

OR in Education Virtual Volunteering Guide

Welcome

Thank you for your interest in volunteering with ORiE. Virtual volunteering is new to many of us, so we've put together this guide to empower you and ensure you feel confident when volunteering online.

What is virtual volunteering?

Volunteering online typically involves giving a talk or a webinar, such as talking to university students at an online careers fair. The exact format of the fair will differ, but it usually involves getting comfortable in a quiet room and talking to your laptop about how awesome OR is!

We might also run some online ORiE workshops, which would involve 'dialling in' to a classroom to deliver e.g. the Lego Furniture Factory workshop. The teacher will handle any in-person elements of the workshop, such as distributing Lego.

Virtual volunteering is a new and exciting field for ORiE, but as with face to face volunteering the Education Manager is ready to help with any queries.

General hints and tips

Do what makes you feel comfortable

For example, if you like to use a remote control when you're presenting, use one when delivering a webinar. Make sure you're in a comfortable, quiet environment to minimise distractions. Having a clock nearby may help you to judge the pacing of your webinar to stay on track.

Be Yourself

Your audience will appreciate seeing your face and hearing your voice. While looking and sounding professional is important, feeling stressed or aiming for perfection isn't. Most people will trip over their words once or twice or briefly lose their train of thought when presenting in person. It's fine if this also happens when you're recording a webinar, it makes you seem more human.

Make sure the audience can see you

The webinar will seem more personal if the audience can see your facial expressions as you present. If you create your own slides, you may want to account for this and leave space for your video to overlap the slides.

Practice makes perfect

An extra rehearsal to familiarise yourself with the technology you'll be using can help ensure things run smoothly. The school or university you speak to should offer this, if not the Education Manager can help.

Problem-proof your technology

Make sure your phone is on silent and sign out of programmes like Outlook or Skype that can generate pop-up notifications. Make sure your laptop is plugged in before your webinar starts. Back-up tech (webcams, microphones etc.) aren't needed, but if you do have back-ups, make sure they're on hand. If your slides are saved on the cloud or a server, save a temporary copy to your desktop so you won't have any issues accessing them before the webinar.

Make sure the recording is helpful

If your webinar is being recorded and somebody uses the chat function to ask a question, there are two things to bear in mind. First, people who watch the recording may not see the chat, so reading the question out loud before answering can add helpful context. Second, if you refer to or address an audience member, use only their first name to ensure their anonymity and privacy.

Encourage Audience Participation

Your audience may need some extra encouragement to get involved in an online setting. There are a variety of ways you can encourage participation, from asking the audience to make a note of key points or have a discussion with each other in the chat function. Most webinar software has features you can use to encourage participation. You can use polls to ask the audience questions, and the Q&A or chat functions let the audience ask questions. Some software allows audience members to 'raise their hand', so you can invite them to use their microphone to ask a question.

Be prepared for questions

Webinar attendees can submit questions when they think of them. You can either answer questions as they are asked, build in certain times to answer questions, review all the questions at the end, or invite a co-chair to answer questions for you. Do whatever makes you feel most at ease and let the audience know what to expect.

Using ORiE resources

ORiE resources are already designed to be interactive, engaging and easy to use. We recommend familiarising yourself with the slides ahead of time, as with any presentation. All of the resources come with speaker notes to make preparation even easier.

Safeguarding

If you are dialling into a classroom, make sure your webinar software doesn't record the webinar automatically. School webinars should never be recorded. It is best practice to defer to the teacher, who should be present for the webinar, on software and safeguarding requirements.



Creating your own slides

Introduce yourself

Personal connections can be harder to build when you're not presenting in person. Including an 'about me' slide in your presentation may help to overcome this. You can keep this professional or include a fun fact about you or your hobbies.

Use more visuals

In a presentation, the audience split their attention between the speaker and the slides. In a webinar, the audience relies more on the slides being visual and engaging as the speaker is less visible. Keep your slides moving to help keep your presentation visually engaging.

Highlight what you want people to look at

In a face to face presentation you may point or use a laser pointer, but this isn't always possible when delivering a webinar. Instead, consider building highlights or animations into your slides to help draw attention to your key points.

Avoid showing slides for a few seconds

If there is a slight time lag between your screen and what the audience can see they may only see a slide for a split second.

Show a slide while you take questions

Your organisation's logo or the 'questions' slide in the ORiE template would work well.

Thank you

ORiE outreach work wouldn't be possible without the hard work of volunteers like you.

Support & advice

The OR Society would like all volunteers to feel confident in delivering high quality, informative OR outreach. Don't forget if you need further help, we can offer guidance and assistance at any step along the way. You can contact the Education Manager by phoning 0121 234 7816 or by emailing education@theorsociety.com