

Collated materials related to Watch Parties (blog post, Microsoft Teams post, Twitter)

Table of Contents

Collated materials related to Watch Parties (blog post, Microsoft Teams post, Twitter)	1
Watch Parties – What, Why, Who, Where, How	1
Watch Parties The hottest new trend but what are they?.....	1
Why run a Watch Party	2
Who plays the video?	3
Solution: The best way of running a Watch Party	4
Where is the video playing?	5
How to run a Watch Party	5
Twitter Activity	6
Microsoft Teams post on the Remote Teaching area.....	6

March 3, 2021 / [Fiona MacNeill](#) / [accessibility](#)
University of Brighton eLearning Team Blog
[Link to live blog post](#)

Watch Parties – What, Why, Who, Where, How

Watch Parties

The hottest new trend but what are they?

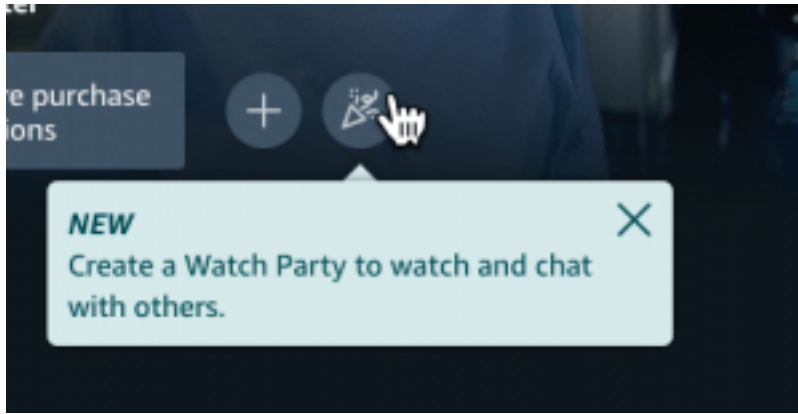
Watch Parties are the digital counterpart of an analogue concept established during the VHS era. The basic concept is:

“I have a video that we both want to watch, so let’s set a time and watch it together!”

More recently gamers and fan culture have revitalised this idea with the emergence of online tools such as [Twitch](#)¹ and [Discord](#)². Tools designed to facilitate the sharing of a live streamed video source from players/presenters to their audience. The digital form of the concept is also entering the mainstream via the likes of Amazon Prime which now offers a ‘watch party’ tool for select films and TV shows. Don’t get too excited though, you and your viewers have to all rent/buy the same film/TV show and you all have to have Amazon Prime accounts!

¹ Live streaming gaming platform – this application is not supported at the university.

² Social platform which supports video sharing.



The new Watch Party button in the Amazon Prime – found on the right-hand side of selected films and TV show episodes

Why run a Watch Party

Watch Parties have started to gain popularity in educational settings and the teaching arrangements during the pandemic, which typically feature a combination of live and pre-recorded content, lend themselves to the format. Back in January, Emily Nordmann from University of Glasgow created a [Sway presentation about Watch Parties](#) featuring some structural tips. A few folks at University of Brighton have been experimenting with the format (please do comment on this post and share your thoughts if you have tried it).

If you're doing online lectures this semester, one format we found works well is watch parties where there is pre-recorded content, but also a scheduled time where we stream the video and answer questions/do quizzes and discussion etc. [Some guidance here](#)

— Emily Nordmann (@emilynordmann) [January 18, 2021](#)

Before you run your own Watch Party, please **do keep reading**. As a prospect for students, it certainly adds a fresh spin to a lesson plan, so if it is done well, it could be an excellent strategy.

