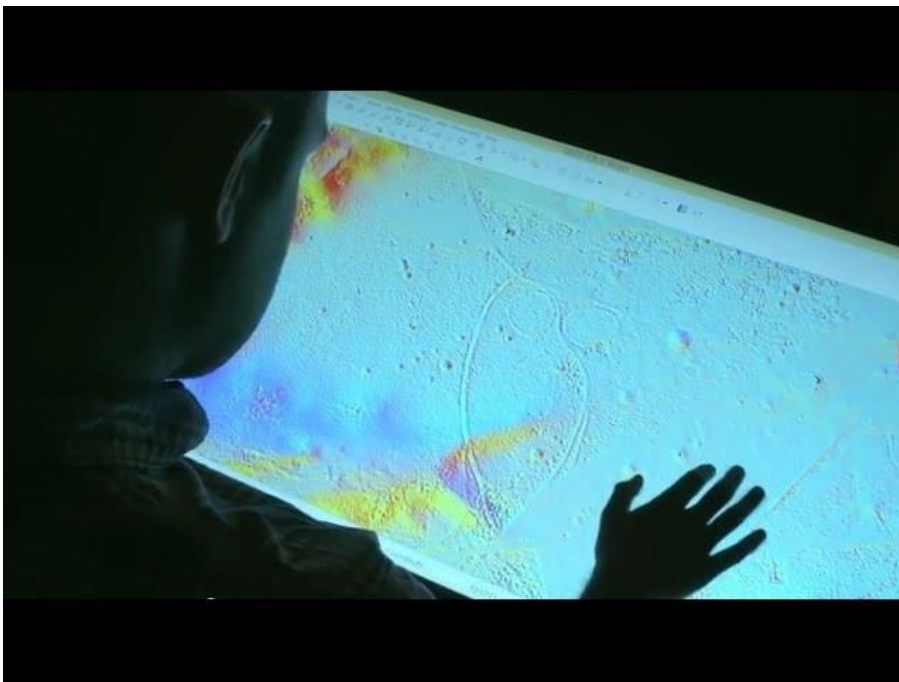
Below are some examples to help you get started

Salisbury Museum



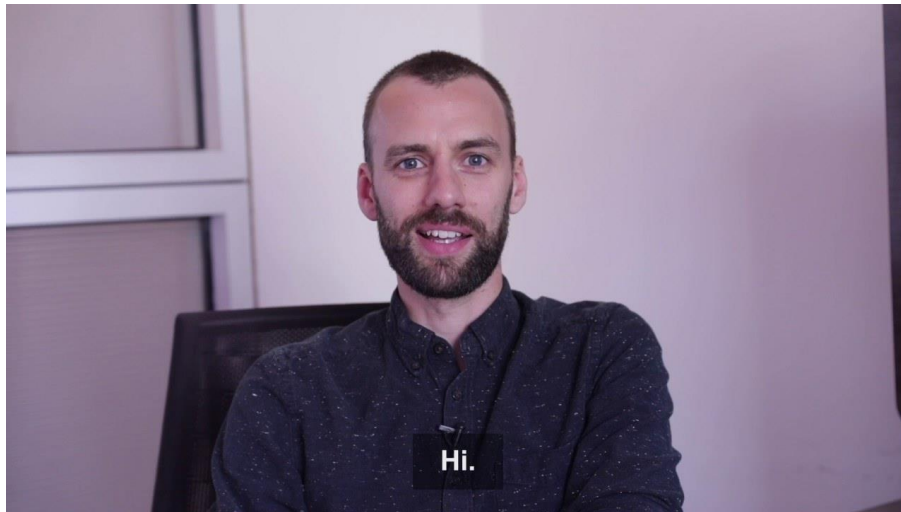
1 - 'Behind the Scenes' videos show an engaging 'pre-recorded' approach to exploring artefacts.

New Forest National Park Authority



2 - New Forest National Park Authority show how LiDAR (Light Detecting and Ranging) technology can be used to create 3-d models of hidden sites.

Historic Environment Scotland



3 - Historic Environment Scotland describe how they can construct and show full 360-degree models of hidden architectural features using Sketchfab.

