

‘Essential Components of an Online Course’ Interactive Notebook

Table of Contents

[Table of Contents](#)

[About the Creator of the Course](#)

[About the Course](#)

[Defining Online Learning](#)

[Considerations](#)

[Equity](#)

[Student Data Privacy](#)

[Essential Components of an Online Course](#)

[Course Organization](#)

[Synchronous or Asynchronous?](#)

[Timeline](#)

[Digital Course Homepage](#)

[Learning Management System/Course Management System](#)

[Other Digital Homepage Options](#)

[What features does a digital course homepage need?](#)

[Consistent Formatting](#)

[Why Consistent Formatting?](#)

[Tips for Consistent Formatting](#)

[Use the same font](#)

[Use styles to format headings](#)

[Common page structure/layout](#)

[Colors](#)

[Graphics](#)

[Personal Connections](#)

[1:1 Appointments](#)

[Learning Journals](#)

lindy@intechgratedpd.org

[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

[Video/Audio](#)

[Bitmojis](#)

[Virtual Check-ins](#)

[Forms](#)

[Spreadsheets](#)

[Essential Digital Tools](#)

[Flipgrid](#)

[Forms](#)

[Slides](#)

[Screencasting Tools](#)

[Other Digital Tools To Enhance Online Learning](#)

[Office Hours](#)

[Safety and Privacy in the World of Video Calls](#)

[Video Conferencing Tools](#)

[Learner Choice](#)

[Choice Boards](#)

[Genius Hour](#)

[Hyperdocs](#)

[Reflection](#)

[Supporting Parents/Adults/Guardians](#)

[More Resources for Online Learning](#)

[G Suite for Edu \(Google\) Districts](#)

[Microsoft 365 for Edu Districts](#)

[Microsoft Teams for Education](#)

[Parting Thoughts](#)

[Sources](#)

[Appendix: Dos and Don'ts of Online Learning](#)

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](https://twitter.com/lindyhockenbary)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

About the Creator of the Course



inTECHgrated
professional development
LINDY HOCKENBARY



My name is Lindy Hockenbary, and I reside in beautiful Bozeman, Montana. I have spent my career in education in various roles. I started as a middle and high school teacher. I was lucky and always had what is now deemed a “1:1” environment as my classroom was the ‘computer lab’ for the entire small school! Then, by random life happenings, I worked for a personal finance project developing curriculum. As part of this job, we would train teachers how to use our curriculum. I began to really enjoy the professional development side. This led to working as a technology integration specialist for a regional education service center and the completion of a Master degree in Educational Technology. I currently work as an instructional technology consultant with my business [inTECHgrated Professional Development](http://intechgrated.com). I am lucky and get to visit schools all over the world helping to ensure various technologies are purposefully integrated. I have various educational technology certifications shown in the badges below. My motto is to use the learning tool that is best for learners. I have been teaching online courses for several years. Please connect with me on twitter: [@lindyhockenbary](https://twitter.com/lindyhockenbary)



lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](https://twitter.com/lindyhockenbary)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

About the Course



Welcome to your interactive notebook! What is an interactive notebook? Think of it as a short digital book with hyperlinks. Interactive notebooks are a great option for the self-directed learner.

The goal of this course (by the way - I am calling it a course since we are talking about online courses...even though it technically an interactive notebook) is to give you a structure you can use to teach a successful online course. I don't expect you will master online teaching by the time you work through this notebook; no one is a master online teacher! However, I hope this gets you started on the right foot with online teaching and provides a vision of what your online course could look like.

This course was designed with K-12 teachers in mind, but most information can apply to post-secondary/higher education learning environments as well.

Technology changes quickly, so for the "how-to" parts, I have tried to link directly to the source, if possible (ie - [Google for Education Training Center](#), [Microsoft Educator Community](#), etc.) so the instructions will update as the tool changes.

Since this is an *interactive* notebook, any time you [see blue underlined letters](#), it means that text is hyperlinked to a web resource or a location in the notebook. Simply click the blue underlined text and the web resource should automatically open in a new window or you should be taken to the location of the notebook.

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Icons have been added to the left margin throughout the interactive notebook to help call out specific points:



Tips/Best Practices - Any additional tips or recommended best practices.



Learn more - Any resources to continue your learning on a topic.



Access - Content where equity of access could be discussed or addressed.



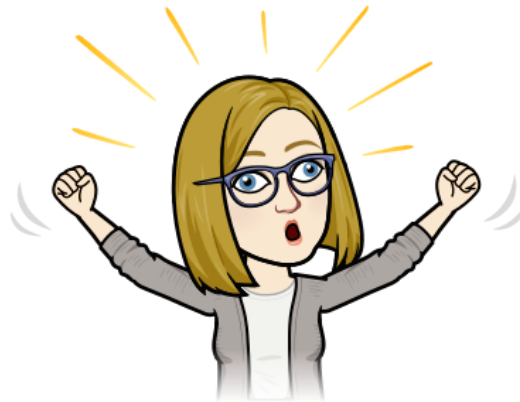
Accessibility - Content where accessibility of learning materials could be discussed or addressed.



Student Data Privacy and Security - Content that relates to student data privacy and security in general and may warrant further discussion with your educational institution.



Reflection Questions - Optional questions throughout to stop and reflect on how the content could apply to your unique learning environment.



LET GET STARTED



These icons came from [The Noun Project](#). I use this tool to provide visual cues in my online content. The Noun Project has [add-ons for Google Docs and Google Slides](#). [Flaticon](#) is another option to find icons. Or, get really fancy and use [Google Autodraw](#) to make your own icons.

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Defining Online Learning

Before we dive into the world of facilitating online learning, let's make sure we are all on the same page regarding the definition of **online learning**. You will hear many terms in the education space: online learning, **e-learning**, **remote learning**, **distance learning**, etc. Some will say these are synonyms. Some will scrutinize small differences between each term and place one term as an umbrella of another. Everyone has a slightly different interpretation of these terms.