The Watch Party format in a higher education setting

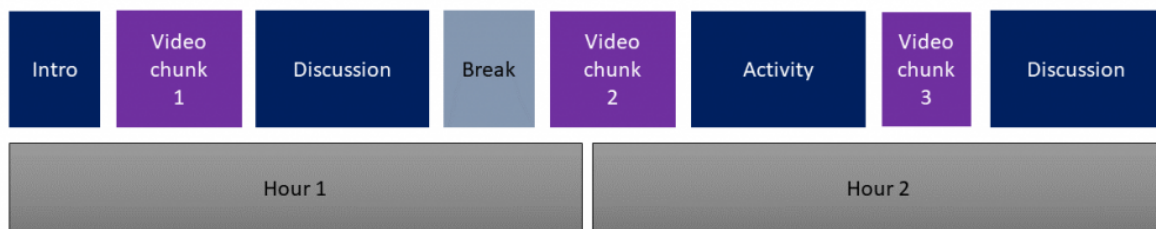
The format for a Watch Party session provides structured time to collectively watch a pre-recorded lecture video in chunks. Between the chunks there may be a class discussion via video call, online activities to complete, or message-based chats (e.g., the posts area in your Microsoft Team). The benefit is that the time is reserved for watching a long video. We know from research that long videos typically have low engagement; Martin Compton provides an excellent discussion of this issue [on the ALTC blog](#). So, in essence the Watch Party provides permission for the time to be used for *watching/digesting* and makes the task of watching more manageable and sociable.

Example format:

Taking a 40-minute lecture video and splitting it into two 15min chunks and one 10min chunk.

- Microsoft Teams call to kick off [10mins]
- Watch first video chunk [15mins]
- Discussion of the content in a Microsoft Teams call [20mins] – this is the prime attention zone and a good time to go through tricky concepts.
- Screen break [10mins]
- Watch second video chunk [15mins]
- Worksheet or activity [20mins]
- Watch final video chunk [10mins]
- Teams call to summarise and explain any further activities/learning [20mins]

Total time: 2hrs



Visualisation of the session chunks outlined in the text section above

Who plays the video?

The concept of a Watch Party implies that the instructor will screenshare the video content from their computer using the sharing options in Microsoft Teams.

Here are the main reasons why this is **not a good idea**:

1. **The experience of watching long videos via screenshare is not good.** It is a stream of a streamed content. It is akin to photocopying a photocopy. So, issues with audio and video synchronisation, freezing and loss of audio are common. It may be playing fine on your end, but not for the students. Your broadband connection and your students' broadband or data can affect the experience of 'watching'.
2. **Students cannot use video accessibility controls.** So, say you have a student who uses the closed captions (subtitle text) on videos, they will not be able to use those on your 'streamed' version of the video. Students who make use of accessibility controls may not have disclosed their disability, so it is not possible to assume that access to these controls is not needed. Also, if you have a noisy environment, no headphones and distractions turning on the closed captions is a necessary option for anyone.
3. **Digital Rights Management, or DRM is implemented in Microsoft Teams.** So, we have found that in some cases a video can play on your screen but if you try to screenshare it with others it is blocked by DRM in Teams, so the

'viewers' only see a black window where the video should display.

However, having said all of this we are still pro-Watch Party...

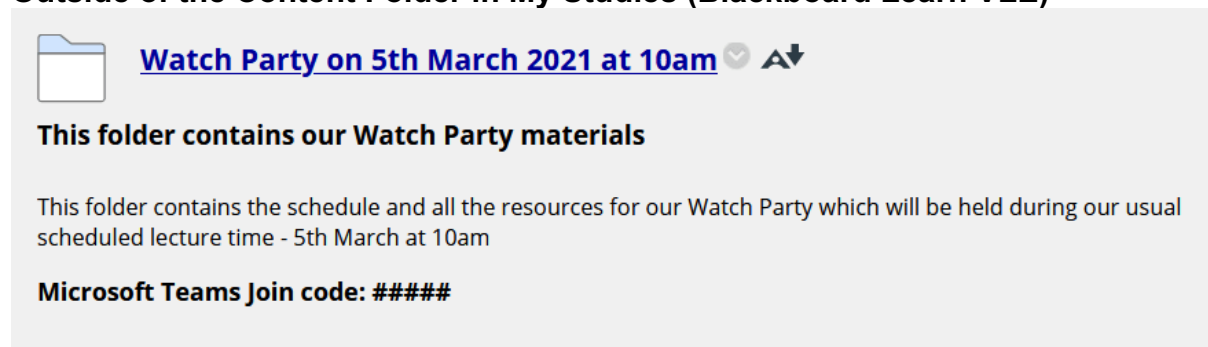
Solution: The best way of running a Watch Party

Run your Watch Party with the same format but you will asynchronously, yet synchronously watch together. What we mean by this is you provide a window of time for students to watch and then they all go away and watch the video on their own computers/devices using a link. This can work really well. To add to the feeling of watching together folks can stay in the Teams call or use chat to be 'present'. You can use it as a backchannel for discussing observations and questions about the video. To make this process run effectively we recommend setting up a folder in your module with the structure and links for the session ready to go. You can also provide these via the Microsoft Team on the day, for ease of access.

