Online Teaching Advice & Tips from Full Time Faculty

The following tips and advice are provided to help new instructors and adjuncts have a smoother transition to teaching online. For clarity I have edited submitted faculty tips to either add a link or expand shortened text.

Contact the CIE department (cie@brazosport.edu) for assistance in applying any of the following tips or advice items.

NOTE: When using 3rd party tools such as "Remind" consider FERPA privacy policies and never send grades and personal information through apps. Keep texts general and apply to the entire class.

Instructor: Gregg Curry | Online teaching experience: 1 semester

Check with your students often to make sure they understand your communications, instructions, and the course material. This can be done by randomly picking a few students each week and contacting them via phone calls or email. If they give feedback that there is confusion, then fix the problem quickly.

Instructor: Antonio Zamoralez | Online teaching experience: 4 years

1. A major challenge online students face is keeping track of deadlines, so keeping due dates and deadlines consistent (every Sunday at 10PM for example) can help students stay on track.

2. Try and grade the first assignment as quickly as possible so students are able to make changes if necessary before the next assignment is due.

3. Students may get accustomed to certain turnaround on grading (see above), and may get concerned that their assignments were not properly submitted if a week or so has passed. Keep students up to date with any delays you might be experiencing in the grading process with a news post.

Instructor: Alicia Deleon | Online teaching experience: 7 years

1. Take advantage of My Mediasite (our video streaming server) and record voice/screen videos for students- I am constantly getting feedback on how valuable these are.

2. Take the time log into your online course often and provide feedback to your students within 24 hours— it is easy to 'forget' with online classes and students really appreciate prompt feedback

Instructor: Deborah Lariviere | Online teaching experience: 8 years

1. Have students submit a SYLLABUS QUIZ. This has proved to be one of my favorite things! It really ensures students understand what is expected of them!

2. Present information in as many ways as possible: provide WRITTEN LECTURE, AUDIO LINKS or PODCASTS, POWERPOINT SHOWS. Everyone learns differently, and you want to reach all learning styles.

3. Review your QUIZ STATISTICS. If fewer than 70% of your students answer a question correctly, chances are there's something wrong with the question. Probe and find out why they answered it wrong and then edit the question.

Instructor: Jerry James | Online teaching experience: 10+ years

1) The week before class starts... send your students a Welcome email conveying how you are looking forward to helping them be successful in the digital learning environment.

2) Have all your exam dates established and course materials posted before day 1. Show them you are on top of things. The more enthused you are about teaching, the more enthused they will be about learning.

3) Learn what the address line looks like for emails you receive from students in your online class and know that you can only respond to them from within your D2L class. If you receive their email through your Gmail or Outlook account it is very easy to just hit Reply and send them a response. You'll be very proud of how quickly you responded. They, however, will NOT receive your reply and will be wondering why you don't respond faster. Three - four days later you will get a message saying the reply you sent was undeliverable.   So you CANNOT simply Reply to emails from and address such as name####@online.brazosport.edu. You must reply from within D2L.

 4) Be very prompt about grading assignments and giving feedback. Students need your feedback to know if they meeting your expectations. They will often wait for your feedback before moving on the next assignment. Prompt feedback from you keeps them moving at an energetic pace.

Instructor: Emily Arthur | Online teaching experience: 12 years

I think starting a course from scratch is really overwhelming. Here is a process that has helped me:

1. Start by thinking about what you want students to know ([learning objectives](#)).

2. Next, think about how you currently "chunk" information by week, or by unit. These chunks are probably your online modules. I set my modules up to be one week's worth of information.

3. As you add content, keep a few ideas in mind:

- Content needs to be in order
- Content needs to be well chunked and in bite-sized pieces
- Only have one new concept per delivery moment
- Make sure content has variety (a short video, a discussion, a PowerPoint with your face)
- Make sure content is personal (students respond to your face and your voice, so learn to use video editing software and other tools)
- Content needs to be emphasized repeatedly; don't assume because you mention it once, students will get it; create some overlap and repetition so students will know the idea is important

4. Create schedules that allow for a bit of flexibility. For example, you may want to create 11:59 p.m. deadlines or deadlines on a Sunday night. Or, perhaps discussions stay open for several weeks before locking.

5. Consider supplementing D2L messaging with an app that allows for a speedier response time such as "Remind".

6. In your syllabus, clearly outline online attendance, discussion participation, online behavior and other expectations.

Instructor: Jennifer Poland | Online teaching experience: 12 years

1. Make sure that your syllabus is very clear on policies; Late work, plagiarism, technical difficulties, etc. It needs to be very clear. Jeff Detrick (Dean of Instruction) has a good statement regarding plagiarism that you should include. I would recommend doing a basic syllabus quiz just to make sure they look over these policies.

2. Communicate clearly and often. I use "Remind" to send out text reminders to students the day before assignments are due. It also allows the students to text questions back without having my cell number. I send out a reminder that assignments are due the day before using Remind and the email tool in D2L.

3. Remember FERPA. Check email addresses to make sure grade-related questions come from an official email.

4. Set your email in D2L to forward a copy to your BC email. It makes it easier for you to know when a student is trying to get in touch with you.

5. Try to have your assignments due on the same day of the week. I do Sundays at midnight after years of finding out what worked best for students. If they're due on the same day, it's easier for students to keep track. Make sure to give a window for every assignment of at least a few days.

6. Leave detailed feedback if possible. This helps students feel clear on why the received a certain grade. Since they aren't meeting you face-to-face, this helps avoid confusion and grade appeals. Your students will need help in figuring out how to check

the feedback on quizzes. I've got a detailed, step-by-step handout with screenshots that I send out several times the first few weeks and post in the course.

7. Check over the settings in your course, such as for Quizzes, the Dropbox, and even Grades. Recheck them. Make sure you have the settings done correctly.

8. Be realistic about the amount of work they will be able to complete. I've spent the past few years tweaking one of my classes striving to find that balance.

9. Limit multiple-choice and auto-grade assignments for reading quizzes. To be frank, they don't learn from those. They do poorly and then they do poorly on the tests because they aren't having the class time to get clarification. Instead, I do guided reading assignments. They are fewer questions (usually less than 10) but cover the main concepts. I have the students break the concepts down and provide their own examples. It gives me a chance to correct anything they don't understand before they get to a test.

Instructor: Alisa Petrovich | Online teaching experience: 18 years

Take time to individually contact every student who misses a graded assignment deadline. Ask if they are ok and if they need help with the course.

Do not use the Virtual Campus mass email system to the whole class. Show concern by noting something about their individual performance in the course. Most thank you and start to progress again.

Always double check your email before sending. Be certain you are polite, helpful, and not judgmental.

Instructor: Wayne Pryor | Online teaching experience: 20

Providing student feedback on a daily basis is something students seem to appreciate. I give students a calendar of due dates for the entire semester so they can look ahead.
All assignments have an opening and closing window. I have more rather than fewer quizzes. Since there are numerous quizzes I have started dropping the lowest quiz grade. If a student misses the due date for a quiz that becomes their drop grade. I use the gradebook so that students can see exactly what their grade is at any given moment. Quizzes are automatically scored and posted to the gradebook.