

# Instruction Design Tips for Online Learning

*Instructional Design Tips for Online Learning* was developed by Joan Van Duzer of Humboldt State University to be used in conjunction with the *Rubric for Online Instruction* developed by CSU, Chico, c 2002.

Categories one through six, below, correspond to the categories of the Rubric for Online Instruction, developed by CSU, Chico.

Both instruments are available online, [www.csuchico.edu/celt/roi](http://www.csuchico.edu/celt/roi).

**Category 1 - Learner Support and Resources**

**Category 2 – Online Organization and Design**

**Category 3 – Instructional Design and Delivery**

**Category 4 – Assessment and Evaluation of Student Learning**

**Category 5 - Appropriate and Effective Use of Technology**

**Category 6 – Faculty Use of Student Feedback**

# Category 1 - Learner Support and Resources

## A. Information about being an online learner

- Tips for being a successful online student
- Quiz to self-assess readiness to be an online student
- Link to Library resources
- Instructions for how to conduct online research
- Instructions on how to write a research paper
- Guidelines for APA/MLA format of papers and/or citations
- Link to the testing center
- Link to campus remedial resource center
- Link to student disability resource center
- Information/tutorials on how to use software required by class assignments
- Contact information for technical support or Help Desk
- Checklist or other method for common troubleshooting tips
- Minimum computer hardware and software requirements
- Tips for avoiding and dealing with computer viruses
- Sources for any required plug-ins (and links)
- Tutorial(s) or job aids for how to use the LMS tools
- FAQs for LMS
- Netiquette guidelines

## B. Course specific resources

- Contact information for the instructor
- Contact information for academic department or advisor
- Information on additional related courses
- Pre-requisites of course
- Link(s) to Bookstore(s) to order textbooks or other instructional materials
- FAQ site on course information
- Estimated amount of time needed for completing course requirements

## C. Resources supporting course content

- Link(s) to web sites with supporting information relevant to course content
- Link(s) to web sites of organizations or associations related to course content
- Glossary of terms or links to definitions of new vocabulary
- Link(s) to learning objects (external to course, such as MERLOT)

## Category 2 – Online Organization and Design

### A. Course navigability and organization

- Syllabus is easily located
- Links to other parts of the course or external sources are accurate and up-to-date
- Instructional materials required are easily located
- Numbers identify sequenced steps; bullets list items are not prioritized or sequential
- Course content is organized in a logical format
- Topics are clearly identified and subtopics are related to topics
- Sequential (vs. concurrent) topics are annotated with dates
- Course schedule is available in a printer-friendly format for student convenience
- Organization and sequencing of the course content is logical and clear
- Resources are separated into "required" and "optional" categories

### B. Syllabus includes

- Course objectives
- Course completion requirements
- Expectations of students' participation, honesty, etc.
- Timeline for student participation is clear
- Faculty member(s) introductory information
- Expectations of availability of and turnaround time for contact with instructor
- Course schedule is summarized in one place

### C. Aesthetic design

- Typeface is easy to read
- Sufficient contrast between text and background makes information easy to read
- Appropriate images supporting course content add visual interest
- Design keeps course pages to a comfortable length with white space.

### D. Consistency in course

- Layout of course is visually and functionally consistent
- Navigability is clear, simple and user friendly
- Spelling and grammar are consistent and accurate
- Written material is concise
- Language of written material is friendly and supportive
- Clear directions are given for each task or assignment
- Sentences and paragraphs brief

## **E. Universal accessibility**

- Universal accessibility concerns are addressed throughout the course, including transcripts of any non-text objects
- Images are optimized for speedy display and include alternative text
- Alternative formats of materials provided, when possible (e.g., optional print packet of extensive reading materials, CD of audio clips used in course, etc.)
- Use of color adds interest but does not disadvantage those with color blindness

# **Category 3 – Instructional Design and Delivery**

## **A. Promote interaction and communication**

- Students introduce themselves
- Students are encouraged to respond to classmate introductions
- "Ice-breaker" activity to get acquainted
- Instructor introduces himself/herself to model interaction
- Students' input is not evaluated as "right" or "wrong"
- Netiquette described and enforced
- Student participation is tracked and "wallflowers" drawn in to the discussions
- Students are prompted by facilitator to expand on relevant points
- Facilitator may play "devil's advocate"
- Reading and writing requirements are consistent with student abilities and course unit load

