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Teaching Career Development: A Primer for Instructors and Presenters

Second Edition

Debra S. Osborn, Ph.D.

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305 North Beech Circle
Broken Arrow, OK 74012
Phone: (918) 663-7060
Fax: (918) 663-7058
www.ncda.org

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CHAPTER 8

Teaching Online Career Development Classes

Teaching online has certainly become more common in the past decade. A study by Quinn, Hohenshil, and Fortune (2002) of CACREP-accredited programs found that all of the core courses are being taught partially or completely online. It is unlikely that the number has decreased as we have moved further into the 21st century. Just because it is being done, though, does not mean that it should be done. There are several considerations you should think through before making the decision to offer an online course. The purpose of this chapter is to highlight these areas prior to embarking on the journey of online teaching and to provide a variety of tools to make the experience more positive for all involved.

Many terms are used interchangeably to refer to online delivery of courses, such as e-learning, online learning, distance learning, and their related terms of e-teaching, online teaching, and distance teaching. Hybrid or blended courses mean that a course is delivered partially online. In addition, traditional face-to-face courses may be supplemented by online materials and activities.

To begin with, take a moment to reflect on your experiences with teaching or experiencing online teaching. If you have never taught or taken an online course, think about others you know who have done so. What were some of the comments you heard?

My Experiences with Online Teaching and Distance Learning:

To Teach or Not Teach Online

I have been teaching blended and 100% online courses for years. Earlier in my career, as a female faculty member with young children, I wanted to be home during the evenings. A key benefit of online teaching was the flexibility in my schedule. I was able to attend more of my children's swim lessons, read stories, and review homework; I was able to eat supper with my family almost every night. Working at home did require some adjustments. I had to have a computer with a

fast Internet connection. Having a slow Internet service would not work when I needed to spend so much time online. I also needed a backup (such as a local coffee house with free Wi-Fi) in case the connection was spotty. In addition, I had to set aside specific times when I would work online, or else I would spend the entire day and evening checking emails, responding to posts, and grading. At work, I had to deal with perceptions of laziness by my coworkers, philosophical differences about the quality of online teaching, and even resentment because I was not in the office as early or as late as other instructors. I also experienced a dip in my

course evaluations that I was not prepared for. I spent substantially more time on the online course than the face-to-face one, so this came as a shock. If you are going to dive into online teaching, you need to have a thick skin, a strong philosophy for why you want to offer an online course, and a bit of a risk-taking attitude (however calculated).

Online Teaching Rating Exercise

Consider your responses to items on the e-teaching rating exercise as an indicator of whether or not teaching an online course may be for you.

ONLINE TEACHING RATING EXERCISE	<i>1 = very low to 5 = very high</i>				
<i>How self-motivated am I?</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Basic computer skills (turning it on, using the mouse)</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Start and use software programs (including menus and online help)</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Using a word processor or text editor to enter text</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Creating/opening PDF files</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Using a file compression program (e.g., winzip)</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Ability to email attachments</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Ability to work through technology problems</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Ability to work at a computer for a long period of time</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>How flexible am I?</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Ability to navigate the Web</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Ability to problem solve</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Ability to set and honor boundaries</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Ability to give honest feedback</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Excitement about learning new things in new ways</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Willingness to share the stage, give up "control"</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Ability to chat online</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Ability to create and moderate a discussion board</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Ability to import video and audio into presentations</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Knowledge of where to find technical support</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Awareness of "netiquette" rules</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Using browsers: Able to enter URLs in the location bar</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>How to move back and forward between pages</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>How to use search engines</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>How to evaluate a site's worth</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>How to refresh or reload pages</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>How to save bookmarks</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>How to download files and save them</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Ability to create podcasts</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Support from your colleagues about e-teaching</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>How introverted am I?</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>How many students am I likely to have in this online course, and how comfortable do I feel in managing that amount?</i>	1	2	3	4	5

This inventory is not a standardized test, but it can be used to highlight areas of strength and weakness with respect to online teaching. If the majority of your self-rankings are “1” or “2,” that might suggest that you need additional training prior to offering an online course. Even if you only have two or three items that are rated as a “1,” you could use that to determine where you need specific training.

Take a few minutes to reflect on your results. What do these suggest in terms of your readiness to engage in e-teaching? What needs to happen to help you become ready?

Reflection on Online Teaching Rating Exercise:

Another consideration might be intellectual property rights. To whom does your online course or virtual tools belong? Are they yours? If you move to a different university, can you take your products with you? Each university differs on its policies about this issue. A media specialist may provide you with that information.

Forms of Online Teaching

Online teaching is the marriage of content, pedagogy, and technology. The delivery of online teaching can range in type from the simple act of emailing notes or individual feedback to more complex activities such as podcasting. Ultimately, three types of online teaching exist:

- Web-based: offering a course or workshop completely online; may include synchronous (all users engage online at the same time) and asynchronous teaching (online but does not require that users engage at the same time)

- Web-enhanced: enhancing a face-to-face course with online activities
- Hybrid/blended: a combination of face-to-face meetings and online meetings.

When choosing a format, it would be wise to consider both your knowledge and confidence in online teaching as well as your potential students’ knowledge, skill, and comfort level with online learning. For example, in a counseling class, it is likely that a number of students are “Social” types and enjoy talking with each other and interacting with the professor. When a class such as this is transformed from a traditional face-to-face course to an online course, the perceived loss of personal interaction is often the number one concern. To meet this particular concern, an online instructor would deliberately create opportunities for interacting and getting to know each other. Some examples of this might include:

- Small online work groups or communities with occasional or regular group assignments
- Weekly journaling, perhaps coupled with sharing in small groups, and having students

take turns summarizing the overall thoughts for the week.

- An introduction forum, inviting pictures and personal information that creates connections
- An anonymous survey and a follow-up matching quiz (worth zero points) on who held what unusual job
- Requesting/requiring a response to someone else's post on discussion boards
- Using a hybrid approach
- Having online-chat office hours
- Calling periodically (if the class is small enough) to check in with class members.

The interaction with students will not be the same as with traditional face-to-face teaching. With effort, though, you can build that connectedness with students in the e-environment. I have found that I am able to invest more with my students, and am convinced that I am making a difference with some students who would have "flown below the radar" in a traditional face-to-face course.

Myths of Online Teaching

If you have never taught online you may have certain preconceptions of what the experience will be like. Some of these are true, others are not. To help prepare for this section, respond with a true or false to the E-Teaching Quiz.

