Special Report

Online Course Design

11 Strategies for Managing Your Online Courses

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Ideas for Creating an Effective Syllabus for Online Learning

Danielle Geary, EdD

Online students need to feel an instructor presence in their classes. Thorough explanations and effective communication help fulfill this need and can transform a mediocre online course into a great one—and it all starts with the syllabus.

Structure and communication. That's what I've found to be the keys to an effective online course syllabus. Well, that, and something I call a chapter checklist to go along with the syllabus. I've discovered both to be essential to my asynchronous online foreign language course.

Now that I've been teaching Spanish online for five years, experience has taught me some excellent ways to both connect with my students and provide much-needed structure. I've found that small details often make a big difference in professor-student communication in an online course. As I go along, I'll refer to examples in my sample syllabus and chapter checklist (available for download) and explain why I've incorporated them. It really is all in the details.

Pertinent Announcements

After the course and instructor information, I present the most pertinent announcements concerning the course. I put them in red and even highlight some of them (See PART A in the download). Since I'm not there in person to go over the announcements with my students, this is a way to stress their importance. For my Spanish course, for example, they are expected to read and understand the syllabus, be aware that they absolutely must have their own computer access, understand that I use Facebook as a "classroom," as well as the number of hours they're expected to spend on the course. I also include the tech support phone number of the language learning website we use and encourage them to be familiar with it. I present all of these things right from the start—in red and yellow.

Autonomy and Self-Motivation

I take a moment to explicitly describe the amount of self-discipline and motivation required to be successful in an online foreign language course (See PART B). This is a way for me to cover this very important aspect of online learning since I won't be going through the course guidelines with them. Additionally, should this become an issue at some point in the semester, I'm able to point out to the student that I specifically stated in the syllabus that the course required a high level of autonomy and self-motivation, and that he or she chose to stay in the class with this knowledge.

Tech Support

In PART C, I go on to differentiate my role from that of tech support. I make it clear that I answer questions about the course content – not technical issues and user problems. I give them the phone number, email, and hours of tech support, and I link them to information about how to manage their accounts.

Communication

When teaching an online language course, it is essential to have a dependable, quick, easy way to communicate to students in real time. I use Facebook to do this (See PART D). I hold office hours by opening a post to answer questions in real time. I also talk with students individually through Facebook "chat," making myself available to help them get from point A to point B in a timely manner as they work though their exercises. Incorporating this feature into my virtual classroom has saved a lot of time and frustration! Having it on the syllabus reinforces the fact that there is an instructor on the other side of the submission button and that I'm just a click away, available and willing to help.

Technology Instruction

I assign a project that requires the use of a certain technology, so I outline the instructions for setting up and using that technology right on the syllabus (See PART E) for a two-fold effect: It signifies that it's an important part of the course while giving the student specific instructions on how to use the technology without having to figure it out. As tech-savvy as they are, there are things millennials do not know how to do, and non-traditional students appreciate the extra guidance.

How to be Successful

Providing some tips on how to study and be successful in my online course is a way to connect with my students and show them I'm interested in their success. I get positive comments and feedback about the "how to be successful" list I created for them (See PART F). I make it conversational and add some color and emoticons to add a personal element by showing my personality. This has been a valuable addition to my syllabus since I incorporated it a couple of years ago.

Academic Integrity

It's always good to outline some kind of honor code for your course. This may be your personal honor code, your department's honor code, or your university's (See PART G). Of course, students who really want to cheat are going to find a way to do so, but this is an easy way to make them think twice. It brings it to their attention and details the consequences should I find out they've been academically dishonest.

Grading Sheet

Because my course is asynchronous, students work on their own and can work ahead if they choose, so almost all of their activities are open and waiting for completion. This means that their grade in the language

learning website is not correct until the very end of the course when absolutely all activities and assessments have been submitted and graded; thus, I provide a grading sheet (See PART H) for them to figure out their grade on their own at any point in the semester. Additionally, this gives them a snapshot of exactly how their grade is divided and decided.

Chapter Checklist

I regularly get positive feedback about my Chapter Checklist (See PART I). Many students have thanked me for it and even said they wished they had one for other classes. It's really quite simple, but it's probably the most useful tool I give them. It's literally a checklist in which I list what they're to do by week and chapter. I include small blanks before each task for them to literally check items off as they're completed so they can see, at a glance, what they've done and what's left to do in each chapter. While it's true that this creates more work for me, it's worth it to know that my students feel grounded and confident in the completion of their activities from week to week.

Perhaps the most important thing I've learned in the last five years is that the small things are often the big things. Mention them. Express them. Explain them. Doing so increases understanding and curtails confusion, for a smooth, productive, enjoyable semester.

How to Design Online Courses to Enhance Student Engagement

Meixun Sinky Zheng, PhD

When designed and implemented effectively, online learning holds huge potential for education, but many online courses that we see nowadays are not designed based on sound instructional design and adult learning principles. Simply providing students with online content and expecting them to learn on their own is not an effective approach to online learning. Such online courses don't provide students with the high-quality learning experience they deserve. Informed by research and drawn from my years of experience teaching and designing online courses, I will share some online learning design strategies and tips that you can implement to enhance students' online engagement and learning.

> *Simply providing students with online content and expecting them to learn on their own is not an effective approach to online learning.*

Don't do online learning blindly. Before you decide to implement online learning, it is important to think critically about why you are doing it. You don't want to do online learning simply because others are

doing it. If you are considering redesigning a face-to-face course for online delivery, the first thing to do is to evaluate whether online learning is a good fit for your course.

Below are a few questions to ask yourself before implementing online or blended learning:

• What is not working well in my current face-to-face course?

• What is the nature of the content (i.e., is it technical or fundamental)?

• Will it work better if I move those modules online?

• Will I redesign only a few modules or the entire course for online delivery?

Don't literately translate face-to-face content online. One pitfall in online learning design is that some instructors simply move the content and activities from the face-to-face course to the online platform without making any changes. The issue is that not everything that works in a face-to-face environment will work in an online environment. Whole-class discussion with 60 students might work pretty well in the classroom, but the large class size might pose challenges when the instructor implements whole-class online discussion. In this case, it is better to break students down into small groups for online discussion forum activities.

Get students well oriented. If you redesign part of your face-to-face course for online delivery, it is also important to give students the rationale for why you have done so to get their buy-in. Explain to them how the online or blended format will benefit their learning. You can even show them evidence from research.

