

Synchronous vs Asynchronous Pros and Cons

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Dictionary definitions demystified...

Synchronous

adjective

- occurring at the same time; coinciding in time; contemporaneous; simultaneous.
- going on at the same rate and exactly together; recurring together.

Asynchronous

adjective

- not occurring at the same time.
- (of a computer or other electrical machine) having each operation started only after the preceding operation is completed.



Examples of Activities

Synchronous

- Live Lecture
- Chat
- Polling
- Breakout Rooms

Asynchronous

- Recorded Lecture
- Canvas Discussions
- Quiz / Survey
- Canvas Group Discussion
- Canvas Assignment



Synchronous Pros and Cons

Pros

- More interaction between instructor and students
- Immediate feedback
- Immediate answers to questions
- More collaboration possibilities
- More similar to traditional face-to-face learning that students are familiar with

Cons

- Lack of flexibility - students must be there at a specific time
- Students in certain time zones may not be able to attend
- Students cannot access the content later unless instructor uploads video of session
- Technical issues can derail class
- Quality of sessions heavily dependent on instructor



Asynchronous Pros and Cons

Pros

- Flexibility – students can access content at any time
- More student-centred - students can go at their own pace
- Instructors can reuse videos for future terms or other courses
- Potentially higher quality of content due to more rehearsal, editing, re-takes, support

Cons

- Potentially less contact between instructors and students
- Instructors need to schedule regular interactions to keep students on track
- Making videos is initially time-consuming investment
- Topics must be broken down into smaller “chunks” to decrease students’ cognitive load