

The Making of an Effective Online Instructor

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1. Mindset: Be A Reflective Practitioner

Golden Rule: Be a reflective practitioner who is continually honing his teaching practice. Without this, it is unlikely that he will be able to successfully make the pedagogical shift to online teaching.

- a. Teaching online requires a whole different set of strategies, tools, and techniques. Repackaging a face-to-face class won't work.
- b. Take a "life-long" learning approach to professional development, recognizing that technologies and best practices in online education evolve quickly.
- c. Collect student feedback at defined intervals to fuel course revisions. "Every course is a Beta test."

2. Instructor Presence: Be There

Golden Rule: Be a constant, timely, and upbeat presence in the class. The instructor must replace the face-to-face interactions and immediacy factors (gestures, body language, etc.) with their online equivalents.

- a. Feedback should be prompt, relevant, regular, and personalized. State your response time parameters (e.g. 24 hours for email, 48 weekend, 3 days for grading) - and then keep your promise.
- b. Virtual office hours should be available, kept, and occur at times that meet online learner needs (not 9-5!)
- c. Use class-wide Q & A discussion boards to minimize emails and foster connectedness
- d. **Be IN the course:** Enter discussion boards, show emotion, praise students' efforts, send regular announcements, provide personal examples, address students by first name, use humor (effectively).

3. Organization and Planning: Prepare

Golden Rule: Course Structure is the cognitive framework and supports learning.

- a. Online courses are designed upfront before the course begins, course time is spent interacting with and responding to students, addressing difficult subject matter, and engaging in discussion boards.
- b. Use good instructional design principles: course topics based on objectives, a variety of assessments based on learning objectives, etc. Make it as real world as possible so that learners understands the relevance to them.
- c. Use a consistent course layout, since it is the cognitive replacement of the physical classroom.
- d. Provide clear evaluation rubrics for assignments
- e. Don't muck with the course schedule except to fix grievous errors.

4. Student Engagement: Build a Classroom Community

Golden Rule: Connectedness fosters student engagement. Design for opportunities for interaction and student contribution to keep them motivated and connected with the course.

- a. Design (i.e. plan) instructor->student (via presence) interactions & student-to-student interactions
- b. Express and have concern for student learning
- c. Provide a variety of activities and assessments (within a consistent course management structure) to vary the course and provide opportunities for different types of learners.
- d. Have students contribute to the course by adding supplemental material, posting podcast summaries or via class discussion.
- e. Include supplemental materials that are interesting and fun and engaging to students to keep them involved.

References

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.... plus a smattering of personal experience