For the sake of this course, the term online learning is referring to learning that is occurring over the internet, and there is no face-to-face interaction between teacher and learner. Online learning in our definition means all content, learning tasks, communication, and collaboration are occurring virtually.

This course will not discuss **hybrid, blended, or flipped learning**, because these models of learning almost always assume an aspect of face-to-face instruction. However, a key takeaway in this course is that no matter the learning model followed (face-to-face, online, blended, etc.), the pillars of teaching and learning remain the same. In fact, the digital tools used to teach remain mostly the same. What changes is the *strategy*. Therefore, many of the tips, tools, and resources shared in this course can be easily transferred to a blended or face-to-face learning environment.



What terminology is your educational institution using?

Considerations

In the world of educational technology, there are factors that drive every decision educators make regarding using digital tools with learners. Since online learning is completed entirely online, these factors are especially important as a “paper” alternative is often not possible and/or effective. I am beginning this course with two of these considerations that should drive every decision you make with your online course planning: **equity** and **student data privacy**.

Equity

When planning and designing online learning, equity should be at the forefront of all decisions. First, let’s define equity. The definition of **equity** according to Merriam-Webster is justice according to natural law or right.¹ But, what does that mean in the context of education? Equity means making sure every student has the support they need to be successful. Equity in education means understanding that individual needs vary person to person and establishing systems to ensure every learner has an equal opportunity for success.

I don’t want to deep dive into the world of equity in education as we would spend the entire course on only that topic! However, I do want to point out three factors to consider regarding equity in online courses:

1. Access to technology
 - This includes access to devices and access to the internet. Has your education institution planned to ensure all learners have access?
 - Will all students be using the same device? Or, will students be using devices with different operating systems (OSs)? There are so many different operating systems that some tools are compatible with and others not. If your educational institution is not providing the same device to each student, your learners may have any of the following:
 - [Windows OS](#)
 - [Mac OS](#)
 - [iOS](#) - Used on iPads and iPhones
 - [Android OS](#) - tablets or smartphones
 - [Fire OS](#) - Used on Kindles

¹ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/equity>



- Throughout this course, I will call out points where equity of access could be discussed or addressed by the orange device icon in the left margin.

2. Accessibility of learning materials

- Are all learning materials provided in online courses accessible to all learners? Or, do accommodations need to be made?



- Again, I don't want to dive into accessibility, because if we did, this course would never end! However, throughout this course, I will point out specific points related to accessibility with the pink heart icon in the left margin.



- To learn more regarding how you can make your online courses accessible to all, review these resources:

- Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a strategy designed to ensure accessibility of learning to all. UDL applies to all learning environments - online, face-to-face, blended, etc. Learn more on the [UDL website](#).

- Microsoft Educator Community course: [Training teachers to author accessible content](#). This course has great tips that are transferable to non-Microsoft tools.

- Microsoft Educator Community course: [Accessibility, Special Education, and online learning: Supporting equity in a remote learning environment](#)

- As you are building and curating learning materials, you can use accessibility checkers to ensure materials are accessible.

- For Microsoft Office users: Microsoft Office documents (as well as other tools in the Microsoft suite such as [Sway](#)) have a built-in accessibility checker, usually found under the 'Review' tab. Learn more about the accessibility checker in the article "[Improve accessibility with the Accessibility Checker](#),"

- For Google Doc Suite users: [Grackle Docs](#) is an add-on that can be used in Google Docs, Slides, and Sheets to flag accessibility issues.

- For websites: WebAIM has accessibility checkers for websites called [WAVE](#).

3. Adult support

- Is your course designed in a way that learners can complete with minimal adult support? The answer to this will vary drastically

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

depending on many factors such as the age of your learners, their socioeconomic status, if your course is synchronous or asynchronous, etc.

- The reason this is important to consider when designing online learning is that you, as the course designer, do not want to create a situation where success in your course is dependent on adult support; many learners may have little to no adult support at home.



If you are interested in learning more about equity in online learning, you can continue your learning with these resources:

- [International Association of K-12 Online Learning \(iNACOL\) Access and Equity for All Learners in Blended and Online Education](#)
- [Ten Steps to Equity in Education Policy Brief](#)



What could you do to make your learning environment more equitable?

Student Data Privacy

“**Student data privacy** covers the use, collection, handling and governance of students’ **personally identifiable information (PII)**. This includes any and all information that can be used to identify, locate, or contact an individual student—such as name, address, student ID, and login information. It also includes the student’s academic, health, and disciplinary records, as well as information that can be combined to identify a particular student, like demographics and birth date.”²

Student data privacy is a big deal, because there are legal and ethical limitations on the collection, use, sharing, and handling of student PII.² Issues of student data

² https://cosn.org/sites/default/files/Platform_Student_Privacy_White_Paper.pdf

privacy have always been a concern; however, the topic has come to the forefront in recent years as schools use more and more technology and therefore, collect more and more electronic information.

Any digital tool you use in remote or face to face learning should meet federal and state student data privacy laws. In the United States, there are three main federal laws that involve the regulation of student data:

- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
- Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA)
- Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA)



Reference “[The ABCs of Student Data Privacy for Administrators learn about each federal law](#)” to learn more about each specific law.

If you work with students under the age of 13, COPPA will affect your online course as it involves parental consent for websites that collect PII from students under the age of 13. Most likely your school has this covered already for approved websites so make sure to consult with your school leaders.

FERPA relates to the access to student records. This shouldn’t be an issue that comes up in the planning of an online course but make sure to consult with your school leaders.

PPRA involves parental review of surveys and evaluations that require the student to reveal sensitive subject matter (income, religion, political affiliations, etc.). This shouldn’t be information collected in an online course and therefore, should not be much of a concern in the majority of online courses.

State laws will most likely affect what digital tools you use in your online course. Every state is different, so make sure to understand what student data privacy laws are in your state. Your educational institutions’s technology director is a good resource to learn about your state’s student data privacy laws.