Sometimes we might assume that our students have grown up with technology, so they can easily navigate the online learning environment. Nevertheless, being tech dependent is different from being tech savvy. Additionally, being tech savvy in daily life is different from being tech savvy in the learning context. Therefore, it helps to give clear instructions on how to get started. You can do this by creating a two-minute course overview video trailer, providing a virtual walkthrough of the course, or giving students a syllabus quiz to make sure they read the syllabus carefully. For those who haven't had any prior online learning experience, share with them some online learning strategies, including how to manage their time.

Communicate high mutual expectations early on. At the beginning of the course, let students know what you expect of them as well as what they can expect from you. Expectations are mutual. Your expectations for them help guide their efforts. Letting them know what they can expect from you shows your commitment to their online success. For example, you can tell them how soon you will respond to their e-mail inquiries and how soon the grades for assignments will be in. Put this information in the syllabus and remind them of the expectations more than once throughout the course.

Provide a well-organized online course structure. Clear organization is the key to success in any learning environment. If students have to click on several tabs to locate the information they need, they might feel frustrated. It is a good idea to keep things organized by linking them to a central location for ease of access. For instance, you can put readings and viewings, assignments, and supplementary resources all within one module on the Modules/Lessons page in your learning management system. Students can

easily access what they need for that particular module with only one click.

Use multimedia-rich online content. Don't restrict yourself to slides and book chapters. Students find online content that is too text-heavy boring. Most learning management systems allow you to easily incorporate videos, websites, games, and so on to continuously engage students and to help them understand the content. You can easily create interactive content with such tools as SoftChalk, Captivate, or Storyline.

Support online interaction and community building. One of the most important factors contributing to student success in both the face-to-face and online classroom is social interaction. Your online learning activities should support the following three types of interaction:

• Learning–content interaction. Students need to actively interact with the content in order to make meaning. To help them develop a deeper understanding of the content, you can ask them to reflect on what they have read or viewed and discuss how they can apply their new learning.

• Learner–learner interaction. The potential of peer learning is huge. You can leverage peer learning by asking students to conduct peer review, work on collaborative projects using tools such as Wiki and Google Apps, and participate in online discussion forums.

• Learner–instructor interaction. Your visibility in the online course might greatly impact students' satisfaction, motivation, and online learning outcomes. You can easily enhance your online presence by replying to students' discussion forum posts, summarizing each online module before or shortly after it is over, asking them questions, providing feedback to them, and so on.

Use different methods to assess student learning at a higher level. Don't restrict yourself to quizzes or exams. While quizzes and exams are helpful in some contexts, they can't always capture student learning accurately. Using a combination of multiple assessment approaches, you can assess their learning at a higher level on Bloom's revised taxonomy. You can combine quizzes, discussion forums, reflective journals, self-assessment, peer assessment, and hands-on application projects.

Finally, remember that no matter what assessment approaches you use, it is extremely important to provide timely, personalized, and actionable feedback to students.

Making Visible the Invisible

Denise Tolan

How do great teaching moments happen? For me, great ideas usually come from watching bad television. One night, I found a show on the Discovery Health channel called I Lost It. The basic premise of the show is that you hear the motivational tales of people who lost weight. In the episode I watched, a woman told the story of her move to a small town in Colorado when she was 16 years old. The town had a population of 1,500 and the woman and her family were the only African Americans in the community. On top of that, this young woman, at 16, was six feet tall. Her discomfort at being "different," she recalled, was soothed by food. When she graduated from high school, she enrolled in online courses because she wanted "to disappear and be like everyone else." She quit her online classes after a few weeks because she felt "disconnected." Hmmm, I thought.

It just so happened that while I was thinking about this idea of "disappearing" into an online course, I also began teaching one. Each semester I use an icebreaker during which students have to tell the class something about their past, their present, and their future. Over the years I have become accustomed to seeing the lists of three things appear on the discussion board, so I was surprised when checking the board one evening to see a short post from a student in the class: "Are there any (insert racial designation) in here?"

I read it.

I froze.

I wondered if the term had been offensive to anyone.

I wondered if anyone had read it yet.

I deleted the post and I wrote the student, asking why she had posted the comment. The next morning she wrote back, "Oh, I was just wondering if there was anyone else like me out there." She wanted to "see" who was in the class. She wanted a cultural connection. She wanted to make visible the invisible.

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Online teaching is in a double bind as to how to balance the freedom of relative anonymity with potential isolation or the loss of diversity. Much has been written about the online classroom being a level playing field, but I wonder if a level playing field necessitates the stripping away of gender, age, and racial and ethnic identities. How do we honor diversity when we can't see it? Should we even try?

I thought about my own online classrooms. The semester after the war in Iraq began, the discussion board was lit up with students

heatedly discussing (and I mean discussing) both sides of the issue. In spite of my vigilance in maintaining a safe environment for students to openly discuss hot-button issues, some students did make hostile remarks about Iraq and the people of that country. Toward the end of the semester, one of the students revealed that she was an Iraqi woman who had married an American man 11 years prior and had moved to Texas. In the following days I got a lot of email from students who said things like, "If I had only known we had a person from Iraq in class, I would have…." Would have what, I wondered? Been more thoughtful, sensitive, restrained, considerate?

I thought of all the students I had taught in previous online classes who hailed from Finland and Uruguay and Uganda, and how they sometimes had names like Bob and Shay and Ben—names that enabled the cloak of invisibility to remain in place. What if I had asked those students if they would share their diverse lives with the class? I would never pass up teaching opportunities like that in the face-to-face classroom, so why should it be any different in an online class?

Of course, that is my emotional response to issues of diversity. But even in a practical sense, honoring diversity in an online classroom is critical. Each semester, I know there might be some form of cultural distance in my classroom, so I try to find a way to bridge those gaps. I believe some students are at a loss in the online classroom because of issues with language. Some don't comprehend written sarcasm while some fear the permanence of language and the power of the written word. My own mother, for whom English is not the native language, takes time to read every word of a document because, to her, the written word means power. But while there are studies on how to work with issues of cultural distance in regard to tangible academics, it is the essence of culture that is often ignored or overlooked in an online course.

