

Best Practices in Online Teaching



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Teaching Online

- Teaching online is like exploring unfamiliar land. Individual components look familiar, but overall feeling might look different.



5 Myths about Online Teaching

- Teaching online saves time since I don't have to be at class.
- My course is very interactive. So it would not translate well online.
- Online courses do not cater the needs of students with disabilities.
- Students in an online course do not learn as much as students in a face-to-face course.
- The number of learners in online classrooms can be unlimited.

Some benefits of teaching Online

1. Gives students increased access.
2. Increased student interaction.
3. Ability to use the cutting edge online course administration tools.
4. Easy delivery of course materials to learners.
5. Use technology to engage global audience. ¹
6. Multisensory input provides more opportunities for engagement, interest, motivation, and retention. ¹

¹ Michigan State University (2006). *Virtual University Design and Technology. Why teach fully online, blended or enhanced.* Retrieved from http://vudat.msu.edu/benefits_online/

10 Best Practices for Teaching Online

1. Instructor's Presence
2. Create a supportive online community.
3. Set clear expectations for your students & yourself.
4. Use a variety of group sizes for projects.
5. Use both synchronous & asynchronous activities.
6. Early in the term, get students' feedback.
7. Prepare discussions that invite reflections.
8. Focus on resources that is easily accessed from learner's computers.
9. Reach out to your colleagues who have taught online.
10. Plan a good closing/wrap activity for the course.

10 Best Practices – In Detail

1. Instructor's Presence:

- Faculty student bonding is the key.
- Faculty interaction actively engages the students, and the class evolves as a group.
- The “Best online” faculty, according to students, are the ones who show their presence multiple times a week and at best daily.

10 Best Practices – In Detail

2. Create a supportive online community.

- Design a course such that the three dialogues of “faculty-to-student”, “Student-to-student” and “Student-to-resources” are about equal

10 Best Practices – In Detail

3. Set Clear expectations for your students & yourself:

- clear deadlines
- clear, concise directions
- clear, assessable objectives
- clear, thorough syllabus

10 Best Practices – In Detail

4. **Use a variety of group sizes for different projects.**
- Build options and opportunities for students to work together and individually.
 - Collaborative learning groups appear to be both effective and efficient¹
 - Utilize team projects that focus on critical thinking and real life problem solving skills²
 - working with partners prompted the group to stay on task when compared to individual project performance³

1 Curtis and Lawson, (2001); Oliver, et al., (1998)

2 Thompson & McGrath, (1999); Wegner, et al., (1999)

3 Oliver, et al., (1998)

10 Best Practices – In Detail

5. **Use both synchronous and asynchronous activities:**
 - Sometimes there is nothing better than a real-time interactive brainstorming & sharing discussion.
 - Other times the requirement to think, plan and write makes learning effective for individual

10 Best Practices – In Detail

6. **Early in the term, get students' feedback:**
 - Early feedback can help correct and modify the course structure.
 - This helps in better course experience.

10 Best Practices – In Detail

7. Prepare discussions that invite reflections:

- Online discussions are equivalent of class discussions in a face-to-face class.
- Provide an open question and answer forum.
- Encourage critical or creative thinking.
- Have the students get to know each other personally and intellectually.
- Support students in their own reflections and inquires.

10 Best Practices – In Detail

8. Focus on resources that is easily accessed from learner's computers:

- If the content is not digital, it does not exist for students.
- Make sure all the extra resources are accessible from their computer.
- Students also learn a lot from their own work. Their mistakes, corrections, suggestions etc. Keep the discussion boards and student discussion topics open to everyone.

10 Best Practices – In Detail

9. **Reach out to your colleagues who teach online:**
 - Collaboration among colleagues is very resourceful.
 - You learn by sharing ideas.
 - Contact our course designers for help with course development.

10 Best Practices – In Detail

10. **Plan a good closing/wrap activity for the course :**
- Take time to remind students of what 's Next, When the assignments are due, etc.
 - End of the course activity/experience could include student summaries, student analyses, student presentation by making use of their webcam.

Recipe for Success

- Provide students with learning tips, web etiquette and offer helpful resources.
- Make sure all the software plug-ins are readily available to students prior to start of the first class.¹
- Don't assume students know how to behave in a web course: You can require them to sign behavior and ethics contract, that outlines the acceptable code of conduct for the course.¹

¹ Lori Norin, Tim Wall (2010). *Best Practices in Online Teaching: Don't Assume*. Retrieved from <http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/online-education/best-practices-in-online-teaching-dont-assume/>

Useful Resources

- To create free surveys that you can send your students for feedback, use www.surveymonkey.com
- MERLOT (Multimedia Educational Resource for Learning and Online Teaching) is a free and open online community of resources for faculty & students to share learning materials, tips and pedagogy. www.merlot.org/
- TeachNology is a website dedicated to providing free resources for teachers. It includes lesson plan templates, rubrics, teaching tips, math worksheets, etc. www.teach-nology.com

Credits/References

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