Even though policy varies from state to state, these laws regarding student data *typically* have common points. The two common points that will have the most effect on online learning decisions are:

- Governing the permissible activities of online service providers.
- Prohibiting service providers and districts from selling or profiting from PII.

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

This means that you need to ask these questions of any digital tool you use in your online course:

- Does the digital tool collect student PII?
 - A good rule of thumb to know if student PII is collected is if students have to create an account to use the tool. Or, if you enter student information into the tool.
 - Even if you determine a digital tool does not collect student PII, it is still a good idea to review the privacy policy. Any reputable company will have the privacy policy on their website.
- If the tool *does collect* PII, what does the tool's privacy policy say they do with that information? This is the key to whether a digital tool meets student data privacy standards or not.
- If the tool does not sell or profit from student PII, then that tool will *most likely* meet student data privacy standards; however, I heavily stress *most likely*. Please do not take this to mean you can automatically use any tool that does not sell or profit from student PII! Please do your due diligence and research student data privacy requirements in your state. It is a *very complicated subject*.



Many state laws require schools to establish privacy agreements with any digital resource that collects student PII before that tool can be used with students. If your state is a member of the Student Data Privacy Consortium (SDPC), you can easily search the SDPC website by your state and see which companies have signed your state's standard privacy agreement at: <https://sdpc.a4l.org/>

If your online course has learners in multiple states, make sure you are in compliance with each state's data privacy laws.



Throughout the course, content that could relate to student data privacy and may warrant further discussion with your educational institution will be indicated with the green lock symbol in the left margin.

In conclusion, you may notice a theme in all of the above - consult with your educational institution regarding student data privacy. The big question to ask: What digital tools am I allowed and not allowed to use with learners?



If you would like to learn more, refer to these resources:

- [The ABC's of Student Data Privacy for School Administrators](#)
- [Office of Educational Technology - Privacy Technical Assistance Center](#)

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

- [Protecting Student Privacy While Using Online Educational Services: Requirements and Best Practices](#)

See we have already been talking about equity and student data privacy for almost three pages! Let's move on to more exciting things!



?

What steps do you need to take to ensure the digital tools you utilize in your online course comply with student data privacy laws?

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Essential Components of an Online Course

Before we jump into the essential components, let's talk briefly about what online learning looks like. This is not a simple answer and varies dramatically depending on content area, learner age, teaching style, etc. However, one thing is clear across the board: *Do not try to replicate face-to-face instruction in an online environment.*

To be blunt, if you try to replicate the schedule, learning tasks, and/or strategies used in face-to-face learning environments in an online environment, you will not enjoy online teaching and your students will not enjoy online learning! As the Christensen Institute explains in their publication, "[3 tips for a better student online learning experience](#)," do not "take subpar brick-and-mortar experiences and move them online where they will be even worse."³ If this makes you feel at a bit of a loss, don't fret! That is what this course is for!

The essential components of an online course are elements that drive the planning of your online course. This section will go into detail regarding each of these components:

- [Course Organization](#)
- [Digital Homebase](#)
- [Consistent Formatting](#)
- [Personal Connections](#)
- [Virtual Check-ins](#)
- [Essential Digital Tools](#)
- [Office Hours](#)
- [Learner Choice](#)
- [Reflection](#)

³ <https://www.christenseninstitute.org/blog/3-tips-for-a-better-student-online-learning-experience/>

Course Organization

There are several factors that you will want to consider in regards to how you organize your course. We will go into detail on two aspects: synchronous/asynchronous and timeline.

Synchronous or Asynchronous?

Will your online course be synchronous or asynchronous?

Synchronous learning is learning that happens in *real time*. With synchronous learning, teachers and learners are engaged in learning at the same time in the same virtual learning environment. With synchronous learning, educators set a specific time for learners to meet and conduct class. Typically, synchronous learning is facilitated through a video conferencing tool. The most common video conferencing tools in education are Zoom, Google Meet, and Teams meetings. We will discuss these tools in depth later in the course.

Asynchronous learning is when learners complete work related to the course on their *own schedule*. Educators provide learning materials and learning tasks that learners can review and complete at their own pace within a designated time period (for example, one week). Throughout the time period, learners may participate in discussion threads, collaborate using digital tools, or watch a video and respond to a prompt. Asynchronous learning can have an optional synchronous component such as virtual office hours where students can seek extra help or ask questions about the week's assignments. We will learn a lot more about virtual office hours later in the course.

You could also choose a blend of synchronous and asynchronous learning. For example, the required elements of the course could be asynchronous with an optional one hour synchronous meeting every week. There are endless options!



I recommend focusing on asynchronous online learning with teacher office hours offered; synchronous online learning has too many headaches for little or no benefit. However, you may be required by your education institution to facilitate synchronous

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

learning and that is ok! Or, you may find that synchronous learning is better for your unique learners. Keep in mind, there is no wrong way to do online learning.



If you would like to learn more:

- [This infographic gives a quick view of synchronous vs asynchronous learning.](#)
- Read “[Synchronous Learning vs. Asynchronous Learning in Online Education](#)” to explore the pros and cons of synchronous and asynchronous learning.

Timeline/Deadlines

Consider how you will organize the timeline of your course. Of course, these decisions will depend on whether you are facilitating synchronous or asynchronous learning. Regardless of synchronous or asynchronous set-up, a strong organizational strategy is to group learning tasks into time chunks (ie - days or weeks), set open and close days and stick to that schedule for the entire course. For example, lesson material is grouped by week and opens for the week on Wednesday morning and is due Tuesday night... and repeat through the course. This makes managing course deadlines much easier on you and your learners.



A tip when considering timeline and deadlines is to group tasks in a way that allows maximum flexibility for learners to complete the tasks on their own time schedules. I am a big fan of week groupings. This is how I have taught my online courses for years. It makes it super easy for me to manage if I know that I always need to have materials ready by a certain day of the week. However, I have learned not to do the Monday - Sunday schedule as then all questions come in over the weekend! Instead, I open and have materials due mid-week like the example above. This way I don't spend my weekends answering emails!