E-Teaching Quiz

1. *Online teaching takes less time than traditional face-to-face teaching.* ___ True ___ False
2. *Online teaching is easier than face-to-face teaching.* ___ True ___ False
3. *Students prefer online courses to traditional courses.* ___ True ___ False
4. *Your colleagues will appreciate the fact that you are teaching online.* ___ True ___ False
5. *It is really hard to get to know your students in an online course.* ___ True ___ False
6. *Teaching online requires a different skill set than teaching face-to-face.* ___ True ___ False
7. *Only self-motivated students will only be successful in an online course.* ___ True ___ False

Let's take each item one by one.

1. Does online teaching takes less time than traditional face-to-face teaching?

Because it is online, it is assumed that teaching online will take less time. When I first started teaching online, I would hear comments about how easy that must be. You set it up and it runs itself, right? True – somewhat. A certain amount of repetitiveness is there each time you teach a course, however, that is no different in a face-to-face course. While you may make some adjustments to your lectures each semester, the main content is likely to remain the same. There is a tremendous amount of time spent on setting up an online course, much more so than in setting up a face-to-face course. It is easy enough in a face-to-face class to change a presentation slide at the last minute, but if you have created a video lecture, making any change often requires a complete redo of that file. You also have to know that your presentations and supplementary materials (videos, audios, links, etc.) work on various platforms and browsers, whereas in face-to-face, the main platform is you.

What about once the course is designed? Then it becomes less time consuming, right? Wrong. Unless you use self-grading quizzes each week and no discussion questions, you will be spending a great deal of time looking at students' posts, responding to pleas for help, and creating other supporting documents, such as how to chat politely or how to forward emails. Plus, aside from the time you spend preparing for a traditional class, when the in-class time is over, you are done until the next class (except for office hours). With an online class, no matter how many times you teach it, you will quickly come to the realization that your course is always running for at least one student 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

2. Is online teaching easier than face-to-face teaching?

When I first started teaching online, I would have answered, "Absolutely" to that question. You take your lectures, put them online, and have students

answer a question or take a quiz. In my mind, I had given these students the same information that I gave to my face-to-face students, so I was teaching. The problem was that "dumping" my notes onto an online course was not teaching.

I had to adopt a new type of philosophy about teaching and how students learn, and this inadvertently impacted my face-to-face courses in a positive way as well. Instead of a long 7–10 page written lecture, I had to find a way to break my lectures into smaller, more digestible bites. I started having more bullets, and I created more opportunities for self-reflection at the end of each lecture segment. I also wanted to make sure students were reading the textbook, so I deliberately included questions about the readings in the textbook, such as "In your text, the author describes personal agency. This is an important concept to understand. Which of the following is the definition the author gives for this term?" Another way to do this is to refer them to a table or chart in the book and spend some time interpreting it.

I do believe online teaching is easier than face-to-face teaching, at least for me. This may have to do with the number of times I have taught online, my love for technology and trying new things, and also with my being more introverted and less demonstrative in front of a group. Instead of being excited by a hearty classroom discussion, I am usually exhausted by it. In an online environment, I can read and reflect on student discussions in smaller chunks of time. Other instructors who thrive off of classroom discussion or enjoy performing in the classroom may find the transition to online teaching more difficult. The first time that you do anything you will experience difficulties and frustrations, but it does get easier over time.

A side note here: When I taught my first online course, only one other person in our department had taught one, and it was for eight school psychology students. My first class was for more than 20 students. Given that I had never taught online before, I did the best I could, and decided to make the course as similar to the face-to-face course as

possible. If I had four discussion questions that students usually responded to in the face-to-face environment, I had four questions in the online environment. What I did not realize was that I did not grade or respond to each person's comments in the face-to-face environment; we simply discussed the questions. In an online course, though, I felt that I had to do that so students would know I had heard their thoughts. I completely underestimated the amount of time it would take for me and the students. Thus, I would recommend if at all possible, to start with a smaller group until you get a good feel for the timing, which assignments are most useful, etc. Even after teaching online for almost ten years, I still cringe when I have an online class that is nearing 20 students. If it is not possible to have a smaller class, look to alternate weeks with respect to discussion questions and quizzes, or find ways that demand less of your time to read (for example, requiring a check plus, straight check, or check minus for their individual posts and only responding to the group summary post).

3. Do students prefer online courses to traditional courses?

Some do, some do not. I have students who are delighted to be taking an online course, mainly because it is more individualized and more convenient. Others are excited because they think an online course will be a lot easier than a face-to-face course. Then there are others who do not want to take an online course, especially in a counseling program. It could be their personalities, that they thrive on being physically close to their peers and instructor and desire the nonverbal behaviors that are difficult to achieve online. Some have philosophical disagreements with taking an online course, believing that someone who will be working in an interpersonal field should not be taking courses online. Others do not think that they are getting their money's worth for the course when it is online, making statements such as, "I had to teach myself the material." This is especially challenging when students are charged

more for taking an online course than a face-to-face course.

Another factor that can impact a student's attitude toward taking an online course is their prior online learning experiences. Online course delivery can vary greatly from instructor to instructor. There are instructors who create courses that are simply the read-and-take-a-test format. Other instructors may have a poorly designed course or failed to respond regularly. Others can be overzealous (like myself in the early days) and unknowingly create an overly demanding course that is near impossible to complete successfully. All of these can negatively impact a student's opinion about online learning.

One study found that while students in an online course outperformed those in traditional or hybrid courses, their course satisfaction was lower, as indicated in course evaluations (Lowenthal, Bauer, & Chen, 2015). Some of this may be due to the type of questions on the evaluations that may not be appropriate for online courses. For example, asking whether a teacher is on time to class or available outside of class time are inappropriate questions, as an online instructor is always in class and responds at varied times. Still, students will mark these items as lower, and you may see a sag in your student evaluations once you have made the switch to teaching online.

At some universities, having less than a 4.0 average for teaching may be a definite negative. The good news is that the evaluations tend to improve, or at least stabilize over time, in my experience. You have to be willing to risk lower evaluations when you first start teaching online and then try to make improvements each semester. Also realize that you run the risk of lower evaluations whenever you try something new in the online course. You probably do not want to rely on student evaluations as the sole source of the effectiveness of your course regardless of how the course is delivered, but definitely with an online course you want more than one point of evaluation. In addition, you might want to measure against variables other than satisfaction,

such as accomplishment of learner outcomes, engagement, and so forth. Or, you could invite someone to observe your class and write a letter outlining their impressions. You could have a midpoint anonymous survey to get a feel for how things are going. This is especially important in a completely online class, where it is hard to pick up on what individuals are experiencing. In my case, it showed how my courses had steadily improved over time.

