

# Start

## How to <sup>^</sup>Creating a Good Online Class

---

**A snapshot view of a good online class:** While the scope and breadth of good pedagogical sense of creating classes in the virtual world is complex and extensive, we are not going to delve too deeply into all of this. Instead we are going to keep it simple. This training document is to simply get you started in the right direction. All of the methods discussed in brevity here are purely suggestive and you are encouraged to work with some of them that interest you and make your course conform to your style while using best practices. You are already a professional and we are building a bridge to get you across the chasm of transferring your already successful and proven teaching style into a virtual environment and for your student's success.

**A short look at creating an effective class using an online learning system:**

### Issues:

- *Content organization*
- *Faculty interaction*
- *Student confusion*
- *Moving the content along to the end of the class*
- *Universal Design, Section 508 compliance*



### CONTENT ORGANIZATION:

---

- While course content may seem logical to you, it is probably not to your students. Organize your content in such a way as to move students towards what they need to do each week. The start-up method that has worked well is to have your course broken up into weeks:
  - Create Menu Buttons or links that are labeled, "Week 1", "Week 2" or "Module" if you use that scenario, etc.
  - Create a menu button or link just for your class syllabus
  - Create a menu button or link for Tests, Quizzes and Exams
  - Create any menu button or link that alerts students of specific course content
- Have your course content broken into weeks and insert a "check-list" for students to use to complete each week's work.
- Students have reported they like to have week 1 work under a single folder so they don't have to go all over the place to find what they need to do.
- Avoid what instructional design calls, the "Dump Truck" method of course organization. This is where you just start uploading content into your class without any concern for organization or student response.
- **Oklahoma State University** offers these suggestions:
  - ❖ The course structure needs to be logical and consistent. In other words, it needs to reflect some natural order within the content.
  - ❖ Where possible, categorize the course assignments into groups such as class discussion, quizzes, projects, reading materials, or videos.
  - ❖ Familiarize your students with where everything is located in the course site. For example, do all the videos go under one specific course folder or do they go separately under each chapter?
  - ❖ Provide your students with a detailed description of course structure.

HERE ARE VISUAL EXAMPLES OF DIFFERENT STYLES OF SWC COURSES MENU BARS:

Home Page

Announcements

**Syllabus**

Course Tools

Discussion Boards

My Grades

H

**Hidden to show only pertinent content**

Course Text Info

Ways to "Wow" Me

Wiki Instructions

Week 1

Week 2

Week 3

Week 4

Week 5

Week 6

Week 7

Week 8

Week 9

Week 10

A dark-themed menu bar with a list of items. A callout box with a green border and blue text says "Hidden to show only pertinent content". A green arrow points from the callout box to the "Week 6" through "Week 10" items, which are highlighted with a blue border.

Announcements

Syllabus

Due Dates

Learning Units

Grade Center

Discussi

Books

Tools

Commun

Discussion Board

Web Advisor

Help

**Weeks combined into Learning Units**

A light blue menu bar with a list of items. A red arrow points to the "Learning Units" item. A callout box with a green border and blue text says "Weeks combined into Learning Units".

Home Page

Announcements

**Syllabus**

Week 1

Week 2

Week 3

Discussion Boards

Course Tools

My Grades

Help

Course Content

**Simple and easy to navigate**

A light grey menu bar with a list of items. A callout box with a green border and blue text says "Simple and easy to navigate".

Home Page

Announcements

**Syllabus**

Course Content

Course Tools

Discussion Boards

My Grades

Help

Psychiatric Nursing

EKG/ABG

Cardiac System

Respiratory

Shock

FLUID AND LYTES

Endocrine

Immune

Nutrition

GI System

**Discipline specific. Compartmentally organized**

A light blue menu bar with a list of items. A callout box with a green border and blue text says "Discipline specific. Compartmentally organized".

## FACULTY INTERACTION WITH STUDENTS:

---

- Accreditation rules say that faculty must have substantive interaction with students to engender the “online class” philosophy. What is substantive? Its definition varies but it essentially means faculty must have enough interaction with your students to make the class comparable to a traditional face to face class. Better phrased is this excerpt from a dissertation titled: “Instructor-Student Interaction” by Sherri L. Restauri;

*“Students must be stimulated in similar methods in an online class as they are in traditional, face-to-face classes. The specific style of teaching style adopted by the instructor appears to be linked directly with the students’ subsequent learning approach”*

Pretty much says it all. How do you measure interaction?

- Answer student emails quickly and respectfully, normally within 24 hours or sooner if possible
- Participate in discussion boards. Faculty so not need to enter into each conversation, just when appropriate and advances the through process.
- Create opportunities to connect with students such as journals, wikis and synchronous chat.
- Read and “listen” to your class. Be pro-active in addressing student needs and questions.
- Think about what you could do to transfer that face-to-face contact to the virtual world.

## STUDENT CONFUSION:

---

Students have one big complaint that consistently shows up in the OLC. “I don’t know what to do” or “I don’t know what my instructor means”. Students are trying to understand the technology along with the learning component from you. The technology part is solved in the OLC; send your students to us. The understanding component has to be built into your class organization.

Tips to minimize student’s confusion:

1. Organize your menu items (see content organization above)
2. Be very literal in your directions. Write like you have a class full of aliens from another planet.
  - a. Here is an example of discussion board directions to students: Would you know what to do?

During our online course you will be participating in biweekly online discussions. One of the main purposes is to get to know each other. Another is to sharpen your writing skills. In order to earn full credit (10 points) for each discussion board, you must post at least **three responses**.