Questions to consider:

- When will you open course content? Will you open all course content at once or stagger?
- When will learning tasks be due? Daily? Weekly?
- If facilitating synchronous learning, how often will you meet? Daily? Weekly?



Regardless of your course timeline and due dates remember that online learning takes more time than face-to-face learning. In other words, it will take you more time in online learning to cover what you would in a face-to-face learning environment.

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

?

How will your online course be organized?

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Digital Course Homepage

For online learning, you absolutely must have a **'digital homepage'** or 'digital hub' for your online course. The course homepage is the place where all communication for learning flows in and out. This is the place learners go to access all information for the course. A digital homepage is the one-stop shop for everything relating to a particular course. I call this a digital homepage, because you have many choices of what tool to use for your course homepage.

Learning Management System/Course Management System

Many education institutions use a learning management system (LMS) as a digital course homepage. A **learning management system** is simply a software designed to help you manage learning.

★ Read ["What is an LMS?"](#) to go into more detail on learning management systems.

You may also hear the term **course management system (CMS)**. A CMS is very similar to an LMS. In fact, the two terms have been used interchangeably over the last ten to twenty years, and it is almost impossible to distinguish now. Even when the two terms were more distinguished, the fact of the matter is we are comparing apples to apples. In addition, whether it is a LMS or CMS, the goal is to have a digital tool that creates a single online environment for teaching and learning. The major players under the LMS/CMS umbrella have embraced the term LMS; therefore, that is the term we will stick with for the remainder of this course.

★ If you are interested in reading more about the differences between an LMS and CMS, this article, ["Learning and Course Management Systems \(LMS/CMS\),"](#) provides good insights.

★ There are many, many different LMSs. Some are more popular in the K-12 learning space, such as [Canvas](#) and [Schoology](#). Others more popular in the higher education space such as [Blackboard](#), and [D2L or Brightspace](#). [Check out this list of LMSs if you are interested in the vast number available!](#)

Most LMSs will come with a hefty price tag 💰. Some offer limited versions that are free. This is known as a **freemium** tool. Freemium describes a website or software that offers some features for free and charges for premium features.

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Other Digital Homebase Options

A new category of course homebase has emerged in the last several years; these tools don't necessarily fit under the umbrella of LMS or CMS. The two big players in this category are [Google Classroom](#) and [Microsoft Teams](#). There are a lot of strong feelings in the education space regarding whether these tools should be under the umbrella of LMS. Some will argue that they are a new type of LMS; others argue they are a "limited LMS" and even others argue that they are in a category of their own. I don't think it really matters as long as you understand the purpose of these tools is to provide a 'one-stop shop' for learning.

In fact, both Google Classroom and Microsoft Teams have integrations with other LMSs. For example, Teams and Canvas integrate with each other. How is that for complicated?!

Both Google Classroom and Microsoft Teams are free to education institutions but do require set up of both Google and Microsoft's cloud based solutions. To use Google Classroom, a school will want to set up [G Suite for Education](#). To use Microsoft Teams, a school will want to set up [Microsoft 365 Education](#). It is worth setting up either or both G Suite for Education and Microsoft 365 as a host of other digital tools come along with both platforms. Some education institutions stick to one or the other and some have a foot in both platforms. The details of that are for another course though. For the sake of this course, understand that if you want to use either Google Classroom or Microsoft 365 Education as a homebase for your online course, your education institution would have to set up either G Suite for Education or Microsoft 365 Education.

[Seesaw](#) is another tool in the "other digital homebase options" that has made major headway in K-8 education over the last several years. If your learners are elementary aged, Seesaw may be a great digital homebase option for you as it is designed for younger learners in mind and has a solid parent sharing feature.

What features does a digital course homebase need?

Regardless of what tool you use, your online learning course homebase should include at minimum the following features:

- Individual Course Space
 - Of course, the tool needs to have the ability for you to create a different digital 'space' or class for each course.

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

- Easy Learner Communication
 - A place to post announcements and other course communication for learners. This needs to be obvious and easy to access from the learner perspective.
- Learning Task Dropbox
 - How will learners submit learning tasks to you? The digital homebase needs to have a 'learning task dropbox' of sorts where students can submit their learning tasks to you, and you can easily return those tasks.
 - This is an important piece of an online course. This feature needs to be easy for learners to use and easy for you as the teacher to see what tasks need feedback and scoring, how many tasks have been submitted and not been submitted, and which students have submitted/not submitted the learning task.
 - Feedback - Part of the learning task dropbox feature should include a way for the teacher to provide feedback to learners and learners to easily review this feedback.
 - Scoring - Another part of the learning task dropbox feature should be a way for you to score learning tasks, whether it is pass/fail, point-based, standards-based, etc.
- Easy Sharing of Learning Content
 - Teachers need to be able to easily share learning content with students. Questions to consider:
 - Does the tool allow you to easily add and format text?
 - Does the tool allow you to easily link or embed websites, videos, and other multimedia content?
- Calendar
 - The calendar should include at minimum major course dates.
 - Preferably the calendar links to the learning task dropbox for easy management of course due dates.
- Clear Organization
 - Does the tool allow you to organize course content in a way that will be both clear and engaging to your learners? What is clear and engaging to your learners will depend on the age of your learners. For example, there are LMSs that I would not use with elementary aged learners.

There are optional features that aren't required but can be helpful parts of a course homebase:



- Device Agnostic
 - If your learners are using a variety of device types to access your online course, it is especially important that the course homebase is device agnostic. Device agnostic simply means the tool is accessible on any device or operating system.
 - We live in a world of mobile, so in addition to being agnostic, I would also recommend a tool that is mobile friendly. Preferably, the tool has a mobile app available for the major mobile players - iOS and Android. Even if your education institution provides a typical device to all students, those students with smartphones are likely to want to access course information from their smartphone (this also increases engagement in the course!).
- Reports and Analytics
 - Being able to quickly download reports and other analytics from your course homebase tool can help you make important decisions regarding your course as a whole and individual learners. Examples of reports that are helpful to facilitating online learning include:
 - Learner progress and activity
 - Learner completion rates
 - Assessment results
 - Learner participation
- Support
 - Is there a way to get technical support regarding the tool, if needed?
 - Does the tool provide training on how to effectively utilize it for delivering online learning? Or, is training content available from other sources?
- Integration with Student Information System (SIS)
 - If your educational institution uses a SIS (such as Infinite Campus or Powerschool), you may want to consider a tool that integrates with that SIS. A SIS is a tool that manages all student records and administration, often referred to as a gradebook in the K-12 space. Integration of your course homebase and SIS may mean that grades automatically transfer, students are automatically added to the correct courses in the course homebase, etc.