To hear a colleague describe how she encouraged online participants to take part in some clay modelling while she did a presentation **please visit the link below.**

<https://sway.office.com/tTcYc5tyCxiCV6W1#content=2MjCWBC4rBjwqz>

There's also lots of activity info on the [Young Archaeologist's Club \(YAC\) website](#) that could be incorporated into digital sessions. The site is also a great source of inspiration for anyone interested in delivery for 8-16 year olds.

Instead of approaching an online presentation in the same way as an in-person event in tone, content or format. Think about the potential you have to do things differently and to make the most of what the online space brings.

A short exercise to think about what content you could include in your online presentation...

Use the following worksheet to maximise the potential of your online event:

Question	Yes/No?	What can I do to make the most of this...	What additional preparation or resources I need to think about...
Are there presenters I could invite to be involved who may normally be restricted by geography?			
Will my audience be coming from a broader geographical range than usual?			
Can I use pictures, videos or audio to bring alive the presentation?			
Can I add a creative task for the audience to engage them in a different way?			

Part 5 - Top Tips from the archaeology community



"We often focus on quite limited elements (digs etc). Could we do draw along and interactive sessions – forensic scientists radiocarbon dating, edutainment opportunities, the content often feels overly site-based but not very hands-on or applied. What about recreations of historical instruments, soundscapes from ancient landscapes that could be recreated. Great experimental practitioners are doing really interesting creative stuff we just need to get them to show it."

- Online guide research participant

- When hosting sessions, participants and audience members could experience issues with connection and technology. Ensure you have a team member on hand (in addition to the host) who is dedicated to technology support
- Taking part in online sessions can be draining for both participants and hosts. Consider your schedule carefully and include breaks in advance, particularly when having a long session.
- Ask participants to make something using materials from around the house or create a drawing to share with the group. Getting participants up & moving can break up the session, and allow for more active participation
- If you have arranged an activity during a session, be clear about timings and instructions. Use a timer, give people a set amount of time to do a task. This can also help with keeping an active pace in the session
- Academic language has a place, but think about your audience and pitch language at a level which is clear to everyone therefore removing barriers and increasing accessibility
- Have a back up! Following the session, share a PowerPoint or video recording of your session with participants who may have missed the session or had technical difficulties

- Provide clear instructions for participants on how to use software & apps such as Zoom etc in advance. Better yet, schedule in time prior to the start of the session for those who might need support.
- Online presentations are a great opportunity to bring an audience to a dig, through either a live stream or pre recorded content. If doing so, have clear and close shots of key objects

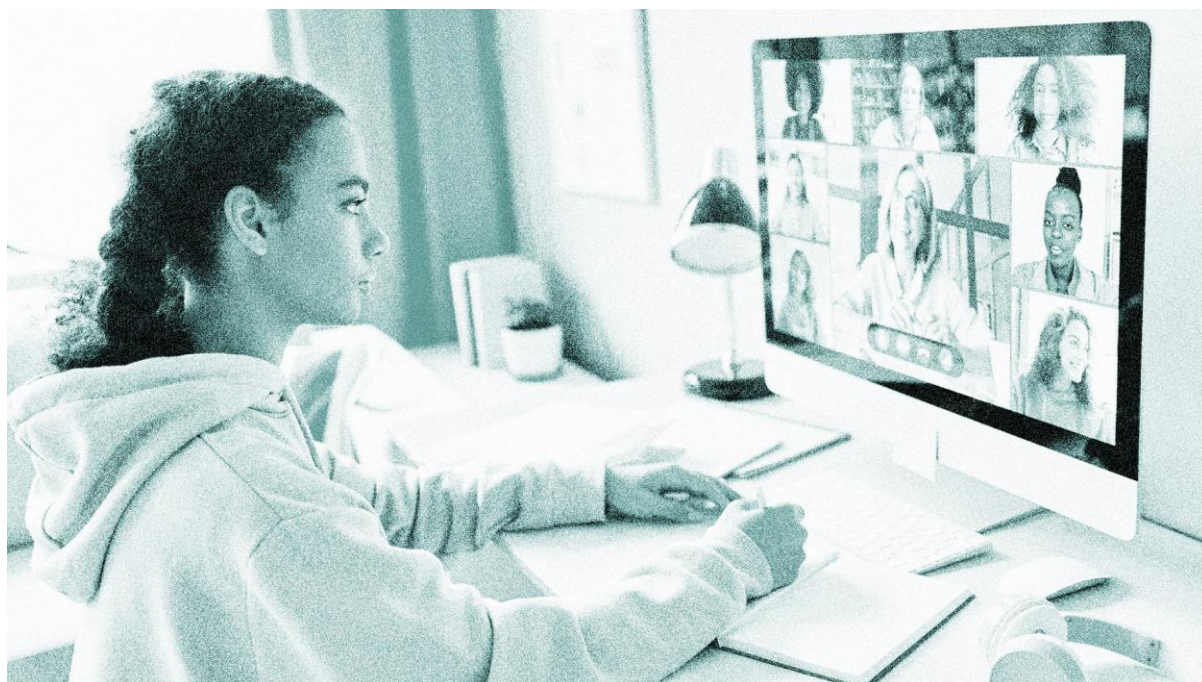
Listen to a research participant & colleague talk about their approach to online presentations, **please click on the link below.**