So how can you incorporate cultural issues into the online classroom? The discussion board is the place to begin. Students can "reveal" themselves in a personal way on the board. Ask a question every week on the discussion board that extends the ideas from a major assignment and lends itself to exposing and honoring differences. For example, if you are asking your students, as I do, to come up with an argument of definition, ask them to also tell you how a person from another race, gender, age, or other able-ness might define the same issue. In another exercise, my students go to the Pulitzer.org website and pick an image from the photographic or editorial cartoon winners, and I ask them to tell us what visual argument the author has made. In another paragraph, they have to consider what a person "other" than themselves might say in response to that argument. It is astonishing how colorful those black-and-white text blocks can become when students are aware that who we are makes a difference in how we teach and learn.

> *"Each semester, I know there might be some form of cultural distance in my classroom, so I try to find a way to bridge those gaps."*

Is posting a picture of each student enough to identify culture in your online class? For mine, probably not. I can see the differences in skin color and age and sex, but I won't see what it is that makes you who you are unless I have the opportunity to hear you and

learn from you. I begin the semester with the Where I'm From poem. (It's easy to find—just Google it.) The poem is student-friendly and allows them to talk about their families, their neighborhoods, the foods they grew up with, and the languages they heard. I might have them do a culture collage—either a PowerPoint or a Word document or any program whereby they can introduce items and images that represent who they are. I also honor these cultural ideas by giving them a grade. Students see through empty gestures pretty well.

Okay—don't we have enough to do? Students have reading issues, learning issues, writing issues, issue issues—why should we care about culture in an online class? Isn't this the one place I can stop thinking about who sits before me? I can only answer these questions for myself: I want my students to be better global citizens. I want a rich cultural environment in all of my classrooms. I want to learn and to grow and I want the joy of sharing new things with my students.

I recognize the irony inherent in sitting on the couch watching a television show about losing weight. I know I have to get up and move if I want to be on that show one day! But I also see irony in online teachers complaining about the lack of engagement in their classes and then rolling out the same class, semester after semester. Where is the point in not utilizing the diverse backgrounds of all students? Who knows—in the process, students might even see themselves in one another and connect in a meaningful way. After all, for some of us, the cultural education within the classroom is the one that has the most impact once students leave us. I hope so anyway. That is why I teach.

What Online Faculty Can Do to Avoid Burnout

By Edna Murugan, PhD, and Noura Badawi, EdD

With the increase in online classes being offered by higher education institutions and the convenience and flexibility it affords (particularly for adult learners), it is important that institutions hire, train, and retain high-quality, student-centric online faculty. Just like on-ground students, online students need instructors who are passionate, organized, creative, and manage the (virtual) classroom effectively. Unfortunately, from time to time, online faculty can struggle with burnout, which may make them less effective instructors.

Although from the outside, it may appear that online instructors have a dream job that allows them to work from home and set their own schedules, many online faculty experience some form of burnout. The reasons are plentiful: taking on too many courses per term (often in addition to a fulltime job), the lack of face-to-face interaction, and the high volume of grading and feedback. It can be difficult at times to sit in a home office after a full day of work, offer substantive responses to discus-

sions, respond to student questions, and grade a dozen papers, all without the benefit of any in-person interactions.

With a new term about to begin, we offer a variety of suggestions to help online faculty combat burnout:

- Develop strong classroom management skills. For example, often students have the same questions as in previous terms. Proactively addressing these questions at the start of the course (e.g., via a posting or group email) will give students a strong start while saving you the time of having to answer repeat questions.
- Take breaks while teaching to keep the experience fresh. No one wants to sit in a chair for three hours straight, and it's unhealthy to do so. When you begin to lose focus, get out of your chair and do something that does not require mental energy.
- Have a set time of day that you log into your classes. When you finish teaching for the day, do not go back to it—being able to unplug and pursue personal interests is essential for maintaining a work-life balance.
- Have some soft music playing in the background while teaching—listening to some non-lyrical tunes may put your mind at ease and keep energy from waning.
- Call students for a more personal interaction—emailing all the time can feel monotonous and does not have the same impact as hearing voices and having a pleasant conversation with a student.
- Create a social media outlet where students can follow you. Set up an Instagram or Twitter account where you can invite students to view your content and help you feel more connected.
- Call a fellow online instructor to discuss curriculum/teaching strategies. Sometimes online faculty feel isolated because they do not have coworkers they can chat with in the faculty lounge. Pick up the phone and interact with your colleagues.
- Pack up your laptop and work in a café—occasionally working in a new location will add variety and allow the opportunity to interact face-to-face with others.
- Avoid eating at your computer. Eating at your desk can make you feel like you live at work. Instead eat in the kitchen or go out and enjoy a meal with family or friends.
- Open a few windows to let some air and sun in— feeling like you are always indoors at your desk in your office at your computer can add to feelings or isolation.
- Get out of your chair and go for a walk. The sunshine and fresh air will help you feel more alive!
- Take a break to have a conversation with a neighbor or friend.
- Join a group fitness class so you can get out, get your blood flowing, and get some face-to-face interaction.
- Take a day off from online teaching to recharge your batteries.
- Do not leave all of your grading until grades are due; spread it out over a period of time.
- Have office hours and discourage students from calling you any time of day or night.
- Join a professional organization where you can attend an annual conference to engage with other online faculty.
- Read academic journals and blogs to gain new teaching techniques and strategies that you could adopt in your classes.
- Read books purely for pleasure or join a local book club.
- Try something different in the classroom each term to break the monotony.

- Teaching the same course term after term could be boring. Mix it up by requesting to teach different courses.
- Avoid working during school-wide breaks. Those breaks are not just for students.
- Volunteer to spend time with residents at a local nursing home.
- Eat nutritiously and sleep well to be fit for the job.

Overall, these suggestions are meant to encourage you to tend to your instructional vitality and personal wellness, so that you can maintain your engagement and interest in online teaching as you grow.

Time-Saving Tips for Teaching Large Online Classes

Eileen F. Schiffer, PhD

Reduced enrollments and state budget cuts have led to increased class sizes at for-profit and nonprofit colleges and universities. "There are 2.4 million fewer college students in the United States than there were just six years ago" (Marcus, 2017). Schools must be creative in implementing strategies to remain solvent. Increasing class size is one strategy – in both on-campus and online classrooms – that allows administrators to benefit from economies of scale. However, students and faculty are negatively affected by that financial "solution" in many ways. There are multiple repercussions of increasing class size, including: decreased instructor interaction with students and provision of substantive feedback on assignments, declining student satisfaction, especially-concerning decreases in student learning, and increased instructor workload (Saiz, 2014).