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Some educators may choose to use a website as a digital homebase. [Google Sites](#) is a popular tool for this. Although, this does accomplish the goal of having all communication for the course in one place, if the website tool you are using does not have a built-in tool for submitting learning tasks, this may cause you a headache, especially if you feel that you are not necessarily a “techie!”



No matter which tool you use as your digital homebase, ensure the tool meets your country and/or state/provinces student data privacy requirements. Many of you will probably have a tool designated by your school to use as a digital homebase for your online course.



If your school does not offer a course homebase tool already, [Canvas](#) and [Seesaw](#) are both freemium tools that allow you to sign up with your school email address. I have taught many online courses through Canvas, and as a bonus, Canvas has immersive reader built into it.



You can use Google Classroom with a personal Google account. However, I strongly recommend against this if you work with learners under the age of 18, because you should only communicate with students with a school-issued account. If your school provides G Suite for Education, then you can use Google Classroom as it is tied to your school-issued account (not a personal account).

Resources for each of the major digital homebases:

- [Google Classroom](#)
 - [Your First Days of Classroom training](#) from Google for Education
 - [Getting Started with Google Classroom](#) from Google for Education
 - [Google Classroom resources](#) from Alice Keeler
- [Microsoft Teams](#)
 - [Teams for Edu Quick Start Guide](#) from Microsoft Education
 - [Microsoft Educator Community](#) Courses:
 - [Teams Course 1: All About Teams](#)
 - [Teams Course 2: Let’s Share](#)
 - [Teams Course 3: Working with Students](#)
 - [Teams Course 4: Assignments and Feedback](#)
 - [Teams Course 5: Class Notebook in Teams](#)
 - [Staying connected with remote learning through Microsoft Teams and Office 365](#)
 - [Transform Learning with Microsoft Teams](#)

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

- [Crafting a collaborative learning environment with Class Teams](#)
- [Canvas](#)
 - [Canvas Quick Start Guide](#) from Canvas Support
 - [Getting Started with Canvas as an Instructor](#) from Canvas Support
 - [Canvas Guides](#) from Canvas Support
- [Seesaw](#)
 - [Seesaw Training and PD](#) from Seesaw

If you happen to use a different tool for your course homepage, navigate to the homepage of that tool and look for the support or help section. Chances are you will find how-to resources there to help you get started.

?

What tool will you use for your digital course homepage?



Consistent Formatting

You want your course to have the same look and feel from unit to unit or week to week. To do this, use consistent formatting throughout an entire course. Formatting includes:

- Font
- Colors
- Design
- Graphics

In essence, you should create a **style guide** for your online course materials. A course style guide basically outlines how the course will look. Many would argue that your educational institution should have a style guide that is followed across all courses in that institution.

Why Consistent Formatting?

For one, having consistent formatting creates a better user experience through an online course and provides visual cues. For example, the use of icons in this course is a great example of using consistent formatting to provide visual cues. In addition, research has found that transitioning to new formats while reading can cause eye strain. As stated in the article, "[To Be a Better Online Reader](#)," "with online reading "you can find yourself transitioning to entirely new layouts from moment to moment, and, each time you do so, your eyes and your reading approach need to adjust. Each adjustment, in turn, takes mental and physical energy."⁴ Therefore, we can help reduce eye fatigue and increase reading comprehension by using consistent formatting in online courses.

Tips for Consistent Formatting

Use the same font

Your entire online course should use the same style of font. It is not necessary for headings to be a different font than content text; however, if you really want to do so, that is ok but keep all headings the same font and all content text the same font throughout the entire course.

⁴ [Being a Better Online Reader](#)



Choose a **sans serif font** as it is better for those with dyslexia.⁵ Sans serif fonts do not have small lines (serifs) at the ends of characters. **Serif fonts** have small lines at the end of characters. Below are examples of sans serif fonts and serif fonts:

Sans Serif Fonts	Serif Fonts
Karla is a sans serif font.	Times New Roman is a serif font.
Arial is a sans serif font.	Garamond is a serif font
Calibri is a sans serif font.	Georgia is a serif font.



Learn more about font choices and accessibility on the [WebAIM website](#).

Use styles to format headings

Word processing tools such as Microsoft Word and Google Docs have built-in styles that allow you to easily make headings and sub-headings within a document. There are many benefits to using styles to create headings over simply changing the size and emphasis of the font; one benefit is styles will create a table of contents for the document. A table of contents is great for any learner but essential for learners who use a screen reader. Simply changing the font size and emphasis of headings does not allow a screen reader to distinguish between the hierarchy of headings.



These headings also create consistency throughout the course by having the same formatting for each heading level, such as title, heading 1, heading 2, etc. I have used the headings built into Google Docs for this course.

