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3 Tips For Being A Successful Distance Learning Instructor

By Kris Bickell

Are you looking to teach an online course for the first time? Or have you already taught online but are looking for some tips to help you become more effective?

The world of online learning is expanding at a rapid pace.

More courses are being offered and more students are enrolling every semester. And while teaching an online course can be done while sitting at your computer in your pajamas, being an effective online instructor requires a good deal of practice and preparation.

Of course, teaching online does take away the face to face involvement with students. Nothing can take the place of seeing a student smile after finally understanding a difficult concept.

But online teaching can be even more rewarding than on-campus teaching, when done well.

What makes an effective online instructor?

While good teaching involves a large number of qualities and techniques, effective online teaching centers on three main points:

1) You must be clear about your expectations!

Since students are not sitting right in front of you, it is extremely important to be very clear. Since you cannot see the students, you cannot see them sitting with a puzzled look while nodding their head in agreement.

How do you know if you are clear enough?

· Ask the students. · Carefully evaluate the quality of the work, and how close the finished product matches the instructions. · Have a colleague read your material before the course begins.

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If student evaluations are distributed at the end of the semester, you can use the feedback to help you improve your course and teaching techniques - but keep in mind that by then you can no longer help the students learn what you want them to learn!

2) You must communicate frequently...and effectively!

Most students will expect you to be sitting at your computer whenever they send you a question by email. Of course, that is not practical, nor is it reasonable. So it is a good idea to give students a time frame in which you will respond, with 24–48 hours being typical.

And it's not enough to just communicate frequently. You must also communicate effectively. While some students (especially new online students) will want you to "take them by the hand" through each step, if you already have clearly written instructions, you can direct them to the instructions.

Keep in mind that most students are not asking you questions to bother you - usually, they just want to make sure they are doing what you want them to do. So be understanding, even when you get questions that make you shake your head.

If you get the same questions frequently, it is a good idea to save the questions - and your responses - to create a "frequently asked questions" section.

3) You must let your personality shine through!

If students just wanted to read a book, they wouldn't need you to read it for them. So, when teaching online, avoid taking the "easy way out" by simply posting a few readings and having students answer the questions:

- Add a little of your personality to your assignments and communications (but be careful when using humor, as it is difficult to convey online).
- Give real life examples that you have learned from being the subject matter "expert".
- Create interesting and interactive assignments to help students really learn the material.

Good teaching, like being good at anything, takes practice.

If you are clear...if you stay in close contact with your students...and if you create an interesting learning experience, you will be the online instructor that students want to learn from!

Kris Bickell is the director of distance learning at a small private University in Connecticut, and an experienced online instructor. He is also the owner of Hi-Speed-Internet.com, which offers tips to help you improve your computer speed.

<http://www.hi-speed-internet.com>

Distance Learning Makes Life Easier

3 Tips For Being A Successful Distance Learning Instructor

By Matthias Reightman

Do you have a desire to continue your education but are just not sure how to fit it into your busy schedule? Or perhaps you want to finish a degree but live too far from a college to make the drive for classes. Whatever your situation, do not be discouraged. Distance learning makes it possible for almost anyone to take a class or work toward a degree regardless of where they live.

Distance learning is becoming increasingly popular in higher education. Educators and administrators realize that people are busy and that gaining a traditional education is not realistic for everyone. Distance learning makes it possible for people of all ages to complete a variety of classes toward degrees of many kinds.

Distance learning can take place over the internet through online courses or by correspondence through the mail. Having internet is definitely helpful for distance learning, but it is certainly not required. All you really need is an address and a mailbox and you can be well on your way to finishing a degree.

If learning from home sounds like it might work for you, begin to research different colleges and universities that offer distance learning as an option for students. A simple internet search or a search at your local library should be able to highlight appropriate schools for you in no time. You will have to consider too what kind of degree or program you hope to study in. Don't rush into studying something until you have explored many options.

A great thing about distance learning is that you can continue with the rest of your life while taking classes. You do not have to stop working, change jobs, or stop spending time with your family and friends. With distance learning you can take as few or as many classes as you want to. Some times in your life may be too busy for more than one class but at other times you may be able to fit in two or three distance learning classes. Distance learning is flexible and it allows you to be in control of your schedule. You will have to look hard to find an option that is as flexible and accommodating as distance learning.

Is there a specific program or degree that you have always dreamed about studying? If so, now is the time. Let distance learning make your educational dreams come true while keeping your life simple and easy.

An advisor to many people thinking about gaining more education, Matthias Reightman is an advocate for distance learning. See if distance learning is right for you by visiting

<http://www.distancelearningtimes.info>



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