

A Mobile-Mindful Syllabus

Students tend to receive little guidance in how to best use the digital learning methods available to them, much less those on a phone. Therefore, once you have evaluated your course for fluid learning opportunities and implemented mobile-mindful options, it will go a long way to make these options explicit and provide recommendations and resources on how to use mobile-mindful options well. Below are a few suggestions and language you could use in your syllabus.

Syllabus Format

Is the syllabus in a format that can be accessed on a phone? Can students navigate to key information, such as due dates and your contact information? Are hyperlinks to relevant information provided, and is that information mobile-accessible?

Course Texts

Indicate format options for the texts, whether they are available in print, electronically, or both. Is the e-version mobile-accessible? If so, what are the best ways to use the mobile content, or what mobile content would you discourage based on functionality and learning goals? Explicit descriptions and guidance on how to make the best of available formats can ensure students “do the reading” and engage with the content frequently. If your texts include multimodal content (e.g. videos, podcast episodes, photo albums), link students to playlists they can save for easy access throughout the course.

Tech Support

Share what support is available to students at your institution, such as help with the LMS, support for other campus software (e.g. Help Desk), nearby computer labs, and where students may be able to borrow devices, such as through the student technology center or library. You may also want to include information about how to access wireless internet or programs they may have free access. Reminding students of this information early in the term can prompt students to set up technology and accounts, troubleshoot with the right people, and find alternatives if they experience technical difficulties.

Tech Policy

If you have a tech policy, avoid an outright tech ban. Such bans can discriminate against students with disabilities and students using e-versions of texts, which are often women and people of color (Galanek et al., 2018). Describe when and how technology could be conducive to class activities, and when they might be more distracting than beneficial. You might include recommendations such as keeping phones silent or other actions that can reduce distraction. If your class relies on the use of technology, encourage students to bring available devices, while describing other options for students, such as print alternatives or where students may be able to borrow devices, such as through the student technology center or library.

Recommended Apps

Listing apps you think will help students boost their mobile learning can better connect students to thinking about course concepts more often. List the app with a very short description of how they could use the app in conjunction with course activity. Describe these apps as recommended, but not required. If you are requiring an app for course activity, explain why it is required and link to information on how students can customize settings related to privacy and notifications.

- LMS app, if available (e.g., Moodle, Canvas)
- Video conferencing app, for virtual office hours, online class sessions, and meeting with groups (e.g., Zoom, Google Meet)
- Task managing app (e.g., Todoist, Google Tasks)
- Document creation and sharing app (e.g., Google Drive, Microsoft Word or Teams)
- Flashcard app, especially if you have flashcards for students or previous students have shared their flashcards (e.g., Quizlet, Anki)
- Communication space, if you are facilitating a space for students to talk to one another and you. (e.g., Slack, Discord, GroupMe). You could ask students if they have interest in such a space before setting one up, or students might set one up for themselves.
- Video or audio app, if you have videos on a specific platform (e.g., YouTube or Vimeo, Google Podcasts or Spotify)
- Photo sharing app, if assignments and projects might call for sharing and curating photos (e.g., Google Photos, Flickr).

If social media is an important component of the course, you may want to list an app accordingly, but be sure to explain options for students who may be hesitant to use these apps, such as ways they can access content without creating a personal account or ways to maintain their privacy.