Common page structure/layout

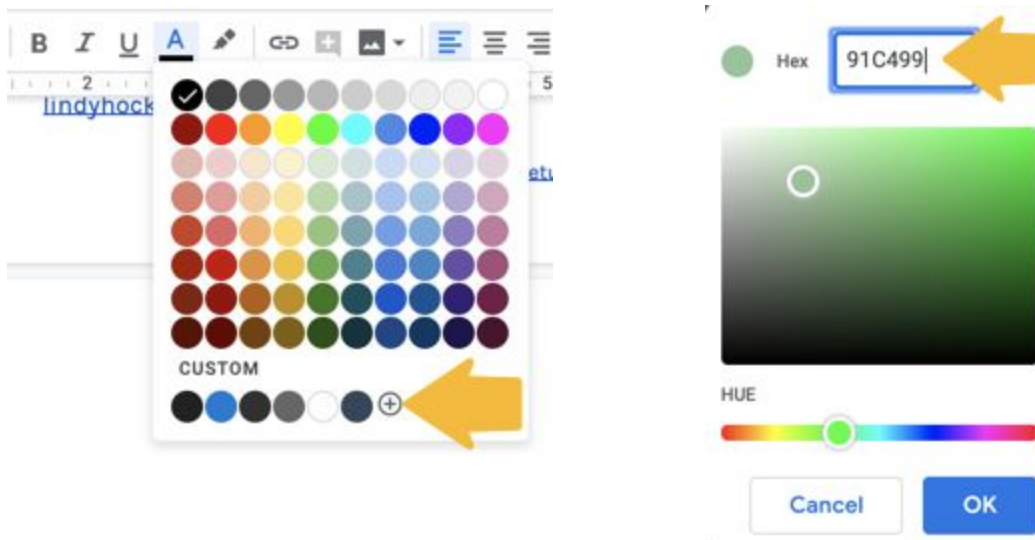
Make sure the pages within your course have the same structure and layout. This is especially important if using a learning management system that houses much of the course content. Having common page structures could include using headings as explained above.

Colors

Choose a color scheme and stick to that color scheme throughout the entire course (if applicable). There are lots of color scheme creators on the web. [Coolors](#) creates

⁵ [Good Fonts for Dyslexia](#)

random color schemes by clicking your spacebar. The HEX code for each color is provided. Copy that HEX code and paste it into the custom color option in the tool that you are using. Here is what that looks like in the Google Doc Suite Tools:



No matter which colors you choose, ensure those colors have high contrast. As this article, “[Effective Use of Color](#),” explains some learners will struggle to read text if there is too little contrast between foreground and background. For example, yellow font on a white background is low contrast; black font on a white background is high contrast. [Colorsafe](#) is a great website that identifies if the colors you have chosen are high enough contrast, and this video, “[Accessible Color Checker](#),” shows how the website works. [WebAIM](#) also has a contrast checker.



If you have colors in mind that you want to use in your online course (say school colors, mascot, or logo) and you don’t have the color code, you can use a color picker tool to grab the color codes. I use a Chrome extension called [ColorPick Eyedropper](#). Then, plug those colors into a contrast checker.

Graphics

Consider using the same types of graphics. For example, if you decide you are going to use clipart, photos, or illustrations for design/aesthetic purposes, stick with that type of image throughout. Also, keep images for aesthetic purposes around the same size.

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



As you may have guessed, consistent formatting is tied to your digital course homepage. No matter what tool you use as your digital homepage, use that tool to drive the consistent formatting you will have throughout the course. Maybe the tool has a color scheme that you can build from. Or, a default font. Whatever the design of your digital homepage, try to bring that into other digital tools that you link from the homepage throughout the course (when possible, of course). For example, if I am going to link a Google Doc or Microsoft Word document to an assignment in my homepage, I will ensure I use the same font and even size in the document as in the homepage. If you are using an LMS, make sure the content you build in the LMS has consistent formatting.



You can use a font generator, such as [CoolFont](#) to get consistency, if you are using a tool that offers little customization of fonts. However, don't choose a 'fancy font' as fancy fonts are often not accessible.



Consistent formatting applies to all forms of teaching, not just online learning! Apply the principle of consistent formatting to your face-to-face learning materials as well.



What will the formatting of your course look like?

Personal Connections

Creating and maintaining personal connections with students is a critical part of the teaching and learning process, because the student-teacher relationship forms the foundation for all learning. You may be thinking, “How do I develop a learning relationship with a student that I never see in person?!” It is true that cultivating relationships looks *different* in an online setting than a face-to-face setting, but the importance is no less. There are many ways you can develop relationships with your students in an online learning environment. We will share four specific strategies to get you started, but keep in mind, these strategies are in no way meant to be a comprehensive list of strategies for cultivating connections with students in online learning.

1:1 Appointments

Open up your calendar periodically for fifteen minute one-on-one appointments with learners where you can join a video call or phone call together. Most calendar tools have an appointment feature that will allow you to set up a block of appointments on your calendar that other people can reserve.

Google Calendar users: [How to set up appointment slots in Google Calendar.](#)

Outlook users: There are several add-ins for Outlook:

- [Microsoft Bookings](#)
- [Calendly](#)
- [FindTime](#)
- [Scheduler](#)

[Calendly](#) is also a great option.

You may even make 1:1 appointments with learners a requirement of your online course to ensure you are connecting with each and every student.

Video conferencing tools are discussed in depth in the [video conferencing tools section](#)

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

If phone calls are needed and you are not working from a brick and mortar school site, don't use your personal phone number to contact students under the age of 18. Use call in numbers built into video conferencing tools. Or, ask your educational institution to provide you with an alternative phone number. [Google Voice](#) and [Grasshopper](#) are two tools that allow another number to be connected to a phone.



Parents and guardians can join 1:1 video calls but should not join video calls with other students.

Learning Journals

Have students complete a form of **learning journal**, which is a log of a learners thoughts, reflections, notes, and more. Learning journals are a great way to have one-on-one conversations with your learners.

Learning journals can look many different ways - written, video, audio via a blog, vlog, or podcast. Below are some tools that you can use:

- Written:
 - Blog tool such as [Blogger](#) or [KidBlog](#)
 - Word processing tool such as [Google Doc](#) or [Word Online](#)
 - Slides tool such as [Google Slides](#) or [PowerPoint Online](#)
 - [OneNote](#)
- Video:
 - [Flipgrid](#)
 - Screencasting tool such as [Screencastify](#) or [Screencastomatic](#)
- Audio:
 - [Soundtrap](#)
 - Web-based audio recording tool such as [Vocaroo](#)

Learning Journals can combine media formats as well. One entry may be a video and the next day a written entry.

