



**Giving Teleclasses – The Pros and Cons
of Speaking to the Faceless
by Kim Pearson**

All of us know the value of speaking and teaching to promote ourselves as authorities in our respective fields. But if your services can be used by people all over the country, maybe all over the world, speaking and teaching can be too limited in scope. One way of reaching more people in far-off places for minimal expense is to teach or facilitate teleclasses.

Teleclasses are live, interactive training classes conducted over the telephone through teleconferencing bridge systems. Like anything else, there are upsides and downsides to them. From my experience, here are some of the pros and cons to think about when considering reaching your target audience with teleclasses.

Pros:

1. You can reach a lot more people this way. I've taught teleclasses that had as many as 500 people enrolled.
2. There's much less set up involved. All you need is a telephone and access to a bridge line, available through many online services. And due to this minimal set up and no travel time, you can do many more teleclasses per week or month than teaching regular in-person workshops. (See number 1.)
3. Your students are not limited to a geographic area. (Also see number 1.) I've had people in my teleclasses from India, New Zealand and South Africa, as well as New York, Chicago, Houston, LA ... you get the idea.
4. You don't have to arrange, or pay, for the space to hold your class. Your own office (or even your own bedroom) is all the space you need.
5. You don't have any travel expenses. With gas prices the way they are, this can save you big bucks. And it's not only you – your students don't have to travel anywhere either. They're in their bedrooms or offices too.
6. You can record your teleclass and put this audio file on your website – you can even sell it, if you want. So your teleclass can keep on giving.

7. You can transcribe these audio files and make them into articles or even books (with editing and enhancements.)

8. You don't have to give out pens to those who forgot to bring one.

9. Your students can leave in the middle of class and won't disrupt anything – or hurt your feelings.

10. Your students cannot interrupt or try to take control of the class (there always seems to be at least one who is more interested in the sound of their voice than yours. Haven't you always wished for a mute button for these people? Well, in teleclasses you have one.)

11. You can wear your jammies to class, and so can your students. Or you can even come to class nude, if you prefer to work that way. (This probably wouldn't work as well for video conferencing.)

Cons:

1. The vibrant sizzling energy that can be present in a classroom will never be as vibrant or as sizzling in a teleclass. You don't get to walk up and down the room, you don't get to wave your arms around in the air (or if you do, no one will see it.) And the students don't ratchet up the energy by laughing or interacting with others in the class. The energy in a teleclass is on a much lower frequency.

2. You will have no audio or visual clues as to what your audience is feeling and thinking – you won't know when you're boring them or when you're exciting them. It is possible, in smaller teleclasses, to keep the participants unmuted and let them interrupt or ask questions, but this will not work if you have more than 10-15 enrollees; otherwise you'll go over the time limit, which in teleclasses is a no-no. Also, many teleclass participants are the kind who sit in the back and never volunteer questions – the relative anonymity of teleclasses is what appeals to them. In a teleclass, you will not know if these back-of-the-room people are smiling or sneering.

3. Participants can multi-task (i.e., answer their email) and may miss a lot of what you have to say. They can be easily distracted by work, family, pets, etc – the details of their daily lives are all around them

4. Your use of visual aids may be limited, such as drawing pictures or diagrams on a whiteboard. Although this can be improved by doing a webinar instead of a teleclass.

5. Technology glitches can be fatal. I've never been on a teleclass where we didn't have to spend at least a few minutes making sure everything was working and all the students could hear. This is boring, to say the least.

Eleven pros to five cons. I guess you can tell that I am a proponent of giving teleclasses. However, you may be wondering why I'm qualified to discuss them. After all, I'm a writer, and although I've presented numerous workshops, series classes, and speeches on writing, I am not a teleclass expert, or a marketing guru.

This article is meant only to share my experiences and results from leading teleclasses. I learned how to give good teleclass through www.teleclassinternational.com. Their Professional Teleleader Training was outstanding and gave me the courage to think that I could handle this new medium. (By the way, this is not a sales pitch – I'm not an affiliate or partner of TeleclassInternational.)

The first teleclass I gave was on "How to Work with a Ghostwriter," sponsored by an article marketing service. Even though I'd taken the teleleader training and was an experienced teacher/facilitator, I was a little nervous. I wrote out a script, practiced it to make sure it didn't run over the time limit, and left time for questions at the end. I tried to make it as personal as I could, so that my personality came through as well as giving informative content.

There were 200+ people signed up and on the call (who knew so many people wanted to hear from a ghost?) But speaking to that dead air, after teaching for years in classroom settings, was *weird*. I felt like a comedian must feel when he tells a joke and nobody laughs. I couldn't tell if they liked me. No head nodding in recognition, no smiles at my bon mots, no frowns or puzzled looks if I was unclear, no shuffling feet or glazed eyes if I was boring, no frenzied scribbling of my helpful hints. No nothing. By the end of the hour I was sweating (good thing they couldn't see me!) and was sure they had all hung up. Then we un-muted everyone so they could ask questions, and the questions started to pour in. Good, intelligent questions. They had been listening!

I sent a follow-up to all the attendees, thanking them for showing up. And I got responses. People asked more questions. People signed up for my e-newsletter. People went on Amazon and bought my books. Best of all, I got new ghostwriting clients.

Since then (two years ago now) I've given many teleclasses. Besides "How to Work with a Ghostwriter," I've talked on "How to Wow Your Readers", "Mining Your Raw Materials", "How to Beat Writers Block", and my newest teleclass called "Writing with

Historical Authenticity". Teleclasses have become one of my primary marketing tools. They have not failed yet to bring me excellent results. Perhaps the same would be true for you.

© 2009 - Kim Pearson is the author of five books, including Dog Park Diary, and a ghostwriter of more than thirty non-fiction books. Dog Park Diary is the first she has ghostwritten for a dog. For more about Dog Park Diary, visit www.dogparkdiary.net, and for more about Kim's ghostwriting services, visit www.primary-sources.com.