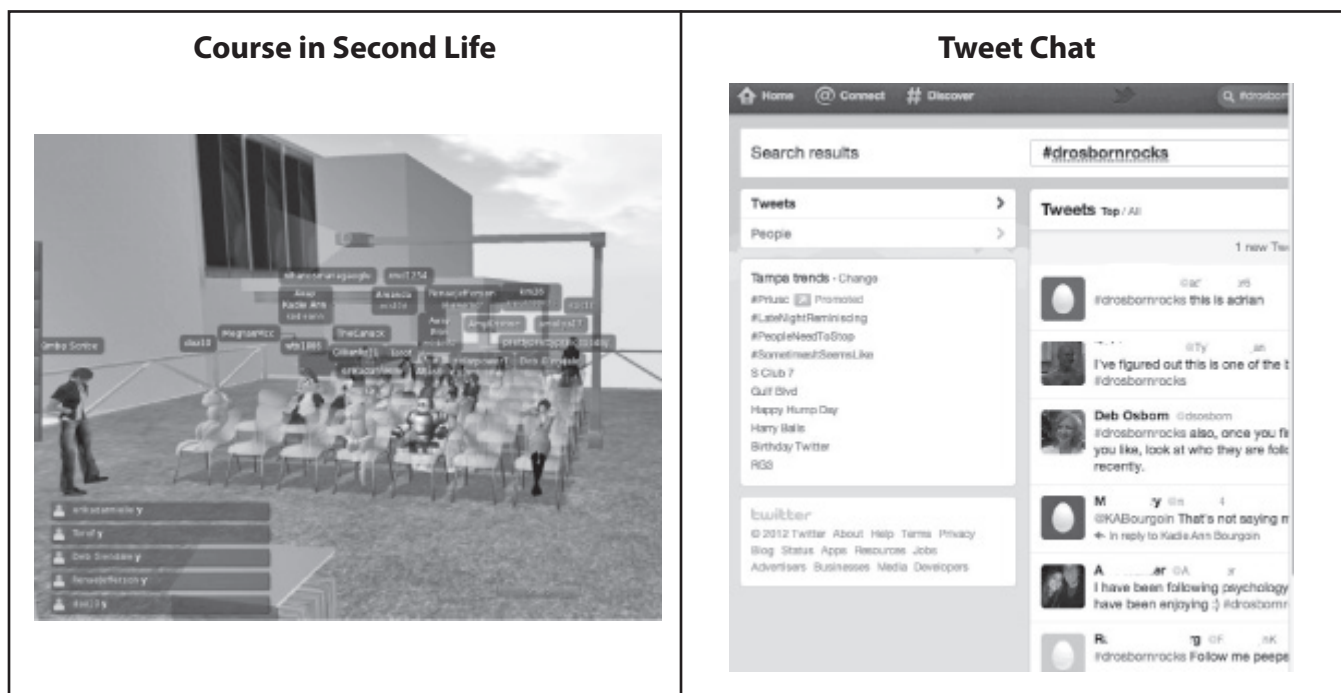
4. Will your colleagues appreciate the fact that you are teaching online?

Not necessarily, and probably not unless they have taught online or your course is part of an online program. I have found colleagues to be very cautious, pessimistic, and dismissive of the value of online courses, for many of the reasons outlined above. They may question if you can really teach certain skills or content online, and whether or not students can actually learn in that environment. They may believe that teaching online is far easier and less time consuming than teaching face-to-face, and resentment may begin to build because

of the misperception that you are taking an “easy way out” of teaching. I have had more than one person comment, “Well, your course is online — you just set it up and let it run itself.” Nothing could be farther from the truth, but it is not often that one hears these statements being made about teaching the same face-to-face course year after year.

I have found it useful to spend time with colleagues showing them what I do online. You might also consider having some of your colleagues do a brief guest lecture in your online course. Another option is to invite a colleague to review your course. This way, they become familiar with what you are doing. There are less formal ways of overcoming this myth. For example, when I was doing an online chat that allowed students to verbally present their PowerPoint presentations, I grabbed any faculty member who walked by and showed them briefly what was happening. Similarly, I have made screen grabs (see Figure 8.1) of classes being conducted in Second Life or in a Tweet Chat and sent them to colleagues as “this is happening right now!” notices.

Figure 8.1 Screen-grabs of Online Course Activities



You may have to be more deliberate about showing the proof that students are learning what is required in your online course. This may mean keeping track of how they do on comprehensive or national exams in the career area, or showing samples of student work. In the end, while some faculty will never appreciate what you are doing in your online course, you need to surround yourself with those that do, even if they are outside of your program or even your college/university. They will be a great support for you, as well as a reservoir of new teaching ideas to for you to try.

5. Is it really hard to get to know your students in an online course?

Getting to know students can be more difficult in an online course, but it can also be easier, too. You just have to be purposeful about it. For some instructors, getting to know your students is not important. You are teaching them this one course and then they and you move on with your lives. No need for deep connections. However, most instructors want to feel some type of connection with their students and, in an online environment, it is very easy for students and the instructor to feel lost and alone.

It might be helpful to think of getting to know your students as building a community or communities. An individual is less likely to feel alone if they are in a small group when members interact with each other regularly. One of the first things I do in my online class is to set up virtual communities, small groups where the students will complete assignments regularly. In those communities, I have a few discussion boards devoted solely to building community. I will have one that is for phone numbers, or an “all about me” board, where they can post pictures of themselves or their pets, share hobbies, etc. I have a miscellaneous board where they can talk about anything, related to the class or not, and not worry about me looking over their shoulder. I will then assign them tasks as a small group, such as responding to a case study or discussing their own career path with respect to gender issues or diversity, and then have one

of them post a summary of their discussion to the main discussion board.

Another activity that builds a connection with my students is to have them journal weekly. I respond to each of these every week. Usually it is not a very long response, sometimes, just a question, but I found that it helps me to feel like I have a personal connection with each one of them, something I am not always able to achieve in a face-to-face class. The journal can be a personal reflection about the module or a professional application to it, and only needs to be a paragraph, although most write more than this. It takes a great deal of time to read and respond to each one, but I feel that it is definitely worth the effort.