The reality is, it's impossible to devote the same time to each student in a larger class as you're able to when there are fewer of them in the class; yet, fundamental elements of adult learning theory and online pedagogy still apply. Learning is facilitated by active instructor engagement and by the provision of timely and substantive feedback. In the online classroom, in particular, where students may feel adrift in cyberspace, instructor presence and responsiveness are critical.

How do you deliver high-quality education in classes with increased class sizes, while managing your workload within realistic time constraints? I've outlined below seven broad strategies to consider. Although the focus is

on online education, many of these strategies could be applied in face-to-face classes as well.

1. Modify assignments

Can some time-intensive assignments be replaced with more time-efficient ones that still target learning objectives?

Effective writing skills must be developed, but could some written assignments – which are the most time-intensive assignments to grade – be replaced with assessments and activities that challenge students without over-burdening instructors?

Consider assessing knowledge-level learning outcomes with auto-graded quizzes. Developing them might require more up-front work, but inclusion of one or two quizzes can significantly reduce grading time.

Be creative in designing assignments that capture analysis-level learning outcomes. For example, is there content that would lend itself to student-run debate forums? That would be a novel way to get students interacting with the content and then each student would be required to post a summary at the end of the debate.

2. Increase efficiency in grading papers

Reduce assignment length; it takes less time to review three pages than six. Decide what's most important to assess and, when possible, shorten assignment length to target those criteria. Be selective in determining what should be covered, and use the reduced page count guidelines as a learning opportunity; reinforcing the importance of conciseness. Remind students that shorter papers require crystal-clear focus and ruthless editing – both skills that will serve them well in their professional writing.

Grade efficiently. If you're not teaching a writing course, there's no need to mark every mechanical error on each paper. Identify and note syntactical, editing, punctuation, and/or citation errors for a page or two, and indicate that you'll focus all remaining feedback on content and analysis exclusively. Those few mechanical notes provide valuable feedback and let students know the kind of errors to avoid on future assignments, which should mean fewer missed points and less pushback on grades.

Look for one or two points per page that effectively (or poorly) address key learning outcomes; highlight those and provide a comment. Commenting on every well or poorly-made point in a paper is ridiculously time-consuming. In larger classes, that level of feedback would leave no time for anything else. However, taking a few minutes on each student's paper to note a few examples that demonstrate attainment of intended learning outcomes reinforces those objectives and facilitates learning, without demanding much time.

Use rubrics. Share rubrics with students before assignments are due. This helps them better meet expectations and reduces your own frustration and time-demands, which are increased when students submit work that misses key criteria. If your LMS enables the use of embedded rubrics, get comfortable using them; they can be huge time-savers! Otherwise, simply copy/paste your rubric on the student's downloaded paper, provide overall comments (utilizing a bank of often-repeated comments can save time, too), and assign points per criteria to help students understand how they did or did not meet expectations.

3. Use your announcements

Announcements can be time savers and

learning boosters. They can set expectations, clarify objectives, and offer class-wide feedback. By highlighting commonly-made errors on assignments, these announcements will diminish the need to repeat the same comments on multiple papers, and reduce the number of student questions posted in the course site or – even more time consuming –emailed to you.

One strategy: Post "tips" before assignments are due. These demonstrate instructor commitment and interest (increasing student satisfaction), and help students understand and meet objectives, which can reduce grading time and time needed to respond to student push-back on grades.

4. Facilitate your forums more efficiently and effectively

Track your posts to students in the discussion forums. This can seem counter-intuitive, but once you get in the habit, this practice can actually save time. I download the gradebook at the beginning of the term, deleting assignment columns, and then save a spreadsheet with a column of student names and one column for each week. When I reply to a student post during the week, I place an "x" in that week's column by their name. By the end of week, I can just quickly skim any new posts (since I'd marked posts "read" each time I'd been in the course site throughout the week), and focus reading only those posts by students I'd not responded to yet. This takes a little more time in the first half of the week, but makes the end of the week's discussion facilitation a breeze.

5. Develop daily course-site habits

Log into the course site every day. These daily check-ins prevent little problems from becoming time-consuming big ones and end up saving you time in the long run. A nibble-and-chunk, or dart-and-linger, approach to online classroom management can be effective. A daily quick check for questions and a few posts to the discussion enable you to establish presence and stimulate conversation, facilitating learning and increasing satisfaction, without consuming a great deal of your time. It's easier to budget your time by making two-three posts per day, rather than trying to respond to 10+ students a few times each week. Supplement those daily darts into the course site with one or two more time-intensive days, which will be less demanding than they might have been since you kept on top of things throughout the week.

6. Schedule email time

An advantage of online teaching is that we can do it anytime, day or night, any day of the week. That's a disadvantage, too, as it's easy to get in the habit of working continuously throughout the day – every day! Reading and responding to emails for a few minutes each morning and/or evening, rather than checking your inbox multiple times a day, allows you to budget your time, and reduces the inefficiency of multi-tasking. "Turn off all notifications outside of [your] dedicated email breaks so that nothing drags you back to your inbox" (Default, 2015, 3) .

7. Utilize your LMS tools

As online learning has grown, so, too, have the tools and resources to support it. Most LMS's have features designed to increase efficiencies and effectiveness. Invest the time to become proficient in your LMS. Learn how to organize and manage your discussion forums. For example, marking posts "read" at the end of each visit to the course site means

that you have fewer posts to wade through the next time you come to class. As noted earlier, using the LMS embedded rubrics can significantly reduce grading time. Automating notifications can allow you to prioritize and organize your tasks each week.

The bottom line

It's likely that increased class sizes will be the norm in higher education for the foreseeable future. It's in your best interest to develop time-saving practices that will enable you to efficiently manage your workload, without sacrificing student learning.

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Top Online Course Design Mistakes

John Orlando, PhD

Although online education has been around for nearly 20 years, I still see a number of common mistakes among online course developers. Here are the top course design mistakes in online education and how to avoid them in your courses.

Too much content

When I hire someone to design an online course, I invariably get too much content. Developers will assign over 150 pages of dense, academic reading per week, along with websites and other resources. Covering all of this content would take far more time than can be expected of students, leading them to pick and choose what they think is important, not what the course developer thinks is important.

The problem is that the course developers tend to think that covering more content produces more learning, and so assigning someone 200 pages of reading will produce twice as much learning than assigning them 100 pages of reading. But this is not true. We have a limited ability to absorb new information, and beyond that limit we reach a point of diminishing returns where we lose not only the new information, but also some of the old information.