No matter what format or tool you use. Learning journals can be a great way to learn more about your students and use that information to develop relationships.



Learning journals can also be used as a strategy to develop metacognition, which we will discuss in depth in the [reflection section](#).

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Video/Audio

Video is a great way to connect with your students in an online course. I know, I know... you don't like to see yourself on video and you don't like to hear yourself. No one does! As a teacher in modern times, you just have to get over this! There is no other way around it. Work into it slowly. Maybe start with a 10 second video... then 30 seconds and so on. At the very least, if you really can't stomach video, make videos with your voice and no 'image' of yourself or record audio only. Your students need to hear and see you in an online course.



Your personality is one of your online teaching strengths. Make sure this shows in your online courses! This is a great way to build a strong culture in your online course. Video is a strong strategy to let your personality shine as well as Bitmojis, which we will talk about in the next [Bitmoji section](#)

There are so many strategies for connecting and engaging with your online learners via video. Think of all the things you share with learners in a face-to-face class and then transfer that to video. Here are a few ideas:

- Daily/weekly updates/pep talks
- Video overviews of daily or weekly tasks to be completed
- Create a "trailer" for your course to engage learners
- Introduce yourself
- Create a course "unboxing" video that introduces students to the course design and organization
- Parent announcements

The best resource I have found for ideas on using video is this webinar - [Creating Awesomesauce Videos for Blended Learning](#). It is almost an hour but well worth it. The presenter also has a book [Create Videos to Inspire Students, Engage Parents and Save You Time](#), if that is more your style.

There are so many different tools you can use to make videos. A smartphone or tablet are perhaps the most valuable tools in the case of creating videos to make personal connections with your students. You can upload these videos directly to [YouTube](#) or a cloud storage tool such as [Google Drive](#) or [OneDrive](#) to share.

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

[Flipgrid](#) is another great tool for recording and sharing videos. It even has a full screencasting tool built into it now. We will learn a lot more about Flipgrid later.



If you can use YouTube, it is the easiest video sharing platform available. There are three sharing settings for videos on YouTube: public, unlisted, and private. This support article, "[Change video privacy settings](#)," explains the difference. When in doubt, choose unlisted.

If you would like to record on a Windows, Mac, Chromebook device or do some basic editing, try one of the tools in the [Screencasting Tool section](#) below.

If you prefer to not be on camera, here are some options for you to still create videos with a personal touch:

- [Powtoon](#) may be a good option to create engaging videos (although can be time-consuming). Powtoon allows you to add your own audio over the visuals.
- [VideoScribe](#) creates whiteboard videos with your voice narrating the content.
- [Video Puppet](#) creates videos from a PowerPoint and adds the audio for you (although it can sound a little robot-like).

For audio-only, [Vocaroo](#) is a great website for recording quick, easy content.

There are so many options to create videos that work with your style, content, and learner age!



Videos can take a significant amount of time to create. I suggest, in the case of videos to connect with your students, to not focus on perfection; instead, focus on being personable. Use your smartphone to take a quick video - nothing fancy! You may even find that a selfie stick *does* indeed have a purposeful use!



Make sure videos have captions to be fully accessible. YouTube has a great caption feature explained in "[Add your own subtitles & closed captions](#)."



Please don't waste your time trying to type a transcript of a video in order to add captions! If you have no other options to get the text for captions, use a little trick of mine. Find a tool that has a dictation feature such as:

- [Google Docs](#) has 'Voice Typing'
- [Microsoft Word](#) and [OneNote](#) have 'Dictate'

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

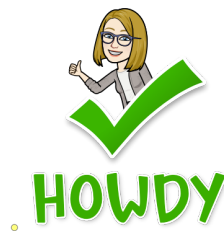
[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Turn on dictation in the tool of choice, then play the video. The dictation tool will dictate the captions for you and all you have to do is copy and paste!

In addition to you (as the instructor) creating videos, have your learners create videos to show their learning, reflect on learning, etc. This is a great way for you to get to know your students.

Bitmojis

Bitmoji's are a great way to add a personal touch to your online learning to help build connections with your learners and let your personality shine! You have probably noticed my Bitmoji throughout this course!



The [Bitmoji website](#) will give you more information. You will need to create your Bitmoji from an Android or iOS device using the Bitmoji app:

- [iOS Bitmoji app](#)
- [Android Bitmoji app](#)

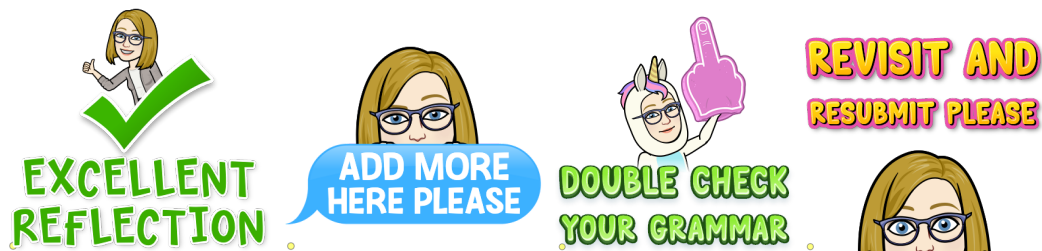
If you want to use your Bitmoji from a Windows, Mac or Chrome device, once you create your Bitmoji, there is this [Bitmoji extension for the Google Chrome browser](#) that allows you to quickly copy and paste Bitmojis in your learning content. The Chrome Bitmoji extension also allows you to customize the text of your Bitmojis! Think of this like providing custom stickers for feedback. To add custom text you simply type the text in the search bar of the Chrome extension:

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



Here are some example custom Bitmojis related to learning:



Another idea for making connections with Bitmojis is to create banners for your digital homebase or even a virtual “classroom.” I had this one at the beginning of the course:

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](https://twitter.com/lindyhockenbary)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



These are fun and easy to create. [This is a Google Slide with several templates](#). Open the Google Slide, go to File < Make a Copy and edit away! This size was designed to fit a Google Classroom banner but could be used in most LMSs.