Here are some other ideas about how to build community in an online class:

- **Link student responses to each other** and encourage more dialogue. You could do this by saying, “Sarah, I think what you’re saying here directly relates with what Kilo was saying about poverty and career options.”
- **Pictures** — of yourself, your animals, your hobbies, as well as encouraging them to post pictures.
- **Anonymous Surveys.** Ask questions relevant to career development, such as “How many jobs have you held?” and “How satisfied are you in your career choice?” Then share the results weekly with the class.
- **Chats** — require participation. Give specific directions for chatting. Limit the chat to 1–2 hours, and require that they have a certain outcome, such as “Ten strategies for helping undecided college students” or “Identify the main issues this client (in an assigned case study) is facing, potential interventions and resources.” Leave some time at the end of chat to discuss the process of chatting, what it was like, and how it differed from what they had thought it would be like. Along with chats, send them to smaller breakout groups, which will increase the likelihood that each person will be involved. I also require that

their microphones be working and that they know they will lose points if it does not. This is to make sure that they have prepared themselves and their computers for the chat and have not waited until the last minute. If disaster strikes, it provides an opportunity to problem solve; for example, calling a friend and participating via speaker phone.

- **Self-disclosure.** Use self-disclosure to enhance connections. For example, when a student shares that she has experienced discrimination because she was pregnant, I can share, without going into many details, that I have experienced similar discrimination and share what I felt as a result. This helps to develop a bond. Be willing to share your mistakes as well as your successes — the mistakes (and lessons learned from them) are probably more valuable. I share about how I misinterpreted a client's results, and the time when I administered an inventory when the client was not in an emotional state respond to it. I then ask them how I could have avoided that mistake. Sharing mistakes humanizes you, and helps build relationship.
- **Weekly announcements.** Some students will not check the discussion board once they have posted their assignment, and they will not go back and read your feedback about their journal entry. However, they will look at class announcements, especially if the announcement is sent to their email. Try to make at least one announcement a week. It could be about anything: an upcoming conference, a new article, a general reaction to what the students posted on a discussion question, letting them know a study guide has been posted, class survey results, and so forth.
- **Introductions Discussion Forum.** On your main discussion board or blog, have a forum dedicated to introductions.
- Require students **respond to each other's posts.** As part of their assignment, include a requirement for them to respond to at least one other person's post. Note: I would not recommend having them post their own comment and also post to someone else's, but encourage them to post their comments as a response to someone else's post, integrating the other person's response into their own. This can save a great deal of time grading, as well as checking to make sure that they did both (posting and responding).
- **Virtual office hours.** Let them know a certain time period when you will be in your virtual office and available to chat. I have found that I need to input that time on my calendar or I will forget to show up. Also, be clear about what the office hour is for. I once had a student who showed up weekly for my online office hour. She never had a question, but wanted to hear what questions other students might have. We typically spent the time talking about her reflections of the week's readings or assignment.
- **Emails and phone calls.** If feeling connected is important to you, then you will need to take the initiative to make sure this happens. One easy way is through email. When students email you, respond to their question, but also show interest in how they are experiencing the course. Ask questions about what they like or do not like, what would make it better, etc. Phone calls also can go a long way. If you schedule 3–5 a week, it will not be overwhelming to you, and the students will get the message that you care about their learning. Post an announcement letting them know that you will be calling and your reason for the call.

Other Ideas I have for Building a Sense of Community in my Online Course

6. Teaching online requires a different skill set than teaching face-to-face.

Teaching online does require some additional skills as compared to teaching face-to-face, but there are more similarities than differences. What do you think it takes to be a great teacher?

Characteristics of a Great Teacher:

Did your list include some of the following?

- Passion/enthusiasm
- Respect for students
- Knowledge of subject matter, resources
- Able to incorporate students' existing knowledge
- Gets all students involved
- Problem solver
- Flexibility
- Not content to sit on his/her laurels
- Patience

These are characteristics of great teachers, regardless of the platform they use when they teach. The point of this exercise is that you already have some of the key skills necessary to be an effective e-teacher. So what other skills do you need? In addition to knowing how to use your main platform, such as Blackboard (<http://www.blackboard.com/learning-management-system/blackboard-learn.aspx>) and Moodle (<https://moodle.org>), or even a personal web page, you need to have familiarity with the items on the self-check at the beginning of this chapter.

One researcher (Young, 2006) identified seven factors that 199 online students associated with effective online teaching: adapting to student needs, using meaningful examples, motivating students to do their best, facilitating the course effectively, delivering a valuable course, communicating effectively and showing concern for student learning. These seven factors captured 86.2% of the variance in effective teaching.

Other researchers (Lewis & Abdul-Hamid, 2006) examined themes from 30 exemplary instructors on online teaching. Themes included providing students with constructive feedback, encouraging interaction among students and involvement in the course, having a well-organized course, facilitating student learning, and keeping a consistent instructor presence in the course. Online teaching demanded a minimum of 14% more time than traditional face-to-face teaching (Tomei, 2006). In the end, remember that it is you and I that teach, not the technology. Technology is just a tool that we use to help students learn.

7. Will students only be successful in an online course if they are self-motivated?

Yes, absolutely. In an online course, you do not have the face-to-face accountability that you do in a traditional course. It is very, very easy to fall behind in an online course because of the great flexibility. My students have a week to read and respond to each of the modules, but still many do not do so until the last minute, and there are always excuses, although they are more technical in nature (e.g., "I know I posted it, but now I can not see it").

I know that some of my students do not like having a weekly discussion question or quiz; they feel it is busywork or a way to make sure they are staying on task — and it does serve these purposes. Knowing this, I try to make the discussion questions relevant to the reading and related to what they might see in counseling. Regardless, most of my students do state that having some weekly assignment helps them stay focused on the readings. At the same time, many of my students like to work ahead. I have found that letting students go too far ahead results in them skimming through the materials and having superficial responses. In a hybrid course, I tend to only release materials about a week or two out. In an online course, however, I usually will make materials available up to the point where we have a chat or discussion scheduled. Sometimes this is four weeks' worth of materials.

Pros and Cons of Online Teaching

As someone who has been teaching hybrid and web-based courses for over many years, obviously there must be some pretty strong positives for my continuing to do so. There are several personal reasons for me. The main benefit for me is convenience. Teaching online provides me with greater flexibility in my schedule and increased family time. Even when I am involved with a real-time synchronous chat with students, I am

able to be home. I save money on gas and am not driving at night or fighting for a parking place at work. Except during the live chats, I can grade and respond to student posts on my time. I can record lectures when I feel most energized.