Course developers also tend to have a "covering content" view of teaching, rather than a "learning view." That is, they want to cover every possible subject within a particular topic because missing one would be missing information. I had one course developer building an emergency management course

assign every process standard in the field because any emergency manager should know all of them. These are long lists of steps that mostly repeat one another in different words. But that is again the wrong view. The point is to teach what students will retain, which in this case is the fundamental steps of emergency management. What do the two approaches have in common? Once students understand this, they can always look up a particular standard if needed.

Finally, course developers tend to use themselves as the measure of time investment in doing course activities. They say to themselves, "It takes me an hour to read 30 pages, so 150 pages will take students five hours." But developers are experts in their field with a background context in the field that allows them to immediately understand new content. Students lack that context, and so it takes them much longer to read and understand work, probably twice as long, if not longer.

To avoid assigning too much material, always start with some time goal for the amount of material students will be assigned per week, such as six hours. Then find an algorithm for how many pages of reading or other content will fit this restriction, one that matches what students can actually be expected to do. Ten pages an hour is probably a good average for material that is not overly difficult.

Second, always begin the planning by asking what central concept is being taught in the week. That is what you want to get across. The content should all point back to the central concept to repeat and reinforce it. The goal is not to add as many new details as possible, like ornaments on a Christmas tree. The goal is to get students to understand the central points. If my week's topic is that up until recently the medical profession has adopted a paternalistic model of "doctor's orders" where patients were not allowed a say in their treatment, then I want to provide stories that illustrate that point. I want students to walk away feeling what it is like for doctor and patient to work in that environment, not the details of cases.

The goal is not to add as many new details as possible, like ornaments on a Christmas tree. The goal is to get students to understand the central points.

Finally, do not assign open-ended work such as "become familiar with this website." Websites can have many nooks, crannies, and links that take the viewer in many different directions. The student will not know what to get out of it and will give up. Always provide students with specific questions to answer when looking at a website or specific pages to cover.

Essay questions disguised as discussion questions

Too often I see discussion questions in an online course written as mini-essays rather than genuine questions to debate with peers. Students end up just taking turns writing their mini-essays to the instructor without any real engagement with one another.

Faculty should not require references in student discussion posts. Those just turn them into essay questions. In principle, online discussion mimics the discussion between peers in a café, and people do not require citations when expressing opinions in a café.

Remember that you are interested in what the student thinks, not what someone else thinks.

When crafting discussion questions, do not ask students to "explain X, Y, Z." That is an essay question. Instead, try inciting controversy with a statement that invites debate. In an information security course I used the question, "Forcing people to use complex passwords and constantly change them actually undermines security by requiring them to write down their passwords or use some easily guessable rule for making them. Do you agree or disagree?" This question allows for reasonable positions on both sides of the topic and can be answered with what students already know and some critical thinking, which is the whole goal of discussion.

Text-heavy content

Each mode of communication has its own nature, and the Internet's nature is visual. This makes videos the ideal content to develop for online courses, not text. A video can be used to introduce the module and let students know what they should be getting out of it. The developer can also assign articles if that is the best source of information, but a common mistake is for course developers to write out the content that they are developing.

A simple rule I use is for course developers to create a 5- to 10-minute introductory video per module. They can use the digital storytelling method of narration with imagery, or they can record themselves speaking live if they are comfortable with that. The point of these introductions is to set the stage and create interest. They should focus on what makes the module interesting or important and what students should get out of it.

The video must capture the student's attention and imagination, not just list the week's topics. One way to do this is to start with a story. For instance, I introduced a module on patients' rights by asking students to imagine that they were on life support and wanted to disconnect the tube and die. However, the hospital refused and strapped them down to force a tube down their throat. I then told them that this would actually have happened in the not-too-distant past, and it raises the issue of patients' rights, which is what we will explore in the module. Now I have their attention, and they know what to get out of the module.

Creating rather than curating

Faculty members are used to delivering lectures that they have designed themselves. This leads them to think that they should be creating the same lectures from scratch for an online course. When I created my first online course, I wrote out 20 or so 5–10 page lectures from scratch. I basically wrote a textbook.

But I was wasting my time and not giving students the best possible content. The Internet is a wealth of great content. The move to online teaching takes the course developer from a content creator to a content curator model. The value of faculty members is not what they know. That is all available outside of them in books, articles, and the like. A faculty

members' value is being able to identify the best content available and to present it in a way that produces understanding. Thus, a course developer's motto should be, "If someone can say it better than I can, let them."

This means that before designing any course, faculty members should visit their college librarian to find the best resources on their topic. Librarians tend to be left out of the course development process, which tends to focus on meetings with instructional designers to learn about the Learning Management System. But librarians are a course developer's best friend. They are not wedded to print books. Far from it; they are fundamentally oriented to providing customers with the information that they need in any format and are generally at the cutting edge of digital content. They will save a course developer hours of time creating content from scratch by providing leads on sources that are better than the content developer can create.

When I covered the Human Genome Project in my first medical ethics course, I wrote out a long text description from scratch. Then I learned that the National Institutes of Health had a wonderful, interactive site that explained it much better than I could. Now I point students to that site and explain what to get out of it.

Understanding Online Teaching and Learning Strategies for First-Year Generation Y Students

Loren Kleinman

There is an overwhelming amount of literature that addresses strategies to develop and facilitate teaching and learning in the online classroom as a way to engage and retain first-year students. Students and faculty in the online classroom are faced with a unique situation: classes without a physical classroom. Professors are also faced with a unique situation: creating a unified class that is engaged and well informed on the structure of the course in order to create a total learning environment (Quitadamo and Brown 2001).

Today, a vast number of first-year students come from the Millennial Generation, otherwise known as Generation Y, an age group born between 1982 and 2002. Despite myths of laziness, this generation is highly comfortable with the Internet and other technologies, thrive on quick (not too detailed) information, are multi-taskers and visual learners who prefer graphics before text such as hypertext, function best when networked,

and demand instant gratification and feedback (Howe and Strauss 2000). Grasha and Yangarber-Hicks (2000) suggested that faculty are pressed with the task of integrating technology into their teaching philosophies, and that technology should be incorporated to engage the millennial first-year student as a means to learn content and support student retention.

First-year students from the Generation Y age group call for utilizing technology in ways such as online quizzes and tests that provide immediate feedback to the students on their performance, discussion boards, embedded media such as YouTube and Twitter feeds, Whiteboards, Podcasts, and automatic graded homework (Wilson 2004).

