

Checklist of Online Student Engagement Strategies

Boomer	don't mind using tech but appreciate walkthroughs on how to use the technology tools that you've provided	Respond well to storytelling—they appreciate experience	structured learning with clear guidelines	value team- and relationship-building
Gen X	have experience watching tech make huge jumps—are digitally adaptive	respond well to real-world assignments and case studies	prefer a structured environment that includes some lectures and small group activities	gravitate towards self-directed educational opportunities that allow them to learn on their own time
Millennials	first to be called digital natives due to their high technological fluency	value information that they can relate to and apply practically	prefer precise learning with bite-sized content instead of going through elaborate lessons	they enjoy communicating, sharing ideas and knowledge, as well as learning and discussing things with each other using technology
Gen Z	true digital natives, they do not remember a time before smartphones or Google—known to be tech-savvy	Is very career minded and appreciates relevance in learning	predominantly learns by doing and prefers active learning environments	they crave community and connection but not in the form of traditional group work

All of the above “preferences” can be seen as generalizations, and there is research that suggests generational labels perpetuate stereotyping. Research recognizes that a person's learning preferences are shaped by a myriad of factors including maturity and experience; over time learning preferences can change. However, if educators can use strategies that appeal to a broad range of students that is a step toward equity. Inclusive teaching and learning practices benefit all students.

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- ☐ Include a short and easy student inventory at the start of the course to collect some details about student interests, goals, learning preferences, and past experiences. Consider the inventory results to tweak assignments to increase relevance and engagement. This will help to draw on the students' need for real-world application of the content. This inventory can be as simple as a Google or MS form.
- ☐ Tell short applicable stories while teaching to build a relationship with students. This promotes a sense of community and belonging while creating a positive environment. If you video these short sections of the synchronous class, your async learners will not be left out.
- ☐ Breaking up the information to avoid cognitive overload is helpful for all students! You can incorporate videos, images, and interactive multimedia into face-to-face and online learning which will help to break up the information. This is a form of chunking that helps to maintain learner engagement and make the learning experience more enjoyable, but remember to keep sections short to battle attention deficits. Several short videos [5 minutes or less] with activities in between them are more effective than one long video to keep students' attention. The same material can be used synchronously and asynchronously.
- ☐ Give explicit instructions and model everything, every assignment, especially online discussion boards. Modeling will help students who may not feel comfortable with the technology get a better understanding. Using non-examples can help students understand what to do by seeing what not to

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do. Requesting that students ask their peers a question in their initial discussion post can result in better peer responses and set the tone for a conversational, inquisitive classroom environment.

- ☐ Encourage students to collaborate, create, and share experiences. Collaboration can be simple using polling applications or online presentation apps that let students create and format presentations and work with other people—even students who work async want to feel connected.
- ☐ Provide specific and applicable feedback often! Specific and applicable feedback improves student motivation and, ultimately, a learner's attainment. Meaningful feedback that pinpoints an area for improvement and gives suggestions goes a long way. Instructors who participate in their own discussion boards have frequent success building relationships with students. Many learning management systems allow audio recordings in the grading section and it is a great way to make a student feel that they received personal attention and have a relationship with their instructor.
- ☐ Including students in decisions when possible is a good practice for engaging adults; co-creating strategies, resources, and methods for instruction. This can be as simple as asking students to find a short video that illustrates the concept or problem that is being covered, often students deliver good resources that can be reused in an instructor's future classes.