Another personal positive is that I really enjoy teaching online. I find the challenge of making an online course fun, exciting, and a high-quality learning experience invigorating. I enjoy getting to know my students online through their journals. I feel much more connected to them individually because of the frequent interactions than I usually do with individuals in my face-to-face classes. There are also several professional positives for online teaching, including:

Pros to Online Teaching:

- 1. Every student is engaged.** In a traditional classroom meeting, there is not time for every person to make a significant contribution on the topic. They might share in groups or with partners, but there is no way for me to hear what each of them is saying. In an online class with weekly assignments or discussion questions, every student must respond.
- 2. It keeps me growing as an instructor.** Every semester, I try something new with technology. I also let things go that I have been doing before. If there is an activity that I come across that is designed for face-to-face instruction, I start problem-solving how to translate that into an online activity. I am also pushing myself to find new ways to use older and newer technology. This keeps me challenged and excited as an instructor.
- 3. Convenience.** Having an online course increases the flexibility in my schedule. My traditional face-to-face classes would usually be scheduled in the evening, with students coming straight from work. Expecting full engagement and energy one, two, or three hours later might have constituted cruel and unusual punishment! The e-course allows students to complete the assignments at their convenience (I set a weekly deadline), and allows them to engage the course when they are ready physically, emotionally, and mentally.
- 4. Allows introverts an opportunity to shine.** In a traditional class, it is usually the extraverts who always have a response, while the introverts think about the discussion, and usually by the end of class, or on the way home, have composed their grand thought – but it’s too late to share it. An online course is great for the introverts. They are able to check on others’ responses throughout the week and take their time culminating a well-thought out response, and they aren’t overshadowed by their extraverted peers.
- 5. Less “thinking on the spot.”** When a question is posed, I have time to research it, or to think about the best way to respond. Sometimes, it will result in a learning activity for the student instead of my simply replying “off the cuff.”
- 6. Allows for multiple discussions on various topics of interest.** I am always surprised to see that students will be posting in the first week’s discussion board long after the deadline has passed. If they find a particular interest area that another student shares, they are likely to keep posting, sharing, and ultimately, learning. I try to create multiple opportunities for this, through non-assignment forums on topics of interest, a course wiki (a web page that students can edit or add links and files to), and a general forum entitled “topics of interest.” I have found that by having these opportunities, the topics extend far beyond what my syllabus outlines, students feel like the course has been individualized somewhat, and they are able to share from their experiences and learn from each other.
- 7. Students increase in their technology capabilities.** Many students have written on their evaluations how they learned to

use technology in creative ways, such as creating games to use in school counseling or mental health workshops. Some students who start off with a very limited knowledge of computer basics are very pleased with their technological competence at the end of the semester – and I have the excitement of knowing that I have increased their marketability post graduation.

8. Some colleges are pushing for more online courses. Online courses do not require the physical space that traditional face-to-face classes require. There is an impact as well on parking and scheduling classroom space. In addition, sometimes online classes can accommodate more students than a traditional course can, and can draw individuals from out of state and even out of country to take the course, thus increasing the number of student credit hours being generated, as well as enhancing the college’s reputation for its technological accomplishments.

9. Connections. With an online course, you can invite speakers from your local area as well as state, national, and international levels to participate in chats or guest lectures. These can be recorded and used in future classes as well. Using this format you bridge connections between students and theorists or practitioners.

There are also some negatives to consider, although many of these can be diminished through

careful planning. Perhaps the biggest negative of online teaching for me is that instead of being an instructor for one to two blocks of time a week, I am always instructing, even on the weekends. With 25 students, there are at least 25 posts a week – and if I require them to respond to another person, that will be 50 posts to read and respond to in a given week. I have a number of students that email me every day. While a positive is that I am able to be home, a negative is that my kids think my computer is attached to me!

When technology is involved, you can expect technical difficulties –for both yourself and the students. As with any crisis, you have to a game plan in place ahead of time, or at least know that you will be able to figure something out – in other words, do not panic. Some of the difficulties I have encountered have included getting up early to grade online only to find that the entire course shell is inaccessible and being updated; I upgraded my computer only to discover that my videos for my class would not display with that version; my power supply and brick stopped functioning, and I did not realize it had happened until I saw a “save your work, your computer is going to turn off” an hour before class was to begin. The list goes on and on – what I have learned is that it is better to expect that something WILL happen, and that somehow or another, I will find a way to move past it.

What are the main reasons for considering teaching online?

Cons to e-Teaching:

1. Time. It takes a great amount of time to initially set up a course. Because every student is involved and writing responses, more time is necessary for reading and responding to these posts.

Solution: Divide students into smaller work groups and have one member post a summary of the threaded discussion to the main board. Save and reuse your analyses of case studies from previous semesters. Let them know that you may not respond individually to each post, but will write a response to the whole. Alternate between having a weekly discussion question with an automatically graded quiz. This will give you extra time to grade and respond, or give you a well-needed break.

2. Lack of understanding/appreciation by peers. Some may have negative ideas about the effectiveness of online teaching.

Solution: Consider having some objective measures of success incorporated in the e-course (such as test scores) to address these concerns.

3. Feeling disconnected from students.

Solution: Be deliberate about forming an online community and have regular, personal communications with each student and the class as a whole.

4. Differences in students' technological capabilities or access to technology.

Solution: Make the first class face-to-face and schedule it in a computer lab. Have specific descriptions of the hardware/software and technological skills necessary to be successful in the course. Walk through each aspect of the online course, allowing time for them to explore. Give them practice assignments that will orient them to the course. For example, have them add a thread to the discussion board, or practice chatting.

5. Academic honesty – especially with test-taking.

Solution: Allow for open-book tests, or use of one page of notes. Change test items (when possible) from facts to application. For example, instead of stating, “What is the third step of the CASVE cycle?” give a brief scenario, such as “Carrie has just completed a career inventory to help her identify her interests. According to the CASVE cycle, what would the next step be?” Set a time limit. Set up an item pool and randomize the items so no one gets the same test. Consider only showing one item at a time and not allowing for backtracking. Prior to launching the test, have a statement of academic honesty.

I recently found out that some students in the university were cheating in a different way. They went into the test, submitted the test without actually having taken it, then went back and opened the test (which then showed the correct answers), printed it out, and then emailed the instructor that they accidentally hit submit, and pleaded for the instructor to reset the exam.

Solution: One option is to only allow students to see their scores, not their responses or correct answer. To address the issue of someone printing out the questions on the quiz, consider creating an item bank of quiz questions and randomizing who gets which items.

6. Technological glitches.

Solution: Let them know upfront that these things will happen. Remind them not to wait until the last day/minute to post an assignment. I have found that saying something to the effect of, “No matter what, we will find a solution. We will work something out,” is very calming should their computer crash in the middle of a test and they are unable to reach me. In the syllabus, state clearly whom they should contact for what problems.

