

Using the Swivl Device to Encourage Communication in the Classroom with Remote Learners

By

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This school year, I have been teaching in a hybrid environment where most of my students are in-person, with about 10% of students attending remotely. It has been a challenge to create an engaging environment for the online students, where they feel like they are contributing and a part of the class.

My school purchased a Swivl device setup for our department's use. The Swivl is a device that works with an existing mobile device (we use an Ipad) as the video input for remote students. What makes the Swivl unique is that it turns and follows a remote mic, providing the online students a view of the speaker at all times, along with excellent audio input.

I have found audio to be an issue when teaching remotely. When using a traditional computer mic system, I would need to be close to the computer for adequate sound transmission to the remote students. If a student in the classroom asked a question, the remote student wouldn't be able to hear the student. With the Swivl, I found it easier to move around the room and maintain high-quality audio. I often pass the mic to students who are answering questions or presenting.



The Swivl setup does take some time; it is not as easy as plug and play. The Ipad must be charged beforehand because you need the connector port to attach the Swivl and you will not be able to charge it during that time. Once the Ipad is connected and the device's power is on, the Swivl app is opened. From there, the information about the meeting (ZOOM, Google Meet, etc) is inputted to join the meeting. When the mic is then turned on, the turning of the Swivl device on its tripod is activated. While this whole process takes just a few minutes, it is not as simple as just plugging it in and starting to teach.

The students enjoy this device and ask me to use it. They have told me they feel like they are more a part of the class because they can see their classmates and hear them clearly when answering questions or presenting. As a teacher, I enjoy it because I am not tied to standing in front of my computer camera so my remote students can see me. I am free to move about the room as I normally would have in pre-COVID times.

The Swivl system cost is roughly \$950-\$1300, depending on which model you choose. You will also need an iPad to work with the system. For more information, visit swivl.com (image credit swivl.com).



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