Please also be aware that you need to take steps to ensure that disabled students are able to access your content. These include, but are not limited to, checking the accuracy of closed captions. Also, if you have a video with limited audio description/exposition you may need to explain what is going on by providing an accompanying written description or an audio description track. Remember these requirements can support interpretation and cognition as well as being related to seeing or hearing the video content. If you need advice on how to do this, please contact your school's [Learning Technologist liaison](#).

Example setup

Outside of the Content Folder in My Studies (Blackboard Learn VLE)



The screenshot shows a folder icon on the left. To its right is the folder title "Watch Party on 5th March 2021 at 10am" in blue text, followed by a dropdown arrow and a share icon. Below the title, it says "This folder contains our Watch Party materials". A descriptive paragraph follows: "This folder contains the schedule and all the resources for our Watch Party which will be held during our usual scheduled lecture time - 5th March at 10am". At the bottom, it displays "Microsoft Teams Join code: #####".

Inside the Content Folder in My Studies (Blackboard Learn VLE)

Click on the image below to see a larger version on a new tab. The layout shown below includes: 'What is a Watch Party?'; the schedule; instructions for accessing the video smart chapters; the video (or if you have separate videos these would be here). Then any activities or worksheets would be included below.



Click on this image to open a larger version in a web browser.

In this example I have used [Panopto Table of Contents](#) to split up an existing lecture video into chunks rather than providing three separate videos. It would be worth demonstrating how to access the table of content in your session via screensharing so that students are clear on how it works.

Where is the video playing?

This is also a very important point. This probably won't be an issue if you are watching your own lecture, but if you choose to use third-party content such as BOB, YouTube, or Vimeo you do need to be aware of 'where' your students are. This is because there are digital rights management factors and content restrictions in different countries. [BOB \(Box of Broadcasts\)](#), for example, is restricted to use in the UK. This is an important consideration until all in-person teaching for all students resumes.

How to run a Watch Party

To summarise

- Let your students know about the Watch Party ahead of time.
- Provide the schedule and resources for the Watch Party in advance. Post these on your module area in a clearly labelled folder.
- Check with any students who may be located outside the UK to make sure that they are able to access and play the videos.
- Ensure that you are aware of students with disabilities and their needs in relation to the content. If there are any videos or aspects where you would

provide additional description if you were in-class make sure you replicate that in written form to accompany the resources.

- Build in a screen break/s.
- Ask your students for feedback during the session and how it went at the end of the session. Rinse and repeat to improve it next time.

Twitter Activity

Fiona MacNeill  @fmacneill

Have you heard of Watch Parties? If “no”, read my blog post. Do you want to run a Watch Party with your students? If “yes”, read my blog post. Inspiration for this post from [@emilynordmann](#) (thanks for sharing!):

<http://blogs.brighton.ac.uk/elearningteam/2021/03/03/watch-parties-what-why-who-where-how/> ... [#BrightLearn](#) [#A11y](#)

[Link to original Tweet](#) – This was my top-tweet in March 2021 providing confirmation that this was a trending concept.

Impressions: 3,670

Total engagements	148
Link clicks	63
Detail expands	50
Likes	12
Profile clicks	11
Retweets	9
Hashtag clicks	2
Replies	1

Microsoft Teams post on the Remote Teaching area

The Remote Teaching area on Microsoft Teams is where academic staff can write questions and share resources for feedback and support.

[03/03/21 16:07] Fiona Macneill

Watch Parties - everything you wanted to know but were (perhaps) hesitant to ask

Hi Folks, We have been receiving quite a few questions about Watch Parties and I know that a few people have tried them (*@mention* - I think?). I decided to write a [blog post summarising the best practice for running a Watch Party](#) and the things that you need to consider so that the format is inclusive and accessible for all your students.

I hope that you find this helpful and please feel free to comment in response to this thread or on the blog itself. Fiona **(2 liked, 2 loved)**

[03/03/21 16:10] @mention - reply
Amazing! I will share this with SASS! Thanks so much!
(1 loved)