

Collaborating remotely

Collaborating virtually on your 6.033 Design Project is unexpected and even disruptive. But many steps of collaboration will not be much different from what you have already been doing.

Strategies for collaboration	Tools & modalities	What your team will use
<p>Asynchronous communication is effective to schedule your workflow and share information: drafts, documents, your other deadlines, calendars.</p>	<p>Email, group text, WhatsApp, Facebook messenger, or any tool you all agree on. Whatever you were using before may still be the best option.</p>	
<p>Synchronous (real-time) communication is ideal for decision-making, brainstorming, system integration, and resolving disputes. Schedule these sessions and assign roles: meeting host if needed, note-taker, etc.</p>	<p>Zoom / WebEx if possible (could be audio only); scheduled chat clients if A/V is not possible. You can sketch on the Zoom whiteboard, share your screen or use a phone camera to show a diagram, etc.</p>	
<p>Establish organized, shared file storage for document drafts, to-do lists, sketches, slides for presentation, images.</p>	<p>Google Docs is often used for the DP; you might also want to use Dropbox. Develop a consistent system to name your folders and files.</p>	
<p>Project management: Assign responsibility for design tasks, writing tasks, and team management like running meetings and managing your Drive folder.</p>	<p>Shared to-do list may be sufficient; shared calendars might simplify deadlines and meetings. The Design Project generally doesn't require more complex tools (Gantt charts/Trello).</p>	
<p>Document management: Assign responsibility for solo sections, joint sections, figures, and editing for consistent voice.</p>	<p>Same tools as project management: Google docs for simultaneous work, Dropbox (or Google drive) as a repository.</p>	

Stick to the Familiar

Keep using your familiar asynchronous modes (texts, email, WhatsApp, or whatever you may have been using before to stay in touch with each other) to schedule your workflow and share information: drafts, documents, and yes, schedules, too.

Meet when You Can

Make sure that you meet face-to-face and have real-time exchanges regularly – not only with your instructors, but also just among yourselves. Allow yourselves time to hang out, be social – after all, you are a team. A good tool for these virtual get-togethers is Zoom (mit.zoom.us); not only in terms of “syncing” your work and to-do lists, but also to stay personally connected. Try to find a suitable time – different time zones may require a bit of negotiation here – using the modalities mentioned in 1.); assign a host for the meeting, either permanently or on a rotating basis, who will also be responsible to record the meeting with one click on a Zoom button. Make use of the Zoom affordances: Whiteboard for sketching, screen sharing to show what you have worked on, etc.

Have a File System

Use Dropbox Or Google Drive to store everything that you need to share with the team; and just like with any file system, make sure that you have a consistent, logical, and unified system to name these folders in Dropbox.

Manage Your Team Work

A to-do list in Google docs would be a good start. MIT has acquired Slack licenses, and you may want to explore the possibilities of this. Assign responsibilities, not only for particular design tasks, but also for team management: Who manages the Dropbox records, who is in charge of sending scheduling reminders, who runs the virtual meetings? Accountability is essential to build trust, and trust is one of the essential elements of successful teamwork.

Have a Writing Plan

Writing your reports is “engineering with words” – which means two things: Your report is, in some sense, an embodiment of your design; it allows others to evaluate and replicate your work. But it is also something that needs to be functional and effective, like any engineering project. Therefore, you need to have a plan for remotely and collaboratively writing the DPPR and DPR, just like you have strategies for remote collaboration on the design (see 1. through 4.): Who is in charge of which section, who will create diagrams and other visuals, who will reach out on Piazza with follow-up questions, who will revise/edit the paper before submitting it, etc. Be as detailed and specific as possible when you assign these tasks, and keep a written record (Google doc, spreadsheets, whatever works for you) with clear internal deadlines for written components, to ensure that your DPPR/DPR proceeds “on track”.