

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What equipment do I need?

You can use a variety of equipment. H.323 videoconferencing equipment (common brands are Polycom, Cisco/Tandberg, LifeSize, AVer, or Sony) works very well. You can also use a setup that includes a computer or laptop, webcam, external/USB omnidirectional microphone, speakers, and a projector or smartboard.

How do I schedule a videoconference?

We take all program requests through the Center for Interactive Learning and Collaboration (CILC) website at CILC.org. Create a free user profile on CILC before you place any program requests.

When requesting a videoconference program, please keep the following in mind:

- We schedule programs Monday through Friday from 9:00-5:00 Eastern time;
- Programs are 45-60 minutes based on the length you request. (In some cases, we can do 40 minute programs);
- We schedule flexibly based on what works for you;
- A group for one program can be 10-30 people. If more people will be attending, please place multiple program requests;
- We take videoconference requests on a first come, first served basis;
- We schedule about a month out. If you place a request with less lead time than that, we may not be able to honor your request;
- Due to the popularity of our free programs, our schedule does sometimes fill up farther out than a month.

Which grades are videoconferences lessons available for?

Third grade and up:

- America's Signs & Symbols, American Indians, Contemporary Craft Works, Found Object Artworks, and To See Is to Think

Fourth grade and up:

- African American Artists, Latino Art and Culture, Lure of the West, and Young America

Fifth grade and up:

- A House Divided: Civil War

All videoconference topics can be adapted for adult audiences.

How much do videoconferences cost?

Our videoconferences are free!

When are videoconferences available?

We offer videoconferences 9:00-5:00 Eastern time Monday through Friday all year round. We don't offer videoconferences when we're closed for federal holidays or on the second Tuesday of each month during training meetings.

What is the format of a videoconference? Is there time for questions at the end?

Our videoconferences are highly conversational. Presenters ask inquiry-based questions and interact with students throughout the program. Attendees, no matter the age, are expected to actively participate and may ask questions throughout the lesson. There may also be time for additional questions at the end.

Which standards do your lessons align with?

All lessons align with portions of the Common Core English Language Arts College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading, as well as for Speaking and Listening. Additionally, depending on the topic of the videoconference, they will also align with portions of one or more of the following: National Visual Arts Standards, Standards in Historical Thinking, National Standards for History for Grades K-4, United States History Content Standards for Grades 5-12, or the National Standards for Civics and Government.

Are any supporting materials available?

Yes! Lessons for elementary, middle/junior high, and high school students are available for each videoconference. The lessons support exploration of themes related to content that may be covered during videoconferences and may be used before, after, or even independent of, a videoconference. Links to downloadable lessons can be found with the program description for each topic.

Do you offer custom topics? Professional development?

Special request topics are offered based on staff availability and how well the collection of the Smithsonian American Art Museum can support exploration of the requested special topic. Professional development sessions for teachers are available based on staff availability. Please inquire about professional development sessions at least three weeks prior to requested date.

Who teaches the videoconference lessons?

Videoconferences are taught by volunteers who have been specially trained as videoconference presenters. Special request topics and professional development sessions are taught by Smithsonian American Art Museum staff.

Do I need to do anything ahead of time to prepare my students?

It can be helpful to discuss videoconference etiquette with students prior to the day of the videoconference. Videoconferences are most successful when the topic requested is connected in some way to what is already being discussed or studied.

Which topics are available to request?

Ten topics under the headings Looking at Art, Exploring History, and Celebrating Heritage are available. Presenters are happy to tailor a videoconference theme or select artworks based on teacher requests.

I requested a program awhile ago. Why haven't I received a confirmation?

Programs are scheduled and confirmed about four weeks before the month in which the program was requested. For example, November programs are scheduled and confirmed at the beginning of October. If you placed your request significantly before the month during which

you requested that your videoconference take place, please know we have received your request and will schedule you at the appropriate time.

How do you confirm my program request?

You will receive a “request accepted” message through the CILC website, as well as an email message directly from the Videoconference Scheduler confirming the date, time, videoconference topic, and presenter name. If you have not received any communication about your requested program, please check the status on CILC, then contact the Videoconference Scheduler at FulcherR@si.edu or (202) 633-8537 with further questions.