7. Students have different learning styles and preferences.

Solution: This does not need to be a problem, but a motivating challenge to the instructor. I ask myself, “How do I address all of the learning styles in this module?” PowerPoint presentations with video/audio links address the visual and auditory learner. Discussion boards and chats address the interpersonal, while journaling or private assignments address the intrapersonal. Creating games such as the virtual career counseling experiment or Jeopardy address kinesthetic learners.

8. Inappropriate public responses. Sometimes a student will feel very comfortable posting personal information such as borderline tendencies, sexual abuse, etc., on a public discussion board. Depending upon when you check the bulletin board, the rest of the class may have already read the post.

Solution: If you catch it early, remove the post. Contact the student privately and state that while you appreciate her applying her personal experience to the course, you are concerned about the amount of information she put out their publicly, and work out a solution together. One possibility would be for you to remove the post and for her to write another. Another solution would be for her to edit the post. If others have already

responded, you may need to write a general response as well as sending a personal email or calling or meeting individually with the student.

Another situation might include a student being inappropriately rude to you or to another student. To address the situation, you might first have a “netiquette” guide about how they should interact online. You may also have to address the person privately, or send a general email/announcement to the class reminding them to be respectful. If the comments are severe enough or recurrent, you should check with the department regarding departmental policies on issues such as this.

9. Incorporating yourself into the course. In a traditional face-to-face course, the instructor has ample opportunity to share stories, jokes, and so forth. This becomes more difficult in an e-course, but it is vital to do if you want to keep your course from being dry and static.

Solution: Use pictures of yourself, your family, your hobbies, etc., where possible. Create video or audio clips that include some of your side stories or humor and incorporate these into PowerPoint presentations or links. Create podcasts for downloading. Invite students to share their humor, such as having them create a career-related top ten list (such as “Top Ten Ways to Fail on a Job Interview”) or a place to post jokes or cartoons.

What negatives might there be with teaching online — and how might these be addressed proactively?

Common Mistakes of Online Teaching

I believe that the most common mistakes of online teaching come from misperceptions. You think this is going to be relatively easy, only to discover the additional complexities and demands of online teaching. Here are some of the mistakes that I made along the way:

- **Assigning/expecting too much.** The first time I taught online, I had students complete two discussion questions per module, and we covered two modules a week. The students were overwhelmed, as was I.
- **Miscalculating the amount of time** it will take for students to complete a module or an assignment. When I first created a virtual scavenger hunt, I thought the activity would take about an hour or two for students to complete. When I began receiving emails that, on average, it was taking six hours to complete (and for one poor student, more than 20 hours), I realized I had made a huge miscalculation. If you are trying a new activity, ask students either directly or through an anonymous survey how long it took for them to complete the activity. I adjusted my scavenger hunt to include more specific directions on where to search and also gave them multiple choice answers to choose from, which decreased the search time to about an hour. When you first begin online teaching, you might want to have a weekly survey that includes a question on how much time they spent on the module. This information will be helpful for you to share with your next distance-learning students. Another option would be to ask students to anonymously rate how useful each of the activities were and to provide suggestions for improving.
- **Responding to each person's post individually.** I found that when I did this for the first two weeks, I had set an expectation that I would be personally responding every

week. This is okay for a class of 10, but with 20, 50, or even 100 students posting to multiple questions, this would be impossible.

- **Relying on data dumping.** When I first taught online, I thought that teaching was simply posting my lecture and then asking a discussion question. I did not even include a PowerPoint presentation to accompany my written lectures. Just as lecturing for four hours straight with no application is ineffective, so is having students read 10–15 pages of single-spaced notes with no application. I had to rethink and restructure my lectures and deliberately include points for reflection, as well as video/audio and web links. I had to shift my focus from teaching to student learning.
- **Grading minutia.** If you want them to do it, attach a grade to it. At least, that was my original mantra. I found myself creating rubrics for 5-point questions here and 3-point questions there, and then having to defend why someone got a 2 versus a 3. I have found it much less time consuming to use a check, check plus, and check minus system, or to award full or no credit. I also had to rethink my discussion questions and assignments. Was this something that they really needed to do? If it was just a great experiential activity, I would move it to the lecture or find a way to do it during the chat.
- **Using inconsistent terminology.** Your goal is for the technology to be a tool, not a distraction. You need to make sure that when directing students to a site or a file that you use the exact terminology. Otherwise, you will lose a great deal of time and raise frustration as you have to make continual clarifications. For example, just prior to writing this point, I had a student say she couldn't find a link. I went into my platform and changed the announcement to say, "I'll post the link in the websites folder." After this, I double checked the announcement and looked for the websites folder on the student menu. This is

where I found out that it was no longer called “websites” but “web resources.” Now, most students would be able to figure out that the link was in the web resources folder, but some may spend a great deal of time searching for the folder with the exact name you stated. So, be careful and always double check links and locations prior to sending students there.

- **Assuming all students have the same amount of technological skills.** This one mistake crept up on me recently during a face-to-face orientation to one of my online courses. Thankfully, I had planned activities to allow students to experiment with all of the different tools I wanted them to use throughout the course. My mistake was assuming that they had all used the platform before and were comfortable with taking a completely online course. In that face-to-face orientation to the online course, I failed to go over some of the basics about taking an online course, such as what to do if the system goes down in the middle of your test or sharing how an online course differs from a face-to-face course. I also failed to say why in the online course there were weekly assignments due, whereas in the face-to-face course, there were usually one to three larger projects due and no weekly assignments. Fortunately, much of this information was included on my syllabus, in a section entitled “Other Notes About This Course.” I found out about my oversights when walking out of that orientation class with a student. She said, “I’m a little nervous about taking a completely online course, but I’m excited about it.” I realized that because I have taught this course online for so many semesters, that I assumed that the students were starting at the same place I was. I was “oriented,” but I failed to orient my students.
- **Over-posting.** In an attempt to make my material as easy to find as possible, I posted my slide presentations and lectures in the online course documents folder, in a useful

stuff folder, and in a Dropbox folder. There were also multiple links to the discussion board and quiz. The students were quickly confused. “Are these all the same things? Do I need to do each one of these?” While my intent was to make it easier, I increased confusion. Be consistent. Always post like things together, and only post it one time. For example, I have a folder entitled “Quizzes for Points” and I put all of my quizzes in that folder instead of in the folder for that particular module. If it is the week for a quiz, my discussion board tells them that for that module, they are having a quiz and exactly where to find it.

