

Teaching Online Tidbits (TOTs)

<https://bit.ly/TOTsSpr2020>

Suggest a TOT

3/16/20: Official Course Announcements

It's always a good thing to have one specific location for official course announcements. I suggest that you make your LMS (D2L) announcements area the location for official course announcements.

[More](#)

3/17/20: Communication & Feedback Guidelines

Nothing freaks an online student out more than not hearing back from their instructors. Help keep your students calm by providing a set of Communication & Feedback Guidelines. [More](#)

3/18/20: Cut Out Assignments

Especially with the emergency move many are making from f2f to online instruction, people should be prepared to cut out assignments/reading/etc. they were originally planning for Spring 2020. [More](#)

3/19/20: Check-in Assignment

Whether teaching f2f or online, you need to know your students to design and develop the best learning experiences for them. Assign periodic check-ins to get a sense of how everything is going. [More](#)

3/20/20: Announcements with Pictures

Close your eyes. Imagine the first article from one of your favorite scholarly journals laying next to the first page of an article from *People* magazine. Which draws your eyes first? Apply this to LMS announcements! [More](#)

3/21/20: Q&A Anonymous Discussion Board

In any class, we recommend that you create a discussion forum that allows students to anonymously post questions. This helps mitigate some email and provides students with the chance to see if their questions have already been answered. [More](#)

3/22/20: Detailed Submission Guidelines

You know how you hate when a student submits a paper without it being stapled together? Submission errors are infinitely more likely in digital environments. Help students, help you: provide them detailed submission guidelines. [More](#)

3/23/20: Assign Reading Major Assignment Prompts

How often has the timing of your lesson plan been disrupted because students asked more questions about an assignment than you expected? Of course, you want them to ask! In asynchronous online classes, you don't get that Q&A unless you assign it! [More](#)

TEACHING ONLINE TIDBITS



3/24/20: Write Expansive Discussion Board Posts

Don't write discussion board questions/prompts that have right/wrong answers...they don't lead to discussion. [More](#)

3/25/20: Give Detailed Reply Prompts

"Looks good!" "I agree." "I thought the same thing." --WORST DISCUSSION BOARD REPLIES EVER! You want good discussion board replies? Write detailed reply prompts! [More](#)

3/26/20: Protect Yourself

Teaching online can take up all of your time, if you let it. You are not and should not be expected to be available 24/7. However, you do also need to be present and active in the course. It's about finding harmony. [More](#)

3/27/20: Discussion Board Rubrics

One of the toughest transitions for new online instructors is reading, responding, and assessing discussion boards (or other smaller, homework type, activities). Be kind to yourself, use rubrics for discussion boards! [More](#)

3/28/20: Bulk Feedback

Once every student has participated in a discussion board assignment, the last thing you want to do is respond to every post. In fact, best practices suggest that students take more ownership over discussion boards when instructors do not respond to every single student in every single post (outside of introductions). [More](#)

3/29/20: File Compression

Students may not have consistent access to reliable internet or data connections while taking part in online courses. One strategy for addressing this is to provide materials that students might download to review offline. [More](#)

3/30/20: Captioning Videos

If we make videos for our classes, we should caption them. For those of us who have been teaching online for a while, this used to be an OVERWHELMING task, but new auto-captioning tools are infinitely easier to use! [More](#)

3/31/20: Take it off...line, that is!

Students may not have consistent access to reliable internet, computers, or even mobile devices while taking part in online courses. One strategy for addressing this is to make your course materials available for download. [More](#)

4/1/20: Lecturing is Good

No, really, we mean this. Lecturing *can* be used for good. However, we have a few stipulations... [More](#)

4/2/20: Why This Format (WTF): Instructional GIFs

Use a Graphic Interchange Format (GIF) to demonstrate steps in a process, whether it's how to do something for class (ex: submit an assignment) or whether it pertains to course content! [More](#)

4/3/20: Use Headers for Accessible Documents

There is **no** excuse for not making documents and webpages more navigable for screen readers; it's easy! Use formatted headers instead of font formatting changes (e.g., bold, italics, size) for your section starters. [More](#)

4/4/20: Alt Tag and Caption Images

We know images help catch the reader's attention, convey meaning, and sometimes are just about having fun. How does your audience know the difference? Make sure you Alt Tag and caption your images to help. [More](#)

4/5/20: Human You

What you wear, talk about before and after class, convey through the stickers on your laptop, all say something about you as a human and make you approachable as such. Online teaching can start to erase those details; don't let it. [More](#)

4/6/20: ePortfolios

Portfolios present an invaluable rhetorical opportunity for students to take stock, consider what they've learned, & make plans for how they'll use new knowledge in the future. ePortfolios don't have to be complex ... [More](#)

4/7/20: Design Courses to Listen

In addition to planning to engage with your students, you need to also carefully construct paths for student communication and instructor listening into your online courses. [More](#)

