

Principles of Online Teaching

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A teacher of online instruction “plans, designs, and incorporates strategies to encourage active learning, interaction, participation, and collaboration in the online environment.”¹

- ❖ *Guide learners* through the learning process
- ❖ *Encourage collaboration* and effective *communication*
- ❖ *Model active participation* in the learning environment



1. Facilitate Effective Collaboration and Provide for the Formation of a Learning Community

Collaboration is a cornerstone of effective online instruction and an essential part of building an online learning community.⁶

- Use icebreakers, personal introductions, and bio pages on *or prior to* week one⁴
- Designate a “virtual café” or “water cooler” for off-topic discussion
- Counter the potential for students and faculty to feel isolated when working online (Social disconnect is a commonly cited reason for dropping out of an online course⁶)
- Provide guidance and structure in order to facilitate positive, effective collaboration *throughout* the course
- Encourage frequent contact among students (e.g., student-led discussion topics, group projects, collaborative brainstorming, peer reviews³)

2. Encourage Active and Transformative Learning

Active learning encourages the formation of higher order thinking skills and the integration of newly learned content within a real world context. Learning that is transformative generates new meaning based upon both what was previously known and what is being learned at present.

- Ask students to state what they expect to learn from the course
- Pose discussion questions that require critical thinking
- Give students the opportunity to teach each other
- Craft project-based assignments that require students to make real world applications
- Provide opportunities for self-reflection (summarize, reflect, relate, apply)³
- Monitor for student engagement; learn to decipher between “being quiet” and “tuning out”

(over)

3. Apply Appropriate Online Teaching Strategies

The instructor's role is to facilitate student learning rather than simply imparting information to be consumed. However, this does not come naturally for students and should be scaffolded through guidance and consistent structure.

- For each module, present content and then follow up with interactive multimedia, project-based learning, and diverse assessment methods.
- Incorporate a variety of modalities in order to accommodate diverse learning style needs and preferences
- Design course activities to be flexible enough so that they might be adapted to the professional needs of each learner
- When possible, provide options that allow students to choose the type of project they complete

4. Maintain Ongoing and Timely Communication with Students

Students need regular opportunities to perform and receive feedback.³ An ongoing, active presence by the instructor is considered critical to students' success and satisfaction in online learning experiences.^{5 7 8}

- Provide frequent, individualized, and timely feedback (e.g., within one week of submission)
 - Information feedback
 - Acknowledgement feedback²
- Occasionally contribute brief comments within discussion threads
- Reach out to students with periodic messages via e-mail and even telephone
- Consider multiple communication modalities in order to enable student contact
 - E-mail (suggested 24-hour response window)
 - Office/mobile phone
 - Chat (e.g., Google, AIM)
 - Videoconferencing (e.g., Skype, Google+)

¹(2006). Standards for quality online teaching. Retrieved from Southern Regional Education Board:
http://publications.sreb.org/2006/06T02_Standards_Online_Teaching.pdf

² Cagiltay K., Graham C., Lim B., Craner J., and Duffy T. (2001, March/April). "Seven Principles of Effective Teaching: A Practical Lens for Evaluating Online Courses" The Technology Source, March/April 2001. Retrieved February 18, 2011
<http://ts.mivu.org/default.asp?show=article&id=1034>.

³Chickering, A. & Ehrmann, S.C. (1996), Implementing the seven principles: technology as lever. *AAHE Bulletin*, October, 3-6.

⁴Conrad, R., and Donaldson, J. A. (2004). *Engaging the Online Learner: Activities and resources for creative instruction*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

⁵Holmes, A., Signer, B., and MacLeod. (2010). Professional development at a distance: A mixed method study exploring inservice teachers' views on presence online. *Digital Learning in Teacher Education*, 27(2), 76-85.

⁶Paloff, R. M., and Pratt, K. (2007). *Building Online Learning Communities: Effective strategies for the virtual classroom*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

⁷Rossmann, M. (1999). Successful online teaching using an asynchronous learner discussion forum. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*, 3(2), 91-97.

⁸Swan, Schenker, Aviv, Shea, & Lin L. (2006). *Student satisfaction with online learning: A concept analysis*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA.