

Tips for Instructors and Students Moving to Online Learning

This document was created by graduate students in IS590EL (eLearning) in the School of Information Sciences at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (instructor: Melissa Wong). In addition to studying eLearning, we are taking (or in my case, teaching) the class online and most students in the course have taken multiple online classes. As part of a class discussion on #ContinuityInstruction and emergency planning, we brainstormed advice to share with instructors and students who are suddenly teaching and learning online. We apologize for any duplication (or grammatical mistakes) and would point out that this document is evidence of what's possible in online environments. In under 40 minutes, we brainstormed, identified themes, broke into groups to collate and edit ideas, and created our finished product (there was a tiny bit of post-class editing to add this introduction and improve accessibility). We hope you find some useful advice!

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Instructors: Tips on How to Support Students

- Accessibility guide / tips
 - Check out free captioning software
 - [Pocket Guide to Inclusive Social Media](#)
 - [Create Accessible Course Content - University of Maryland](#)
- Check out [tips](#) on how to make sure you're respecting student privacy, especially if you're using technologies that aren't provided through the university or your institution.
- Create an outline / keep an assignment page for due dates.
- Set expectations but talk to the students to see what works best for them.
- Communication
 - Email often.
 - Keep open channels of communication for both yourself and between students.
 - Have a way for students and faculty to engage with one another.
 - Find a way to move office hours online, too (or be flexible with setting up times to call/Skype with students who need it).
 - Be responsive in regard to communication. Remember that this is all new to your students as well and they will probably be panic emailing you. Be responsive and understanding.
- Don't post everything at once, roll it out slowly so students do not get overwhelmed.
 - Make content in small bites to avoid overloading students.
 - Keep things simple.

- Send out slides/handouts ahead of time if possible or afterwards for people who may miss sessions/have trouble connecting/want to review.
- Focus on meeting your outcomes.
- Have checkpoints as you go for students to make sure they are doing things correctly, and for you to know they understand--could be simple like a Google form "quiz."

Instructors: Tips for Asynchronous Instruction

- Make content in small bites to avoid overloading students
 - Don't record hour long lectures; break them up into shorter videos based on a topic or learning outcome
 - Focus on the basics: keep it simple, accessible, don't overload on information
 - Think of the lesson's organization before putting it online and be flexible in deleting material out
 - Focus on meeting your outcomes
 - Don't post everything at once, roll it out slowly so students do not get overwhelmed
- Screencasts are a great way to teach a concept that is not easily read and immediately understood--they also help include verbal instruction to not overload learners.
 - Don't worry about using video, audio with slides (a.k.a. slidecast) is just fine!
 - Caption your videos
 - Youtube has free captioning software, but you must edit the automatically generated captions so that they're accurate
 - Keep slides relatively simple: focus on what you would be working on if you were in a face to face lesson. If you wouldn't add graphics/pictures/sounds in class, don't put it in your slides.
 - Don't just type your whole lecture onto your slides
- Create an outline/ keep an assignment page for due dates and assignment instructions
- Make sure you build assessments into your lessons
 - For example, have checkpoints as you go for students to make sure they are doing things right, and for you to know they understand--could be simple like a google form "quiz"
- Allow for multiple avenues for students to express themselves
 - For example, forum posts could be in many different forms, not just a standard written response (videos? gifs?)
- Have a way for students and faculty to engage with one another
 - Keep open channels of communication for both yourself and between students.
 - For example: Introductions, Exit slips, Places to provide feedback and comments, open forums
- Encourage students to stay on top of each week's assignments
 - For example send emails weekly about due dates

- Be flexible with deadlines, everyone is adjusting to a lot and may have to move/find a place to stay, may not have consistent internet access/bandwidth, etc.

Instructors: Tips for Synchronous Instruction

- Course Management
 - Offer alternative “attendance” options (completing an activity, etc.) to students who can't make it to an online classroom for whatever reason.
 - Make sure you're respecting student privacy, especially if you're using technologies that aren't provided through the university or your institution.
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 - Be flexible with deadlines, everyone is adjusting a lot and may have to move/find a place to stay.
 - Make sure all documents/materials are accessible - use Universal Design methods
- Class Content
 - Keep your lesson plans flexible.
 - Keep slides relatively simple: focus on what you would be working on if you were in a face to face lesson. If you wouldn't add graphics/pictures/sounds in class, don't put it in your slides. Don't worry about using video, audio with slides is just fine!
 - Make sure to save a recording for students who can't make it to the live class session or want to review material.
 - Don't worry about using video, audio with slides is just fine.
 - Create an outline and an assignment page for due dates
 - For synchronous lessons, let students have time to work in groups. There is a learning curve at first, but it helps keep lessons moving rather than just lecture.
 - Create opportunities for interaction, if possible.
 - Let students have time to work in groups. There is a learning curve at first, but it helps keep lessons moving rather than lecture only.
- Communication
 - Make sure you know who to contact for technology issues.
 - Encourage students to use the microphone in class.
 - Have multiple ways for students to communicate with you (text, phone, email, etc.)
 - Find a way to move office hours online too (or be flexible with setting up times to call/skype with students who need it.
- General Tips:
 - Don't just type your whole lecture onto your slides

- Allow for multiple avenues for students to express themselves
- Send out slides/handouts ahead of time if possible, or afterwards for people who may miss sessions/have trouble connecting/want to review.
- Watch informational videos on how to use the platform you're going to utilize

Students: Tips for Time Management and Organization

- Keep an agenda to make sure you're up-to-date.
- Keep track of deadlines so you do not miss anything.
- If the professor doesn't set deadlines for discussion forums, set your own deadlines to keep yourself on track.
- Make time for your studies. Set a time to accomplish asynchronous work as if you were actually in class.
- Pace yourself as you go through the video lectures. Don't rush to do them all at once, but slow down and take notes.
- Figure out your own way to manage your time. Set aside time to do readings, assignments etc.
- Check Moodle or other class sites at least once a week to make sure you know what has been added/changed/is coming up.
- Don't let yourself fall behind. Set a routine for when you do school work to keep you on track.
- Make sure you save a copy of your work to a cloud in case you lose the original.
- Do not save large amounts of work for last minute.
- Leave time for unexpected technical difficulties.

Students: Tips for Emotional Support and Self Care

- Don't lock yourself in a learning vacuum: participate, communicate, and collaborate. If you can, "go to class" with a small group of classmates.
- Make a friend to communicate with about assignments or vent to. If you work well together, try partnering up for collaborative assignments.
- Get engaged! Inside and outside of class try to participate which will enhance the experience.
- Find a way to be self-disciplined, self-motivated.
- Create little deadlines for yourself if needed.
- Snacks help keep you awake! Nutritious & delicious!

- Let your instructor know about any limitations (lack of technology, disability, etc.) so that they can accommodate that for online lessons.
- Make the learning environment work for you-move around, stand up and stretch, snack, whatever you need to make sure you stay focused and comfortable.
- Be organized in a way that doesn't overwhelm you.
- Be aware of campus support services.
- Call on your support network to help you succeed!
- Don't worry about being outside of your comfort zone - so is everyone else!

Students: Tips for Participation in Synchronous Sessions (e.g., Zoom)

- Make sure to pay attention, not being physically in class can be distracting.
- Email the professor if you have ANY questions/Communicate Often
- Participate in chats/discussion boards frequently
- Break out of your comfort zone and don't let the physical distance be a barrier. Be even more open with your communication than you would be in person
- Don't lock yourself in a learning vacuum: participate, communicate, and collaborate.
- If you are taking a synchronous class, suggest to your teacher the possibility of recording lecture so students can refer to it again later.
- Find a fidget toy, or even a mindless app on your phone (pattern matching, color by numbers, etc...) to avoid distraction.
- Make sure you have a place with stable internet connections to work in, and one that will not distract you.
- If synchronous-don't forget your computer charger!
- Log in early in case you experience technical issues
- Talk/socialize with your classmates beforehand
- Chat often but not so much that it's distracting
- Pay attention and take notes.
- Don't be afraid to ask your instructor for help/clarification if you are confused about an assignment
- Make sure that you know of alternative places that offer access and accommodations for class time.
- Frequently check the channels of communication established for your course (Moodle/Blackboard; email; etc.)
- Simulate being in a real classroom, break yourself off from distractions. Having class on your couch at home may seem like a good idea but maybe set yourself up in an office instead.
- Snacks help keep you awake!

- Get Engaged! Inside and Outside of class try to participate which will enhance the experience.
- Let your instructor know about any limitations (lack of technology, disability, etc.) so that they can accommodate that for online lessons
- Know important phone numbers/emails in case you experience technical difficulties
- Make the learning environment work for you--move around, stand up and stretch, snack, whatever you need to make sure you stay focused and comfortable
- Make a friend to communicate with about assignments or vent to. If you work well together, try partnering up for collaborative assignments.
- If you're kicked out of class by your technology, don't stress out; it happens to everyone at some point. Just log back in.