## **B. Goals and alignment to learning objectives**

- Pace of delivery of course content is managed
- Course content is "chunked" for more manageable learning
- Instructional design is made clear (e.g., is it self-paced, or group-paced)
- Expectations for synchronous vs asynchronous activities are clearly spelled out

## **C. Learning objectives and activities are integrated**

- Reading assignments match learning objectives
- Activities lead to learning desired concepts
- Tasks and activities are designated as synchronous or asynchronous; sequential or may be completed in any order (clarified)
- Instructional material may be reviewed repeatedly (built-in redundancy)
- Summary provided frequently, particularly at the end of topics, to reinforce learning

**D. Activities to enhance student learning** (addressing multiple learning styles)

- Video clips of interviews, movements
- Historical audio clips of famous speeches
- Screen animations for instructional exercises using software
- Personal interview reports
- Crossword or word search puzzles
- Matching and game-show-style trivia games
- Online scavenger hunt / WebQuest
- Annotated bibliography
- PowerPoint presentations as assignments
- Flash simulations

**E. Activities to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills**

- Discussions center on questions without a single correct answer
- Compare and contrast exercises
- Case studies
- Critique classmates' assignments
- Collaborative exercises
- Portfolios (building one activity upon another) to share/peer review

**Category 4 – Assessment and Evaluation of Student Learning**

**A. Assess student readiness for learning**

- Pre-requisites are defined and enforced
- Acceptable methods for completing assignments are identified (group work, open book, etc.)
- Consequences of cheating or plagiarism

**B. Assessment activities are aligned with learning objectives**

- Criteria used to evaluate participation in online discussion groups
- Study questions
- Quantity and scope of graded assignments is reasonable
- Authentic assessments

**C. Multiple assessment strategies**

- Students' bibliography or reference list includes a variety of materials such as URLs, books and journals, and videos
- When possible, options among assignments are provided to allow for different interests, backgrounds, and personal learning styles

- Students are not assessed solely on tests/quizzes but are provided ample opportunity to demonstrate proficiency in different ways

#### **D. Regular feedback**

- Rich and rapid feedback – self-grading assignments released immediately
- Frequent and substantial feedback from the instructor
- Samples of assignments illustrate instructor's expectations
- Detailed instructions and tips for completing assignments
- Due dates for all assignments
- Rubrics for all assignments identify assessment guidelines
- Grading scale
- Instructor models assignment

#### **E. Self-assessments and peer feedback**

- Self-tests similar to the final evaluation instruments
- Students pose discussion questions, respond to others' discussion topics, later post answers to their own questions and respond to others' comments on their discussion topic
- Peer review opportunities
- Students apply rubric to their own work and describe/defend their score
- Clear guidelines for peer review, if applicable

### **Category 5 - Innovative Teaching Technology**

#### **A. Appropriate tools to facilitate communication**

- Discussion boards
- Synchronous "chats"
- Email
- Listserv
- Teleconferencing
- Group discussion areas, when appropriate for group activities
- Instant messaging

#### **B. New teaching methods**

- Instructor is open to trying new methods of delivery of instruction
- Instructor is open to accepting new methods of students preferred learning styles

### **C. Multimedia elements**

- Flash animations
- Tutorials with screen captures and voice over
- Audio clips
- Graphics
- Video clips
- PowerPoint presentations
- CD-Rom or DVD supplemental materials
- Other learning objects, simulations or interactivities

### **D. Engage students throughout the course**

- Students off-campus with modems are provided with low-bandwidth alternatives for downloading media
- Technology is used to engage students in learning, not just for viewing but for interacting with other students or with the course content

## **Category 6 – Faculty Use of Student Feedback**

### **A. Course content**

- Evaluation survey at end of course
- Student input sought at regular intervals
- Open ended questions
- Students falling behind are prompted to determine what might be delaying their progress
- Students prompted to find web-based resources supporting the topic to share with classmates; the highest quality resources incorporated into the course

### **B. Online technology**

- Instructor has an open door to students to point out flaws of delivery of instruction using technology
- Instructor solicits feedback on how delivery can be more effective for student learning (e.g., a Discussion Topic for Feedback)

### **C. Instruction and assessment**

- Instructor is willing to modify course (live) as needed to improve or fix inadequacies
- Instructor is able to modify elements (e.g., fix bad quiz questions, extend deadlines, review methods of achieving course objectives)

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