

Keeping Online Teaching Simple

There are options for facilitating your classes online that do not require you to live stream video, pre-record lectures, or do PowerPoint voice overs. Often, less technology can be a much easier option, be more accessible, and provide students with the flexibility to work through course content at their own pace. Not all students have access to high-speed internet now that they're off campus. Below you will find some quick tips, simple strategies, and low tech resources for teaching online.

Situations where low tech options work well

- Large classes
- Lecture-based classes
- Content that can easily be captured and explained with slides and notes

Low tech options for sharing content

- First, try to reduce your lecture content to absolute essentials.
- Post your slides to D2L Brightspace:
 - Use the speaker notes to provide students with written notes and commentary for each slide
 - Share links to existing online resources, videos, podcasts, etc. as part of the notes
 - Make sure to clearly flag what is essential and what is supplementary
- Emphasize, highlight, or annotate your course readings
 - ex. "Key concept" or "This section is really important"
- Use the [Announcements tool](#) in D2L Brightspace to provide updates and help guide students through weekly materials and expectations.

For a great example of the low tech approach to getting students to "do stuff" check out Jesse Stommel's [Digital Pedagogy 101 course schedule](#): His course follows a simple structure, where each week students are instructed to "first read" and then "do some stuff." This could consist of submitting a short assignment, or posting a reflection or a question to a discussion.



Encouraging student participation and engagement

Both D2L Brightspace and Google Suite offer you and your students a range of simple tools to engage with course content.

D2L Brightspace Discussions

This collaborative area allows students to post, read, and reply to threads on different topics, share thoughts about course materials, ask questions, share files, or work with peers on assignments and homework.

- [Create discussions, forums, and threads](#)
- [Create student groups \(for private discussions\)](#)

Low tech discussion activities for engaging students

Provide students with guidance on the length and format of their posts. For example, “in 250 words, please do the following”:

- Apply key concepts and theories to relevant examples
- Evaluate examples, case studies, scenarios, and arguments
- Reflect personally on lecture materials (for example, “What is your immediate reaction to...?” “How has the way you think/feel about ... changed?”)
- Analyze complex examples, problems, or situations
- Create a process or methodology for testing out a hypothesis



Quick tips for successful online discussion forums

- **Communicate clear expectations** for how students should participate and what you want them to do. How will you evaluate participation?
- **Create meaningful discussion prompts** that get students to move beyond agree/disagree answers. Discussion questions that encourage students to apply, analyze, or evaluate reading and lecture material work best.
- **Be present in the discussion**, but try not to facilitate too much. Respond to a few early comments to affirm good critical points and to push the discussion in useful directions. Respond again near the end of the discussion to provide summative commentary on questions and themes that emerge.
- **For more ideas for how to use discussion forums and rubrics for assessing participation, see our [Best Practices on Effective Online Communication](#).**

Using the Assignments feature in D2L Brightspace to engage students

The Assignments tab in D2L Brightspace offers you an opportunity to create additional opportunities for students to engage with course material beyond just submitting traditional assessments.

- Create [reflection exercises](#) to encourage students to engage deeply with course content.
- Create a [submission folder](#) that could give students a forum for uploading photos, videos, screenshots, written process flow charts, or drafts of assessments for formative feedback.

Google Suite

The [suite of tools available from Google](#) (Docs, Slides, Sheets, Forms, etc.) can be used alongside D2L for teaching online. You can embed Google files in your course modules by selecting “link” when uploading content and pasting in the link to the Google file.

Using Google Groups to connect with students

- Request a [Class Google Group](#) (all enrolled students will be members)
- Google Groups can be used to share

- Calendar events in Google Calendar
- Documents and folders in Google Drive
- Meeting links from Hangouts Meet

Using Google Docs to facilitate student engagement

- [Create a shared class folder](#) on Google Drive to upload content that students can read or edit (depending on the sharing settings)
- Use Google Docs to facilitate [discussion and collaboration activities](#) and knowledge building.

Using Google Forms to elicit feedback, questions, or participation

- Google Forms can be used to quickly set up surveys with [different question types](#).
- Google Forms responses can be viewed within the form or through a Google Sheet. You can share the responses from the form with your students.
 - [View all your responses in a Google sheet](#)
 - [Share the summary of responses from your Google Form](#) (under “Show a summary of responses”)

For additional resources and step-by-step instructions for transitioning online, you can also refer to [HOG101: Hands-On Guide to Moving Your Teaching Online](#)