



15 BEST PRACTICES FOR TEACHING ONLINE



15 “Best Practices” For Online Teaching



TEACHING RESOURCES

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lesson library



“Let's try not to build the plane while we are flying it.”

Many schools and teachers are rushing to deliver their lessons online and have students learn online. However, in this panic, many are missing the fundamentals and there are a lot of concerns being raised. See [this article](#) for some.

Here are my 15 suggestions and "best practices" for being the best online teacher one can be. Lots of advice also for institutions who should be setting the standards. Where possible, I've linked to recommended online articles for further reading and elaboration. And see a list of recommended readings attached. I've tried to keep my points, short and focused for better "digestion". Also see my "[50 Best Practices For Language Teachers](#)." Most of them, also apply to online teaching.

1. Consult a professional! If you are really serious about a quality learning experience for your students, bring a consultant on board or seek the advice of professionals (tech co-ordinators) with knowledge of educational standards in ed tech. For example, security, privacy, delivery, curriculum and more. It's not just a matter of asking teacher James because he seems rather techie.

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2. Think "Blended learning". Online teaching (and learning) is not just a flipped model of F2F (face to face) classroom teaching held in a video conference room. Synchronous (live) teaching should only be a small portion of student time. Most student time should be devoted to asynchronous or independent learning. That said, teachers should schedule small group or individual sessions and communication with all students just like a F2F blended learning program. [What is blended learning? >>>](#)

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3. Ensure Equity. Your classroom is a diverse place. Not only is every student unique but also their circumstances. As much as possible make sure all students have access to what they need to complete their learning online. A device, access to reliable wifi, access to all materials and resources needed, a secure and safe place to study outside of school. Also be sure to provide non-digital options for those students who might not be able to learn online, for whatever reason.

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4. Design a student or school code of online conduct. Students, particularly teens and young adults will have differing cultural and behavioral expectations when using technology versus being in a regular classroom. So right from day 1, go over how you expect students to behave online in conversation, in video conferences etc ... Otherwise you might get bullying, posting embarrassing photos, rude, profane language etc ...

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5. Think "Backward Design". Start with your learning objectives. Then decide how best to achieve these given your online tools, platform, student and teacher affordances etc ... plus the learning experiences you expect students will have online.

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6. Start With What You Know. You don't have to start from ground zero. What digital tools and platforms are you or your staff already using? Begin with the familiar and then go from there. The transition to online teaching will be a lot easier. Do a tech needs assessment for your school, district or even your self if teaching independently.

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7. Safety First. A virtual classroom just like the regular classroom needs to be a safe and secure area for all students. Review the policies and TOS (Terms of Service) of all online tools used. Also have them approved by your school superiors. Students should log into a secure school environment prior to using tech tools. Make sure hardware is secure and free of viruses and vulnerabilities. [Review these tips >>>](#)

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8. Settings. Student safety won't happen unless schools and teachers ensure all settings maximize and promote a safe learning environment. You don't want [Zoombombing](#) happening during your online lessons! Check thoroughly how you can provide through digital tool settings, the most secure online learning environment possible. **Ex.** For video conferencing - use an encrypted link, password and also a waiting room for student access. Check out the provider and their reputation and standards. Control functionality as much as possible and assign "in situ".

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9. Privacy. Be aware there are strict protections for learners under the age of 13. Make sure your online environment and tools comply with COPPA ([Child Online Privacy Protection Act](#)) and FERPA ([Family Education Rights and Privacy Act](#)). Review providers to make sure student data is not shareable nor stored. Students where possible should not register with personal email accounts. Get consent from parents when teaching young learners. Also, review policies with students including the non-sharing of screenshots, images, copyright rules etc ... Slowly educate your students in the realm of digital responsibility and literacy.

10. Clear Expectations. Provide transparent expectations and selected educational outcomes to all stakeholders. Parents and staff. This includes not just learning outcomes but information about the digital/online program, tutorials on how to use and access learning, hardware requirements, FAQs, assessment policy etc ... Over-communicate in clear and concise language what is required for the online learning.

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11. Schedules. Establish two types of schedules for learners. The overall course schedule and also a daily schedule for when students are expected to be learning, logged in and available. Include initial daily meet and greets, even if just chat. It will help put a more human face on the interaction. Build an online class team!

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12. Too Much. One thing I see too often with digitally enacted curriculum is teachers assigning too many activities, piling on work and submissions. Think through your curriculum and try to avoid this. Student learning activities should be simple in design, aligned to course objectives and with openness to provide students the opportunity to be creative and show their learning. Cut out the chaff!

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13. Engagement. Robustness. Learning online needn't to be the boring activity it is often pictured. The online classroom should not consist of uploaded pdfs and worksheets to complete nor fill in the blank webpage activities. Challenge your students with creative assignments that work towards their strengths. Break learning into smaller chunks, check student understanding often, get students leading and teaching each other.

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14. Be Accessible. Students will need help both with the tech side of things and also with their independent learning. Provide a safe and secure way for students to access help and their teacher. Teachers should provide scheduled contact times for all students, young or old. Just like a F2F classroom - teachers need a lot of personal communication with each student. Communication and relationships are still job #1. Especially in this time of COVID 19 - stress the personal, caring touch.

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15. Comittment. Teaching online is a journey of continual professional development and reflection. It does get easier over time but there is lots to learn and continual professional development in educational technology is a must. Teachers should seek out mentors or pair with other teachers to review their online curriculum and teaching. Continually refine and reassess what you do and the things you do it with (platform, tools etc ...). The realm of educational technology is a continually changing one. See the [ISTE \(International Society for Technology in Education\) Standards](#).

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Recommended Reading

5 Concerns about the mad rush to online learning >>> Washington Post

How To Be A Better Online Teacher >>> Chronicle of Higher Education

Online Learning and the Digital Divide >>> Medium

10 Strategies For Online Learning >>> ISTE

6 Elements At The Core Of Online Teaching >>> Center For Transformative Learning and Teaching

3 Biggest Remote Teaching Concerns >>> Ed Surge

Shift To Remote Teaching. Boom or Bane? >>> Inside Higher Ed

100 Worst Ed Tech Debacles >>> Audrey Watters

Essential Tech Support >>> BAM! Radio Podcast



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