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10 Best Practices To Be An Effective Online Teacher

It's no secret that effective teachers are paramount to effective learning in the classroom, and in the case of online studies, the teaching principles and methods they use are even more important. Here are 10 best practices to be an effective online teacher.

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How To Be An Effective Online Teacher

The digital classroom brings with it a range of unknown and unexplored territory, mostly in part to its relative newness when compared to traditional teaching methods. To be an effective online teacher, there are 10 simple but effective practices you can follow. When coupled with a comprehensive course load and the right resources, there's no reason why online learning can't be even more effective than a traditional classroom setting.

1. Be Present

Sure, you might not be physically present in a classroom, but there are many ways to make yourself known in the digital realm. Achieving this online means utilizing a range of different communication methods and ensuring that you check in on them daily or hourly if needed. Discussion boards, emails, announcements, and forums, are just some of the ways you can be present each day in your online classroom. When the course begins, ear guidelines for your students about when you'll be present.

with a very clear set of expectations before they commence their studies. These expectations should include everything from what they can expect from you as their teacher, as well as what will be required of them. The expectations can outline due dates for assessments, your communication frequency, how much online participation you require of them, and the conduct they will be expected to display throughout the course.

3. Let The Students Do The Work

The aim of learning is to have students engaged in the content for as long as possible, so you need to create the opportunity for this to happen. Professor of Psychology Bill Pelz discussed in his “Principles of Effective Online Pedagogy” report that the more time the students spend engaged in the content, the more they’ll learn.


To give your students plenty of opportunity to engage with the content and each other you can ask them to find and discuss resources, grade their own assignments, and hold student-led discussions in the online forums.

4. Nurture A Supportive Online Community

Since this online space is their classroom, you want students to feel as supported as possible when they’re here. By using a variety of dialogue formats, you’ll ensure your coursework caters to all learning types and allows students to flourish.

[Encourage students](#) to use the general forum for discussion, but also set up small groups within the class so that students can engage in feedback and support with their fellow classmates. Some students may sit back and learn from the sidelines, whereas others will benefit greatly from actively engaging in this type of communication.

5. Think Before You Write

Not only is this an important principle for teaching staff to follow, but one that should be communicated from the very beginning to all students. As it’s well known that written text can be left open to interpretation or misinterpretation at any time, it’s crucial to  well thought out responses and posts to others.

6. Ask For Feedback

Sometime around the 2nd or 3rd week, you should ask your students for [direct and honest feedback](#) on how things are going. This feedback should cover everything from content to teaching methods, and request any areas requiring improvement. The best way to achieve this is in a somewhat formal tone, so post something on the discussion board and see what pops up.

7. Foster Personal Relationships With Each Student


Getting some one on one time with each student is just as important as effective group communication. Students studying online can sometimes feel deserted and alone in the digital classroom, so it's up to you to make an effort and reach out.

Use a blend of different communication methods, including [personalized responses](#) to their discussion boards posts and emails addressed to only one student. At the start of the course, you should set out in your expectations the best communication methods, but never give out your personal email address or contact details to a student.

8. Make Use Of Group And Individual Projects

A healthy mix of group and individual projects is the best way to ensure success with online learning. Giving students this variety of [learning styles](#) will enhance their learning capabilities, and teach them the importance of both group work and individual achievements.

9. Use Resources That Are Readily Available

Since your students will already be engaged on their computers and use the internet to log onto the learning portal, the best resources for them are going to be online. By using an assortment of relevant and easily accessible resources such as digital publications, news sites, and online videos, your students are going to be far more engaged than if they had to 


10. Have A Closing Activity

Finally, you want to end the course with a bang. The best way to achieve this is with a final summary or assessment that helps students to reflect on everything they've learned. Allow students to reflect on the content and the experiences shared so that everyone is made aware of what they're taking away from the course.

Incorporating these principles into your online teaching methods will not only ensure a supportive community for your students, but will make your job ultimately easier too. As online learning is still in its building stages when compared to other methods of teaching, the most effective principles will continue to grow and adapt to the new world of digital classrooms.

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