<https://sway.office.com/tTcYc5tyCxjCV6W1#content=HTkDBHttZOXIqN>

"In skill-based training – keep groups small so that people can share screens and engage with each other. Enable the facilitator and participants to engage with the software or content. This needs time and space – don't try to do too much, especially when content is new or unfamiliar. Allow the time for it. It's a really simple but fundamental aspect."

- Online guide research participant

Part 6 - Some last things to think about...



Being clear about the meaning of terminology and using accessible language. This applies to all forms of presentation, but is especially important in the online space. People's concentration spans are shorter on-screen, and it's easier to become distracted. If you use a lot of technical language, acronyms or discipline specific terms, you are likely to alienate your audience. Sometimes these are unavoidable. If that's the case, they should be explained fully and made accessible to a lay audience.

It's not a competition and you are not being judged. The style and tone should be professional and friendly. Most Festival presentations are based on sharing something interesting with a wider group than usual, or celebrating a quirky or interesting aspect of archaeology (i.e. bringing more people into it!), so try not to be too guarded or defensive, and it's ok to say you're a bit nervous if that's the case – we're also a supportive professional community.

People attend festivals to celebrate and mix with each other. How can we design a 'festival vibe' into the session (e.g. encouraging the chat function throughout, providing bespoke, unstructured time after for those who want to engage further)?



“Hybridity is the future. We need to recognise the potential of both online and in-person spaces. For a lot of community groups the online space is off-putting and difficult, but there are whole groups of people who prefer to engage in this way.

- Online guide research participant

Part 7 - Available resources



- You might like to explore [Heritage Digital](#), a new project supported by National Lottery Heritage Fund's Digital Skills for Heritage initiative, which aims to increase free digital skills training and support available to heritage organisations.
- With regards accessibility, [Drake Music](#) a leading organisation working in music, disability and technology have a comprehensive guide on Accessibility of online conferences and remote meetings.
- [VocalEyes](#) a charity who support blind and partially sighted people to experience and enjoy art and heritage. They have a wide range of resources hosted on their website including this one on increasing accessibility to online conferences
- The [Digital Culture Network](#) who provide practical support around developing online and digital skills. You might be interested in reading their short article on how to make online content accessible.
- There are a wide range of online conferencing services you can try to host your online presentations. While [Zoom](#) and [Microsoft Teams](#) are most commonly used, you can also try [Amazon Chime](#), [Google Hangouts](#), or [Google Meet](#).



Contacts and acknowledgements



We would like to continue to develop tips and ideas around this topic. If you have any further thoughts or resources you think it would be useful to include and share, please email festival@archaeologyuk.org

If you require this guide in another format that would be easier for you to use (e.g. large print, audio or a language other than English), please also let us know.

If you have any questions or comments about the background research for this guide or require any further information, please email claire@tialt.org or douglas@tialt.org.