The first response must be several paragraphs that have been carefully written and proofread before you submit. You must respond specifically to the discussion prompt. You must have a clear topic sentence for each paragraph and develop your ideas with examples or details.

I recommend you write it in Notepad, spell check it, and then copy and paste it into the discussion forum. The second and third responses should be replies to another student or the instructor's posting. Each must be a minimum of four carefully written sentences.

Because this is a large class, I have divided you into two groups. Those students with last names beginning with A-M, please participate in the (A-M) discussion forum for each unit. Students with last names beginning with N-Z, please participate in the (N-Z) discussion forum for each unit

.The due dates are listed in the course "Due Dates" area as well as in the Course Units.  
NEED HELP? If you are new to using discussion boards, check out this quick tutorial.

Sounds thorough and gives students the expectation of their participation. It also gives students a direction in which to receive support. This set of direction was randomly chosen from within our SWC online learning classes. While it is a good example there are more directions you can add to make this even more complete and effective.

Here is another discussion board direction: This one not so good:

*This is your discussion board. Please type your answers by the end of the week*

**Here is an example of assignment directions: (not good)**

*Write a precis of the article we read in class - Science: How Global Myths are Made. Please use MLA format and type your work.*

- Does it tell the student how to submit the assignment?
- Does it tell the student any expectations?
- Does it give the student any path to clarification?

**Here is a different one: (better)**

*The assignment is worth 100 points. Your paper is due on or before Wednesday, October 23<sup>rd</sup>. Please note: You are responsible for submitting your assignment. If you are not sure that I have received it please contact me prior to the due date. Please use MLA format for your paper, which is expected to be 3-4 pages in length and approximately 1500 words, single spaced and size 12 font and sans-serif such as Arial or Tahoma. Click on the link above to submit your assignment, be sure to look for the green banner that tells you that you have successfully submitted your assignment. You will be graded on clarity, attention to directions and grammar. If you have any questions please contact me right away at: [XXX.XXXX@gmail.com](mailto:XXX.XXXX@gmail.com)*

This direction set has the required parts of expectations, how to submit and where to go and what to do for questions.

**MOVING THE CONTENT ALONG TO THE END OF THE CLASS:**

---

As you do in your face to face class, the information needs to have a forward momentum that leads students to the end of the term with an expected goal to accomplish, your online class is no different. Your material needs to use three principals:

1. Tell the what you are teaching
2. Teach them
3. Tell them what you have taught

Does your course content lead them to each new week by giving them clear expectations on what to accomplish? Does your information remind them of what they had learned in the previous week and what connection it has for the current one? Does your information help students understand where in the learning process they are and what pathway you are leading them to the end result?

Give your students learning points: what should they know now, what do they need to do to get by the upcoming week and clearly state where they are going. Here is an example: Let's say your students are in a bowling class. You are



trying to teach them that throwing the bowling ball a certain way will know over more pins. So, which way is best to do this?

1. Have them roll the ball down the lane but you have held a sheet up about halfway down the lane, blocking their view of the pins. When the ball hits the pins you don't say a word and let them guess how many pins they have knocked down?
2. Have them roll the ball down the lane, pass the sheet and then tell them how many pins they have knocked down?
3. Take the sheet down completely and let them SEE how pins they have knocked down?

I am going to choose number 3. How about you?

**TIP:** Give a class survey at the beginning middle and end of your class to see how students are responding to your online teaching style.

#### **UNIVERSAL DESIGN, SECTION 508 COMPLIANCE:**

---

Designing your course to accommodate students who have special needs is a necessary and mandated part of using the virtual environment. The SWC DSS office can help you ensure your course is using Universal Design standards for designing your course. Call them at extension 6512 on the Chula Vista Campus or extension 4408 at the Otay Mesa Higher Education Center.

Section 508 compliance means in part that you need to:

- Give special needs students more time on taking tests and exams
- Images must have ALT-TEXT (a short description of what the image is)
- Make documents viewed on the web and websites ready for screen readers to help sight impaired learners
- Colors on your Blackboard class should be high contrast and less red the better

These examples just scratch the surface of what you need to be aware of. Do not let this overwhelm you. Blackboard itself is certified section 508 compliant so by using it you are already 80% there! Consult with our DSS (Disabled Student Services) department to get going in the right direction.

For additional resources on Section 508 please go here:

<http://criterion508.com/?gclid=CNqxvdG3vbICFUjhQgodOGwAFg> and read more on this issue.

Remember, this document only scratches the surface of what a good online course is made of. Your mission if you choose to accept it, is to go forth and commit to a quality online course that your students will experience great successes by taking it. They will not be threatened, confused or overwhelmed by the learning, but will be challenged and want to be better learners.

Come to the Online Learning Center and learn more in small steps from us. Learn how to use the technology to make your job easier but produce more imaginative and dynamic results in your classroom.

## MORE ONLINE RESOURCES FOR BUILDING YOUR CLASS:

---

- Your faculty support website specific to SWC: [www.swccd.edu/~olc](http://www.swccd.edu/~olc)
- “Ten Best Practices for Teaching Online”:  
<http://www.designingforlearning.info/services/writing/ecoach/tenbest.html>
- “Guide to Teaching Online Courses”: <http://www.nea.org/home/30103.htm>
- “Tips and Tricks for Teaching Online”: [http://itdl.org/journal/oct\\_04/article04.htm](http://itdl.org/journal/oct_04/article04.htm)
- Creative tips for Teaching Online”: <http://www.onlineteachingtips.org/mambo/>
- On-Demand Training for Teachers form Blackboard: <http://ondemand.blackboard.com/>
- CCCConfer: Free synchronous meetings for office hours: <http://www.cccconfer.org/index1.aspx>