- **Becoming too dependent on technology or a platform.** When you rely completely on one tool or a platform to help you deliver a course, you set yourself up for a crisis situation when something with the hardware, software, or platform does not work, becomes unavailable or changes suddenly. When you teach a face-to-face course, you have to be flexible and able to change quickly if a discussion goes down an unexpected route or if there is a hurricane or snowstorm headed toward your town on the day you teach. The same is true with technology. Breakdowns and glitches happen all the time. You need to have a backup plan. For example, if you normally have students respond on a discussion board and your platform is being repaired all week, you might decide either to let them email you their thoughts or to quickly create a blog. You could also extend a deadline if necessary. A failure in technology should not equate with a failure in delivering the information.

Ethical Issues

There are some ethical issues that correspond with online teaching. One issue is not all students may have regular access to a computer or have the technological competency, hardware, or

software required to successfully complete the course. Perhaps the technology you are using is too advanced for the hardware that some students have. For example, not all students have hardware that would support the graphics required for engaging in a Second Life activity. Others may have a very slow Internet connection that can make downloads or chats horribly tedious. Privacy is also an ongoing concern. Students may feel very safe and comfortable posting very personal feelings and opinions online, especially if they feel that the course is “safe.” However, what they post may be copied, forwarded, or misinterpreted. Students need to be reminded to find a balance between sharing too much and too little, as well as all students being encouraged to remain professional and to assume that information shared by other students in the course should remain in the classroom and not be shared publicly.

Another issue is that of quality. Is the online course the same quality as the face-to-face course? Do students leave as prepared as they did from the face-to-face course? Every once in a while I get an evaluation where a student complains that they did not get their money’s worth with the online course, that they had to teach themselves. Perhaps they were used to being more passive learners? The reality is, they would have been just as disappointed in my face-to-face course because I expect that they will be just as active learners there.

I make it my goal to make my online and hybrid courses better than my face-to-face courses. I look at my learning objectives and evaluate my online classes regularly in light of those objectives.

There is another issue of knowing that the student completing the online course is the student who is enrolled in the course. Most online courses require students to enter an ID or password, but there is nothing stopping them from sharing that information or having someone else take the test once they are online, or scheduling to take the online test in a computer lab with another student sitting at the next terminal, or screen-grabbing the test questions and sharing them with another student. I usually review integrity at the beginning of my class. I also have an integrity statement at the beginning of my quizzes. I also try to make my questions more application, and thus allow for open-notes and open-book quizzes.

Transforming a Traditional Course into an Online One

Transforming a face-to-face course into an online course requires some careful planning.

Table 8.1 illustrates the need for careful planning, and is one example of how to create an online course that consists of stand-alone presentations of information.

Table 8.1 Careful Planning Steps for Online Courses

Step 1	Determine your specific goals for the course. How will you know that your course is successful? Will it be by student satisfaction with the course, student projects, grades on tests, or a combination of factors?
Step 2	Organize your traditional course lectures into modules or weekly presentations. Begin drafting your syllabus. Also consider if you will use synchronous and asynchronous experiences.
Step 3	Determine if you are going to use PowerPoint/Keynote/Prezi, podcasts, or other online tools to create a presentation to accompany your lecture.
Step 4	Create your presentations or podcasts. Remember, briefer is better. Students are used to 5-minute YouTube videos. See where you can naturally divide your lecture.
Step 5	Record your presentations. Decide on whether you will have your face being on the screen the whole time, or alternate between showing and not showing your face, or using a green screen as a backdrop so you can provide more interesting sets.
Step 6	Determine which online platform you are going to use to deliver your course. In many institutions, you may not have the option to choose but must use the platform they provide.
Step 7	Create discussion questions or quizzes to accompany each of your lectures. Think about the activities and assignments you usually have in your traditional class, and explore how to transform these for this online class.
Step 8	Determine how you will create community in your virtual classroom, and how you will maintain an ethical environment within this online space.
Step 9	Load the lecture segments and accompanying materials onto your platform. Ask a colleague with experience in delivering online courses to look at what you have designed and give you feedback.
Step 10	Deliver the course.
Step 11	Request ongoing feedback about the course, evaluate the course, and make alterations to the course or syllabus.

Table 8.1 was only one example. Another version of an online course would be delivering a course synchronously, either partially or completely. For example, you may decide to have an hour chat weekly with all participants.

Getting Started

As you can see, a great deal of preparation goes into teaching an online course. Preparation for the course should take place long before you actually offer it. In some cases, you can negotiate a course release or an increase in your teaching assignment to allow you to prepare for the course. In addition, you should take advantage of any training offered by your institution related to teaching online, such as using a specific online platform, creating podcasts, and using PowerPoint/Keynote or similar tools. Find out where to go to for technical support, and see if the center for teaching enhancement at your school has any resources or ideas to enhance your virtual course. Finally, make sure to identify faculty within your area that have offered online classes and talk with them about how they created and managed their online courses. You will need their support when things go wrong, and you will want someone to share your triumphs with as well.

As you consider making this move, here are more details about some of the significant steps to getting started.

- **Know your platform.** If you are at a university or college, the likelihood is that an online course shell (such as Blackboard) is already available for your use. If you do not have access to a preexisting course shell, you will have to put the course together piecemeal, perhaps through a personal web page, wiki, or blog, with links to the tools you wish to use in your course, such as a sticky note page or chatting.
- **Consider the tools you want to use:** podcasting, blogging, chatting (text or verbal), discussion boards, and so forth. Do not let the tools you want to use drive your content.
- **Consider the technological capabilities of your students.** Many may have computers that are unable to run sophisticated programs. If you plan to demonstrate via videotaped segments of yourself, the download time may be enormous. You might consider creating smaller chunks of the videos.
- **Look at each objective and assignment on your syllabus.** Determine how you want to present the material online. Will you use a presentation with guided notes or will you require them to listen to a lecture each week and post responses? Will the objective be measured by a graded assignment or by activity in the class? You need to figure out the best way to meet each objective online.
- **Make sure to try out every activity prior to your first class.** Also, design activities for students to do during a face-to-face orientation class time that will increase their familiarity with the tools. You do not want these activities to be time consuming (such as “Describe your career path”) but something that can be responded to quickly and that requires a minimal amount of risk in sharing. For example, you might have students take a 1 item quiz about the syllabus, or post an introduction on the bulletin board. If your class is 100% online, you may want to also record videos of how to access each portion of the course, in addition to your syllabus review.
- **Keep it simple.** Include basic information on how to navigate your online course. For example, I use the main discussion board as our road map. I tell the students to look at their supplement and presentation notes first, and when they are ready for the week’s activity to go to the main discussion board. There is a forum for each one of the modules, and it tells the students clearly where the assignment is located. Sometimes, it is right there on the

board, whereas at other times, they are required to take a quiz or work in their workgroups. However, in keeping it simple, I tell them, “Always go to the main discussion board first. It will tell you the next step.”