Research suggests that Generation Y first-year students have a high attrition rate as a result of their level of expectations and enthusiasm for the college experience, which often leads to disillusionment. According to Education Dynamics' November 2008 survey by California State University-Northridge, reasons online students drop out include financial challenges (41%), life events (32%), health issues (23%), lack of personal motivation (21%), and lack of faculty interaction (21%). Among online students who dropped out of their degree or certificate programs, 40% percent failed to seek any help or resources before abandoning their programs. Nearly half (47%) of students who dropped out did so before completing one online course.

Allen and Seaman (2007) suggested that part of the reason for online student attrition is that faculty, staff, and the strategic alignment of the college is not vested in the value and legitimacy of online learning. Allen and Seaman (2007) also suggested that colleges that have a vested interest in online education's value and legitimacy have higher faculty engagement and less student attrition. Institutions that see online education as a "long-term strategy" are successful in student degree completion.

Their study "Online Nation," supported by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation and based on responses from more than 2,500 colleges and universities, considered five questions important to the success of online education programs, including barriers to the adoption of online education and why institutions provide online learning. Allen and Seaman's study provided insight into the framework and strategic alignment of online education. However, while the study uncovered statistics on faculty and administrator engagement as relating to quality and graduation rate of students, Allen and Seaman (2007) failed to reveal how generational differences contributed to student retention or attrition.

Access to online education alone is not enough to encourage student completion of academic degrees.

This study proposes that by incorporating flexibility, content, and community features into the first-year Generation Y online classroom instructor perceptions of student engagement may improve. Incorporating teaching and learning strategies and pedagogy that aim to listen to students needs, facilitate learning and discussion, and provide resources and access to tutoring and library services, will allow students to be more effective online learners. Access to online education alone is not enough to encourage student completion of academic degrees.

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Ten Ways to Get Reluctant and Downright Scared Students Enthusiastic About Taking Online Courses

Errol Craig Sull

Forrest Gump might as well have been talking about the profiles of online students when describing a box of chocolate: "You never know what you're going to get." Indeed, in addition to the geographic, age, and other mixtures, there is also a wide range of enthusiasms when it comes to taking an online course for the first time: from a level of total comfort and ease in using computers to major fear and anxiety. Many teaching online don't expect the latter; there is a widely held belief that anyone taking an online course not only is tech savvy but also has no problem in not being in a brick-and-mortar classroom (where face-to-face interaction with the instructor is taken for granted).

As just about anyone who has taught online has discovered, this is a major misconception.

Many students are returning to the classroom after years away—and to an online course, to boot. There are also the students who know little—and sometimes nothing—about using a computer, freely admitting their high stress level at now having to do a course online. And there are students who strongly maintain that the only way to learn is with an instructor they can see, hear, and talk with right in front of them. All of this translates into additional work on the instructor's part—something necessary and noble, to be sure,

but also something that can be minimized with a few teaching strategies:

1.That welcoming email is so important. If your first email is too harsh or impersonal it can really bother those students already concerned about taking an online course. Instead, welcome them with enthusiasm and interest—and always let the students know you are available and eager to help anytime. This approach will go a long way in making those anxious students feel less anxious.

2. Address possible student concerns before they're brought up. I have what I call my Mini-Guide to Taking X Course Online, and one of the sections addresses some of the pre-course problems I know I'll encounter from students (mentioned above). Just out of curiosity, I kept track of the number of students who would raise these concerns before I included the section and after—I had a nearly 25 percent drop in hearing from students once I added this section. It's not going to address every concern, but it does help— and every little bit allows for more focus on the course itself.

3. Anticipate student computer fears, et al.—and be ready for them. What I'm about to suggest serves two purposes: being able to immediately respond to most pre-course student concerns emails and saving you time. I type out a series of responses to questions regarding lack of computer knowledge, not being face-to-face with the instructor, etc.; I have these saved in one file called Student Pre-Course Concerns. When I receive an email from a student addressing one of these, I simply copy and paste my template response in my return email, tweaking it, of course, for that specific student. If you do this, have a friendly, I'm really-interested-in-your-problem tone—you want the students to feel you are not just giving a perfunctory response.

4. Never make yourself out to be a computer wizard. This is one of the worst things you can do, for it gives already nervous students just that much more to be nervous about. No one is born computer-wise—in fact, it really helps to let the student know you once felt the same way he/she does now (or at least were also once a computer neophyte). Your computer prowess will come through in your helping students better understand how to navigate through your school's computer environment.

5. Write students often—and not as R2D2. Depending on the online platform used (WebCT, eCollege, Blackboard, etc.) you will have opportunities to write students through chat rooms, discussion threads, team projects, overall class announcements, and general email. Do this often: students—especially those who initially were hesitant about taking the online course— need to feel that you are an involved, caring instructor, not one who simply pops in once-in-awhile.

6. Don't hesitate to talk with students still having problems. Sometimes, no matter how often you write (to the class and individual students) there is still a need for one closer step: the sound of your voice. This can be very reassuring, very motivating—often beyond what you can say in writing. And remind your students of your willingness to speak with them throughout the course: if it's a one-time thing at the beginning of the class students can either forget it's an option or— worse—think you really didn't mean it.

7. Never accept computer awkwardness as an excuse for late assignments. Do this and you immediately offer any student a convenient out for handing in late work. In the Mini-Guide I mentioned earlier, I remind students of one of my favorite quotes from Clint Eastwood's movie Heartbreak Bridge:

"You improvise. You adapt. You overcome." Translation: if your computer is not working or you don't have access to one for a few days, visit the library or use a friend's. I remind students that in taking any course they have a responsibility to get the work in on time (barring unexpected illness, catastrophe, etc.).

8. Have resource and contact information ready. There may be times when there is a tech question beyond your knowledge but one the tech department, your supervisor, or some other administrator will probably be able to answer. Have those folks' emails, positions, phone numbers, and best time to reach on one sheet that you can pull up when needed.

9. Always "sell" the positives of online courses that landline schools can't offer. This is a big plus in helping anxious students somewhat overcome their nervousness. Often, students are so focused on what they are concerned about in taking an online course that they forget—or may not even know—all the terrific benefits online education offers. I enumerate these in my Mini-Guide with an approach of, "Welcome to the exciting, interesting, and bonus-filled world of online education!"