4/8/20: Develop a Listening Persona

Being a good listener means being present & engaged. It's one thing to design for students to communicate with you; it's another thing to critically listen & productively respond to your students in a timely manner. [More](#)

4/9/20: Listen to the Silences

In online classes, if we wait until a student reaches out for help, we may be too late. To support all your students, you need to plan to listen to the silences. [More](#)

4/10/20: Be a Guide

Like face-to-face instruction, online course layout & design can differ from between courses. You need to guide YOUR students through YOUR course; it can mean the difference between students participating or not. [More](#)

4/13/20: Accessible Texts: Hardware

TOTS FOR LITERACY LESSONS

If all the world's a stage, then we can agree that just about anything can be a text used for teaching. The trick in digital learning is making texts available and accessible to students. [More](#)

4/14/20: Accessible Texts: Software

TOTS FOR LITERACY LESSONS

<sarcastic voice>Our favorite assumption that instructors make is assuming all students have access to MS Word</sarcastic voice> Don't be the person we're judging! Access is about both hardware & software [More](#)

4/15/20: Accessible Texts: Connectivity

TOTS FOR LITERACY LESSONS

In the world of The Cloud it seems odd to talk about physical connectivity; but in this case physical = reality. Digital connectivity is through wires & towers & satellites & devices; a missing link breaks down connectivity [More](#)

4/16/20: Accessible Texts: Modality/Media

TOTS FOR LITERACY LESSONS

Making a text accessible means providing alternative access to the text in multiple modalities and media. [More](#)

4/17/20: Accessible Texts: Process Knowledge

TOTS FOR LITERACY LESSONS

Many people assume the younger generation of students magically have AND *know how to use* all the current technologies. Don't make that mistake too. [More](#)

4/20/20: Facilitate Mindful Reading

TOTS FOR LITERACY LESSONS

Two decades of research shows people read online materials more quickly: "they're far more likely to scan than read word for word" (Moran, 2020). Therefore, online educators must design activities that facilitate mindful reading. [More](#)

4/21/20: Highlight to Identify

TOTS FOR LITERACY LESSONS

Whether in print or digital, highlighting texts that we are reading is easy; almost too easy. If strategically designed as an activity to help read the text, highlighting can be extremely useful. [More](#)

4/22/20: Question the Text

TOTS FOR LITERACY LESSONS

A benefit of assigning digital texts is that students can write on it without ruining the material object. Require students to write on their books (& webpages & videos &...)! [More](#)

[4/23/20: Code Highlighting & Annotations](#)

TOTS FOR LITERACY LESSONS

Ever go back to a reading you highlighted & annotated texts and struggle to figure out what your past self was thinking? Prompt students to develop highlighting & annotating keys for their reading notes.

[More](#)

[4/24/20: Collaborative Annotations](#)

TOTS FOR LITERACY LESSONS

Talking about a text helps with learning, and when using digital texts, we can start those conversations directly on the text itself. [More](#)

[4/27/20: Articulate Feedback Plans](#)

As you wrap up the semester, you'll want to be clear about the feedback your students should expect. Make sure they know when, where, & how you will provide feedback & grades for homework, projects, exams, & course [More](#)

[4/28/20: Use Observable & Measurable Outcomes & Rubrics](#)

As we wrap up the semester, it's important to articulate clear outcomes about our assessments. Grading criteria that is observable & measurable makes it easy for students to meet requirements & for teachers to assess. [More](#)

[4/29/20: Plan for Oh \\$#!^](#)

When teaching online, we expect technology to fail. Links are broken, files are empty, uploads didn't upload, webpages didn't publish, work was submitted to the wrong place... Make sure you & your students are prepared [More](#)

[4/30/20: Map Course Goals](#)

Over the last few weeks, you may have removed assignments or changed them drastically to make classes more manageable for students. That doesn't mean you weren't reaching course goals; make sure your students know it [More](#)

[5/1/20: Final Grade Calculation](#)

This tidbit is COVID-19 specific. Many of us are working in a semester that started out fine. You'll need to decide what weight each part of the semester holds for student's final grades, & then do the math for them. [More](#)

[5/4/20: Multimodal Archiving & Note Taking](#)

TOTS FOR LITERACY LESSONS

Consuming texts and collecting data is a multimodal experience; why wouldn't your notes reflect that process? [More](#)

[5/5/20: Journal Reading & Research](#)

TOTS FOR LITERACY LESSONS

It's critical to take notes when doing reading or research for academic purposes. Using well designed digital journaling environments will help students prepare for future projects and exams. [More](#)

5/6/20: Source/Citation Trackers

TOTS FOR LITERACY LESSONS

Having a good system for tracking sources & citations is crucial for any research project. The better systems involve using some sort of digital technology that allow for both tracking the source & taking notes. [More](#)

5/7/20: Rhetorical Analysis

TOTS FOR LITERACY LESSONS

Rhetorical analysis is not specific to online spaces, but doing a rhetorical analysis in online spaces can prove challenging because of the fluidity of the internet. [More](#)

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