



# Lifetime Arts

## Adapting your Creative Aging Program for Remote Settings in 10 Steps

This guide offers key recommendations from Lifetime Arts to help teaching artists and organizations design and deliver remote Creative Aging programs for older adults. While most remote programs are conducted online via video conferencing, some may also be telephone-based to ensure access for those without high-speed internet or digital devices.

### 1. Prepare for Remote Instruction

#### **Assess your own readiness.**

Make sure you're comfortable using your online platform and equipment. Test your internet connection, camera, and microphone—your voice should be clear and your video well-lit. Depending on your art form, you may want additional tools or special hardware, such as a second overhead camera to show hands-on demonstrations.

[This video shows you how to work with two cameras in zoom.](#)

### 2. Design with Class Size and Art Form in Mind

#### **Don't equate platform capacity with class capacity.**

Just because Zoom can host 100 people doesn't mean that size is right for your class. Class size should support both skill-building and social connection.

- Choose art forms that translate well to online formats. Drawing may work better than ceramics for example, or story-telling rather than scene study.
- Before you finalize your offering, survey older adults to learn which of the art forms you've identified generate the most interest.

- Adjust class size to fit the art form and your ability to provide individual support to each student.
- Consider your art-making materials. At an in-person class, you will usually have all the materials a participant needs in the room, and sometimes specialist tools. Consider what participants may already have at home, and how you might get specific materials to students, if needed. It is generally not a good idea to design a program that will require students to purchase expensive specialist supplies.

### 3. Understand Participants' Tech Access and Needs

#### **Survey participants before the program starts.**

It's best practice not to make assumptions about people's comfort levels or experience with technology based on age. Participants will come to your program with differing skills and needs; some will need support, and some will be tech pros.

- Confirm participants have internet access and what device(s) they plan to use (computer, tablet, phone).
- Ask about their comfort level with video conferencing tools, and specifically the one you intend to use.
- If you can provide it, find out if they have interest in a one-on-one tech support session before class begins.

If possible, offer technical support before and during the course. This improves participation and reduces frustration.

### 4. Set Participants Up for Success

Before the first class:

- Send clear instructions and short "how-to" videos for accessing the platform.
- Schedule a tech setup session with each participant.

- Assign a dedicated tech support contact for every session- i.e. someone they can call other than the teaching artist if they are having trouble logging etc.
- Encourage participants to log on 20 minutes early to troubleshoot.

## 5. Adapt Class Structure for Virtual Delivery

**Balance live engagement with flexible, independent work.** *Zoom fatigue* is a real thing. Lifetime Arts recommends in-person classes to be a minimum of 90 minutes; for an online class of this duration, planning time for screen breaks is essential. You can also consider using both synchronous and asynchronous learning to reduce screen time.

- **Synchronous = live sessions in real time** (group classes, instruction, breakout discussions)
- **Asynchronous = individual activities done on one's own** (watching a video, reading a poem, doing a virtual museum tour, working on an assignment)

Combining both supports deeper learning, personal reflection, and community building.

## 6. Build Your Course Around S.A.F.E. Principles

**Lifetime Art's S.A.F.E. Planning Framework for Creative Aging Programs:**

- **Skills:** Focus on deep learning in a single art form
- **Assessment:** Adapt lessons to meet the needs of each learner
- **Feedback:** Offer structured, constructive feedback opportunities
- **Engage Socially:** Intentionally build in time for connection—during and between classes. Use breakout rooms or phone-based partner check-ins if needed.

[View our SAFE guide for more details](#)

In an online program, it can be more challenging to incorporate opportunities for **social engagement** or one-on-one **feedback** and **assessment**. Here are some options to consider:

- Use breakout rooms in classes for small group discussion.
- Encourage students to meet with each other between classes. Provide a loose structure with prompts for them to share work, discuss their process, or reflect on resources. This can be in person, virtual, or via phone.
- Start a discussion board or group chat on an agreed-upon platform such as Facebook or WhatsApp for conversation throughout the week.
- If possible, hold office hours via video or phone for one-on-one feedback and coaching.

## 7. Make the Most of Digital Tools

Use approved public-domain or Creative Commons digital content (videos, images, readings) to support learning and enrich the experience.

## 8. Establish Clear Class Protocols

- Share basic etiquette: when to mute, camera use, chat use, etc.
- Email guidelines ahead of time and repeat them at the start of class.
- Send these in advance:
  - Class overview and weekly agenda
  - Resource links
  - Short weekly feedback survey

## 9. Create a Virtual Space for Celebration

**Culminating events** are an important part of creative aging programs because they give people a chance to share the work they've created. These events can still have a big impact, even when they happen remotely.

Culminating events can take many forms, such as:

- A live video call
- A pre-recorded video
- A live stream on social media
- An online art gallery
- A storytelling project turned into a podcast.

These are just a few suggestions. If your program takes place over the phone, you can invite people to join a conference call so they can listen to the sharing of the work. The most important thing is that participants get to show their work and have their artistic voices heard!

## **10. In Everything, Foster a Shared Learning Experience**

Be transparent: let participants know their feedback helps shape a better class for everyone. Even though you are remote, create a culture where everyone feels they're contributing to something meaningful—together.