10. Keep an online folder of all "yikes!" emails. This can assist you in so many ways, including preparing additional template responses for emails, helping you become better prepared the next time you receive a concern you hadn't thought about "this time," and giving you reason to search out additional support resources. My list is several pages long, only new "concerns" go in, and I have them broken down by category.

REMEMBER: Fear of the unknown can be easily assuaged by a flashlight of sincere concern, availability, and assistance—with a thread of friendliness thrown in for good measure.

What You Are Saying Online Without Your Words

John Orlando, PhD

It is often said that much, if not most, of communication comes not in what we say but in how we say it. We might say something that sounds angry, but our facial expression demonstrates that we are joking. Conversely, we might say something that sounds very friendly, but our facial expression indicates that the words should be taken as mocking. This is why emoticons exist: to recover the fidelity lost when a face-to-face message is translated into text. In fact, the ability to convey nuance in communication is one of the many advantages of providing voice or screencasting feedback to students.

> *"This is why emoticons exist: to recover the fidelity lost when a face-to-face message is translated into text."*

But Rima Al Tawil (2019) demonstrates that

there is a variety of ways in which nonverbal cues make their way into online learning, and it is important for instructors to understand these communication influences to monitor and manage the tone of their courses.

Timing

One feature of online education is that its relationship to time differs fundamentally from that of face-to-face learning. In a face-to-face course, the institution determines time. A student needs to be in class at specific times each week. Within the class the student must pick up the information the instructor covers, at the instructor's pace. If the student zones out for a minute or just doesn't hear something, they cannot rewind and replay what they missed. Yes, they could ask the instructor to repeat what they said, but how many students are willing to do that? Similarly, class content must fit into the scheduled time period. The instructor must cover a topic within the allotted 50 minutes even if it really deserves 40 or 60 minutes of time. Also, students who speak are usually cognizant of the time they are using and whether they are losing the other students in the class. By contrast, online students have far more control over time. They can access the material on their own schedule, write discussion postings at their leisure and pace, and review material as many times as they need to understand it.

As Al Tawil notes, the timing of events can send its own message in an online course. For instance, an instructor who posts replies to student discussions daily appears to be far more invested in the class and thus in students' success than one who posts only once per week. The same is true of personal communication with students in response to questions. Online students regard an immediate response much more favorably than they do one that comes a while later. Of course, the worst is no response at all. As one student said, "If I am ignored, I take it as a negative response. If, and when, this occurs, I tend to only contribute sufficiently to get my marks" (p. 151).

This does not mean that the online instructor must remain chained to their computer, waiting for the next discussion posting or email. Like everyone, the instructor needs to set up a work schedule that balances all their responsibilities. But there are things instructors can do to improve the timing of their work with students in an online course. For one, instead of checking in on a course twice per week for four hours each time, the instructor can check in four times per week for two hours each time so that there are shorter lags between student communication and instructor response. For this reason, I suggest that online instructors check in at least every other day. I also suggest that instructors check their class email daily during the work week and at least once every weekend. This schedule seems to provide a reasonable balance between instructor presence and workload.

Another option is to use social media for some of class communication due to its immediacy. Students are accustomed to texting and using social media at all times of

day. While an instructor cannot very well be on-call throughout the day, those who are used to texting throughout the day can tell students that they are open to text messages for questions to reduce response times. A student who needs a question answered to complete an assignment due the next day will appreciate the timely help.

bedroom, and over my shoulder dinosaur cartoons are visible along the tops of the walls. In one video I begin, "Hello, I'm John Orlando, the instructor for this course, and yes, there are dinosaurs on the wall. Is there a problem here?" Now students know that humor is accepted in this course. I go on to discuss why the class is important, alert students to

Hello, I'm John Orlando, the instructor for this course, and yes, there are dinosaurs on the wall.

Tone

Those who have been around for a while might remember the television show The Paper Chase (1978–79, 1983–86), which follows the fictional lives of law students. One character is the strict law professor Charles W. Kingsfield Jr., who wears a suit and bowtie, speaks with a measured tone that conveys high-brow academic discipline, and expects his students to emulate him. There is no place for humor in his classroom, and not surprisingly the effect is to put students on edge when they come to class.

Leaving aside whether a style such as Professor Kingsfield's is good for learning (I suspect that it is not), instructors must be cognizant of the atmosphere they are establishing with their communication. I personally prefer a lighthearted atmosphere, which I believe puts students at ease and in turn allows for authentic expression of their ideas, increases their willingness to contribute to the course, and encourages discussion that ranges beyond just "giving the instructor what they want."

I establish this tone right at the beginning of my courses with welcome and bio videos. I shoot my welcome videos with a webcam in my home office. The room used to be a child's

anything unusual about the course, and end by inviting them to contact me with any questions. It is important these welcome messages not simply repeat the syllabus; students can read that themselves. Instead, they set the tone for the course and motivate students.

I also provide a video biography. When asked to talk about themselves, many faculty just cover their CVs. This is a mistake. Nobody picks a course because of where the instructor went to school or what they have published. Students are interested in the instructor as a person. Thus, I talk about how I was born in Wisconsin and moved to Vermont. Here I use the digital storytelling format of combining narration with imagery, never bullet points. I use a cow to represent Wisconsin and a skier to represent Vermont. Students are likelier to remember where I am from and where I live when they associate this information with images than if I read them bullet points. I also talk about why I became interested in online teaching and my subject matter. My doing so helps create interest in the subject among students. Whether you follow this same format is less important than understanding that your tone and the format of your communication establish an atmosphere and expectations. It is important to send the messages that you want

to send.

Al Tawil also noted how the format of instructor discussion postings conveys a message to students. She compared a posting in the form of a single, long paragraph—much as you would see in an academic article—to the same text formatted as an email. The second version started with "Hello Everyone" and then used short paragraphs broken up by headings, introductory questions, and numbered lists. Students interpreted the first version as coming from as "someone who did not have time" for the class and "did not put enough effort into making their thought/opinion meaningful to their peers" (p. 154). Students had an entirely different impression of the second one as coming from someone who was "friendly, warm, inviting, open, inclusive, engaging, pleasant, fun, thoughtful of the time of others."

Consider how to use nonverbal communication cues in your online courses to set the tone and atmosphere of the classes.

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How to Keep from Going MIA in Your Online Course

Steve Swinnells, PhD

As an adjunct professor and one who works daily with faculty in helping them understand online education, I have noticed and heard of increasing numbers of professors going missing in action (MIA) while teaching their online course. This is particularly disturbing since engagement is the number one characteristic that faculty must strive for when teaching from a distance.