My Next Steps for Transforming or Creating an Online Course:

Creating the Virtual Classroom

When you are creating a virtual course, you have to take into consideration all of the factors that you normally have in a traditional classroom, such as small groups, atmosphere, and physical space. With some careful planning, you can recreate the benefits of the traditional classroom along with the benefits of all that the virtual environment offers. It may help to think about how you decorate your home or office. What is unique about you imbedded there? How can you create that same atmosphere in the online environment? For example, I love pansies, so when I created the banner for one of my courses, I chose one that had pansies on it. I also love my pets, so they sometimes make an appearance on my video lectures.

Here are some of the items in my virtual classroom:

- Some information (personal and professional) about me, with a picture of my family
- A place for student websites and blogs
- Discussion boards:
 - An introduction forum
 - Forums on prescribed topics
 - A miscellaneous forum
 - A “Top Ten” forum
 - A “Hot off the Presses” forum for current events
 - A “Funny Careers” forum for cartoons and jokes
- A wiki, where students can edit and add to a website that I have begun (sample topics have included career days for elementary counselors, career counseling for ex-offenders, and “coming out” at work issues)
- My syllabus
- A link to my personal and professional websites
- Self-help quizzes for each module (they can take these repeatedly for zero points)
- A link for private journaling

- Weekly announcements
- Anonymous surveys
- Chatrooms and discussion boards for work groups
- Virtual office hours
- Links to career-related websites of interest
- Supplementary readings
- Email functions
- Quizzes and exams
- Gradebook

Some other things that may be available to you include a calendar or task reminder, or an assignment dropbox (where students “drop off” their assignments). Remember, while your virtual classroom may have all the bells and whistles of a traditional classroom, the most important elements in the classroom are you and your students. A virtual course in its simplest form could be comprised of students emailing you their assignments and you emailing back feedback. Your regular involvement in your virtual course, regardless of how simple or sophisticated the course design is, will be the key ingredient in your course’s success.

What I Foresee in My Virtual Class — Add a Descriptor to the Buttons:

My Online Class

Syllabus

Real Time
Chats

ALS in an Online Classroom

We have covered multiple active learning strategies in the preceding chapters. Many of these activities can be replicated in an online classroom. The ones that require individual responses are easiest to replicate. A self-help quiz is active learning, as is posting an opinion to a discussion question. The bigger challenge comes for more interactive ALS, but with advances in technology, this is becoming easier. Many sites allow for group chats or multiple callers, so students could meet together to complete an assignment in this way. Other possibilities include:

- Tweeting a weekly picture or tweet of how they applied one of the concepts for that module that week.
- Breaking students into smaller discussion groups in different “rooms,” giving them a task (e.g., a case study analysis, interpreting career assessment results, an online scavenger hunt), and then having them report back to the group as a whole.
- Creating an interactive lecture that allows them to answer questions and see the reasons why an answer is incorrect or correct.
- Breaking into pairs or triads in different rooms and having them role-play the concept.
- Having students complete an anonymous quiz in real time (some programs allow for this or you could use a site such as www.polleverywhere.com) and show the results. For example, “Which occupational field do you think will be growing in the next ten years?”
- Allow students to draw on a slide. Give a rating scale and ask them to mark where they stand on a given issue.
- Invite students to clap when something is said they agree with, or to ask questions in the text box as a speaker is sharing.
- Vary the online tools you use. Try online

bulletin boards, Tweetchats, blogging, podcasts. Mix it up just enough to keep it interesting.

On the First Day of Online Class, My Students Said to Me ...

Similar to the first day of any type of class that you teach, you will want to arrive early to the first class or the orientation to your online course. You should have a physical orientation to your course. Certainly, there are ways of providing an orientation online, but when first starting off, I have found it to be incredibly useful to have everyone present to try out the components of the online course they will be using throughout the semester. This first meeting is also a great time to establish work groups and build community. In addition to communicating the expectations of the course, you will also have the goal of providing students with an on-ramp to your course, similar to the on-ramps on highways that allow you to merge into traffic. Thus, I always schedule my first meeting, whether it is for an online course or hybrid course, in the computer lab. If that is not possible, I ask students to bring their laptops having loaded the software (such as Elluminate) needed for the class.

Summary

Online teaching is gaining in popularity in colleges and universities. There are many personal and professional positives and negatives to online teaching. Making the decision to teach online is a decision that should not be made without considering many of the factors outlined in this chapter. To stay up to date, join professional groups that talk about distance learning and education, and follow people on social media who are involved in online teaching. For example, consider the United States Distance Learning Association LinkedIn Group and other resources listed below in the Sites of Interest.

Questions for Reflection

1. *What attitudes, thoughts, and concerns do you have about teaching online? How might you address these?*
2. *Are there any parts of a career course that you would feel uncomfortable placing online? If so, why?*
3. *Interview students who have taken online courses. What did they find went well and did not go so well? How can you use this information to enhance your course?*
4. *What experiences have you had with teaching or taking online courses? How can you incorporate that information into your course?*
5. *How did you score on the technology self-ratings? What else might you do to strengthen areas that need help?*
6. *Do some investigating to see if there are course development workshops on your campus for those wishing to teach online and take advantage of these. For example, www.Lynda.com has excellent trainings and courses on a variety of topics including education.*
7. *Is it right to require students to have a laptop, access to high-speed Internet, other hardware and software, or a certain level of technological skills? If your course is required, how will you respond to a student who says he or she cannot afford these tools?*

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Sites of Interest

Please note: these links were active at the time of publication.

- E-Learning Glossary: www.td.org/Publications/Newsletters/Learning-Circuits/Glossary
- Illinois Online Network: www.ion.uillinois.edu/resources/tutorials/overview/
- Instructional Technology Council: <http://www.itcnetwork.org>
- Internet Slang: www.noslang.com/dictionary.php
- Office of Educational Technology: <http://tech.ed.gov>
- Top Ten Rules for Developing Your First Online Course: <http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/online-education/top-10-rules-developing-first-online-course/>
- University of Washington online teaching guides: <http://www.washington.edu/teaching/teaching-resources/engaging-students-in-learning/flipping-the-classroom/>
- United States Distance Learning Association (<https://www.usdla.org>) — The United States Distance Learning Association provides content in many different educational arenas on Distance Learning in the United States. Start with the What's New area or choose a content area from the menu on the home page.