



TPSE's Top Ten List: Recommended Practices for Every Online Instructor

1 Keep compassion and flexibility as top priorities.

Understand the stress that students are experiencing. Keep your and your students' mental health as high priorities. Keep realistic expectations of yourself and your students, understanding that everyone may have obstacles or conflicts. Collaborate with students to devise solutions that work for you and them.

2 Communicate expectations clearly, often, and through multiple modalities.

Establish a weekly routine. Provide students with a weekly list of deliverables, details about what tools should be used, and instructions on how to submit work. State expectations for participation.

3 Balance synchronous (everyone at the same time) and asynchronous (students work at different times while adhering to common deadlines) instruction.

Assess the advantages and implications of both modes of instruction for a sense of class community and for equitable access. Provide alternate assignments for students who cannot participate synchronously. Be aware of privacy and safety concerns that prevent some students from working online.

4 Encourage student collaboration and discourse.

Create open-ended activities to engage students. Adapt active learning strategies to the online setting. Plan alternatives for those students who cannot engage with their groups. Consider social media and online collaboration tools.

5 Embrace the range of student needs, including disability and other equity concerns.

Recognize that some students may have childcare or other family responsibilities, unreliable Internet access, or inadequate computer resources. Some students may require disability-related accommodations. Use multiple representations (visual, oral, text, graphs).

6 Rethink assessment, and consider whether high-stakes assessments are effective tools for measuring student understanding.

Incorporate formative assessment to support student learning and develop tools for authentic assessment. Consider alternatives such as comprehensive projects that synthesize concepts, small frequent quizzes, group assignments, or opportunities to critique the reasoning represented in sample student work.

7 Help students access assistance, and help them learn how to learn online.

Become familiar with how students can access extra help, tutoring, library services, advising, crisis services, counseling, and financial aid resources. Establish virtual office hours and meet with small groups to make efficient use of your time.

8 Have backup plans for technological glitches.

Check technology in advance, and be prepared for the unexpected. Provide alternatives if technology is unreliable, unavailable, or presents students with security issues. Be open to all options (e.g., phone calls, pictures via text message or email, or even snail mail) to communicate and to receive student work.

9 Collaborate with colleagues.

Work with colleagues in your department, other departments, in support roles across campus, and at other institutions to collaboratively improve instruction.

10 Use this disruption as an opportunity to integrate new practices and resources.

Think outside the box and try new active learning strategies and new technologies. Keep equity at the forefront of your design and instructional practices.