> *"When you personalize your course, the students will sense your presence repeatedly throughout..."*

Being MIA can take several forms. There is the extreme of providing no communication, feedback, or encouragement to students. In this case, the online course becomes nothing more than a self-directed correspondence course. Another form is when feedback is either not constructive (perhaps an assignment is hurriedly graded) or arrives too late for the student to improve in subsequent assignments. How can students expect a genuine learning experience when the instructor does not provide the guidance and help that is so desperately needed in a timely and beneficial manner? Yet another form of going MIA is lack of presence

in interactive assignments such as blogs or discussion boards.

So what can we do?

1. **Set times to "go to class."** I always recommend to my students that they imagine their online course as a face-to-face course and to "attend" on a regular basis. The same holds true for the professor. By "going to class," you can catch up on grading assignments, respond to emails, provide guidance for interactive assignments, and generate meaningful announcements that help keep the students on task. This will also prevent your own falling behind and becoming discouraged.

2. Find ways to personalize your course with your presence. Include media such as a welcome video at the beginning of the course, or insert media at the start of each module so that the student can see or hear you, and consider video/ audio feedback for some assignments. In addition, occasionally include a video or audio segment within your announcement section, so once again your students can make connection with more than a computer. How does this help you not go MIA? When you personalize your course, the students will sense your presence repeatedly throughout, and you will feel more invested in the course and more likely to remain engaged.

3. Seek opportunities to engage students in creative ways. Like any discipline, teaching online is not something one learns overnight. One professor I know writes personalized emails to two or three students a week with nothing more than a positive affirmation of some task the student performed that week. Another professor responds to writing assignments using a self-recorded Adobe Connect session so that the student can see and hear the critique. He finds that this encourages responses even more quickly than typing out or marking up a written assignment. Use a product such as VoiceThread to respond to discussion board postings—again, this is another way the student feels you are present by virtue of seeing and hearing you.

4. Use discussion boards wisely and often. Despite the calls for instructor-free student discussions, it is wise to intervene regularly, for several reasons. First, just as in a face-to-face course, you can prevent the session from going off topic. Students can quickly veer off point, but your presence helps keep them focused and on task. Second, students will know that you care about what they are saying. They know you will be looking at their responses—

responses that can be praised, critiqued, or called upon for more critical thinking. And finally, by remaining active in a discussion board, you can monitor any inappropriate responses. Your presence will certainly alleviate the fear that you have somehow gone MIA.

5. Remember that online does not mean off-line. Just because the content, assignments, and assessments are online does not mean that the actual teaching and instructor presence can be off-line. One could have a beautifully designed online course, but with an off-line professor, the learning experience will lack the depth, breadth, and richness of a true learning experience. You may not see your students but that does not mean they do not see you or are not looking for you. Make yourself available through virtual office hours. Once a week, open up a synchronous session using Adobe Connect or a chat function where students may come to talk with you. Better yet, conduct a review session prior to a quiz or exam.

Remember that teaching online is not a spectator activity—it is a participative one!

Ten Online Teaching Tips You May Not Have Heard

Noura Badawi, EdD

At a time when online institutions are in fierce competition for students and accreditation agencies are taking a critical look at online course quality, it is becoming increasingly important for online instructors to ensure that they are exceeding their institution's expectations.

Students are also expecting more from their online courses. And while most of us know the importance of addressing students by name in the discussion board and offering students substantive feedback on assignments, there many more things we can do.

In this article, I outline 10 online teaching tips that may be less well-known but can lead to a more positive experience for both professor and student.

1. Communicate Information Using Multiple Channels

If you have important information to convey to students, don't use just one channel of communication, use multiple. For example, instead of simply posting information only in the announcements area, or only in the feedback area, or sending it only via email, include the information in all three of these places. This will reduce the number of students saying they did not get the memo. Posting information in as many places as possible will result in more students getting the information they need to succeed.

2. Sync School Email Account to Phone

Contact your institution's help desk for instructions on how to sync your school email account to your iPhone or Android. Not only

will receiving email in multiple places reduce your likelihood of missing messages, it will also allow you to address urgent questions and concerns in a timely fashion. Students are often pleasantly surprised at my response time. However, it is important to set boundaries by letting students know when to expect a reply. For example, you can inform them that you normally respond within a 24-hour period, during regular business hours. This will help maintain your work-life balance.

3. Text

If you can't reach a student via phone or email, try texting! It's harder to miss or ignore a text message. Also, students will appreciate the fact that they can text you if they have a quick question. My students have thanked me numerous times for being accessible in this way. This tip comes with a caveat: While students will benefit from being able to text, it is also important to let them know upfront that it can take up to 24 hours for you to reply.

4. Create an Instagram account

Utilize social media to motivate and share information with students. Create an Instagram page just for students to include motivational quotes, memes, reminders, tips, etc. You might even include a photo or two of yourself, your kids, or pets! Most students enjoy getting to know their professor as a person.

5. Keep a Running List of Resources to Include in Feedback

Compile a list of helpful resources to send to students who are struggling in certain areas. For example, if a student submits a paper that illustrates he or she does not know how to use commas, don't just point out the mistake, but refer to your list of resources and include the appropriate resource in your feedback. A Word document, bookmarks folder, or desktop sticky note are great places to keep these resources handy.

6. Use Reflection Questions

Get students thinking more critically about their writing assignments by asking questions, such as:

- In what ways, if any, did writing this paper change your views about the topic?
- What did you find most challenging about writing about this topic?
- What do you still want to know about this topic?
- o What did you enjoy most about writing this paper?
- What did you discover about this topic that surprised you?

7. Create a Forum

If your Learning Management System allows, create a forum where students can go to find useful information and ask questions on a subject. For example, if you notice that most of your students struggle with APA, create a forum where they can easily locate resources on the subject and ask related questions.

8. Do a Welcome Email

If you have time, email each student at the start of the term to say hello and find out what they hope to get out of the class. Most students will appreciate the time you take to do this.

9. Promote the Rubric

Remind students of the grading rubric for the week's main assignment in announcements and email to make sure they know what they will be graded on to eliminate questions like "How long does the paper have to be?"

10. Reflect on Your Teaching

On a weekly or bi-weekly basis, ask yourself:

- What can be improved about my individual interactions with students?
- What more can I do to make this subject more engaging and memorable?
- What is lacking in my classroom?

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