There is also a [Bitmoji add-in for Gmail](#), so you can use Bitmojis in email to learners. I use this a lot - even with colleagues!

There are so many things you can do with Bitmojis as a teacher there is even a [Bitmoji for Educators Facebook group](#)! Go ahead and join... you know you want to!



I don't suggest having students create Bitmojis as there are some that would be deemed inappropriate for a learning setting. Most are completely fine. Just be aware of this when choosing your Bitmojis to use.



How will you cultivate relationships with learners in an online course?

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Virtual Check-ins

Regular contact with learners is key to online learning, and virtual check-ins are a solid strategy for maintaining this contact. Virtual check-ins allow you to gauge learner progress and well-being. When teaching in a face-to-face environment, the teacher is able to physically see learner progress, and although not fool-proof, physically seeing and interacting with students gives a fairly good idea of the learners emotional state. Since this is not possible in online learning, virtual check-ins are super important. Why virtual check-ins?:

- Identify learner pain points or points in need of assistance
- Reach out to learners specific to their individual needs
- Check on learner well-being
- Continue to build relationships with your students
- Receive feedback on coursework and make adjustments where necessary



To elaborate on that last bullet, in addition to checking in on learner progress and well-being, use your check-ins to solicit feedback on the course. What is going well? What has been challenging? Use this information to determine what is working and not-working and make adjustments to the course as needed. Iterate. Improve. It is ok to make changes in the middle of a course if something is really not working! Remember that *fail = first attempt in learning!*



How often you have learners complete a check-in will depend on many factors, including the length of your course, your course organization, age of your learners, etc. I would recommend at minimum a weekly check-in or a check-in at the beginning and/or end of each unit/module within the course.

There are many ways to conduct a virtual check-in. The two most popular virtual check-in tools are forms and spreadsheets.

Forms

I am a big fan of using a form creation tool, such as Google Forms or Microsoft Forms.

[Click here for an example virtual check-in form.](#)

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

This was created using Google Forms but the same form could be created using Microsoft Forms or another survey creator tool. [This link will make a copy of this example form](#) that you can then edit and make your own. Since this example is a Google Form, a Google account is required.

Customize the questions in your virtual check-in form to fit your learners and your course organization; however, at minimum, I would recommend a question that identifies learner progress with the coursework and a question that checks in on mood/emotional well-being. It is a difficult balance of getting the information you need but not having too many questions that the learner skips over them. Think about how you can incentivise students to complete the virtual check-in. Maybe you award a prize or embed a fun 'easter egg.' You could even slightly change the check-in form every now and then with something fun (maybe a funny bitmoji?) so learners will want to check the form to see what is there this time. Don't be afraid to have fun with it.



An educator in Canada took the check-in form from above and customized by adding Bitmojis! [This link will make a copy of the Bitmoji form.](#)

[Refer to the Forms section below for how-to instructions for using Google Forms and Microsoft Forms.](#)

Spreadsheets

Utilizing a spreadsheet is another way to complete a virtual check-in. Below are two example spreadsheets:

- [Spreadsheet Organized By Learning Task, Date, or Week](#)
 - Each sheet within this spreadsheet is organized slightly differently - one by learning task, one by date, and one by week.
- [Learner To-Do List](#)
 - A slightly different take on a virtual check-in combined with a learner to-do list.

Feel free to make a copy of these spreadsheets and edit to your liking by navigating to File < Make a Copy. Or, if you prefer Microsoft Excel format, download as an Excel file by navigating to File < Download < Microsoft Excel.

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



To learn how to use Google Sheets explore [Your First Day of Google Sheets](#) training or [Getting Started with Google Forms](#) from Google for Education. These skills are easily transferred to other spreadsheet tools such as Excel.



What will you do to ensure regular contact with the learners in your online class?

Essential Digital Tools

The key to keeping your head above water as a first time online course instructor is to focus on a few tools that can accomplish many things. Of course, every teacher is going to give you a different list of their 'essential digital tools' for online learning so keep that in mind as you review this section.

How did I come up with the four essential digital tools shared? If you break the act of teaching into common categories, you may come up with the following tasks:

- Content Delivery
- Assessment
- Feedback
- Social-Emotional Learning

I look at these categories or 'pillars' of teaching and ask "Which tools can help me in each pillar?" For me, Flipgrid, forms, slides, and screencasting tools give me a lot of bang for my buck as I can use each of these tools in each of these pillars. In addition, in each of these tools or tool categories there are tools that are device agnostic and/or have solid mobile apps.

Before we dive into the details of these tools, note that these tools are used in addition to the digital course homebase. These are the tools that I link from the homebase and use to accomplish learning tasks of many different varieties. Let's talk about this for a bit, because this is perhaps one of the most important things to understand about building an online learning course. No matter what digital homebase you use, link learning tasks from the homebase using digital tools. Some LMSs will have tools built into the system that may accomplish similar tasks as the essential digital tools. That is great if you want to use the built-in tools; the key is to remember that you are not stuck with only the tools in your LMS or other course homebase tool!



Remember to keep formatting consistent in the tools that you link from your homebase. This won't always be possible and will be very dependent on the specific tool being used. For example, there is not much custom formatting in Flipgrid. However, if I was going to link to a Google Slide or PowerPoint Online, I would try to use the same color scheme and design as my homebase in addition to the same font.

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



By the way, I think it is important to note that I don't use any tools in an online learning environment that I also don't use in a face-to-face learning environment. It's the strategy that is different. So guess what... if you learn a new tool, you can use that tool if you also teach face-to-face classes.



Focus on mobile. Unless your school has made other arrangements for learner device and internet access, assume all learners only have access via a smartphone. Therefore, ensure the learning tasks given can be completed from a phone. Flipgrid, slides, and forms are all mobile friendly. Screencasting tools will depend on the device you use.

[Flipgrid](#)

Flipgrid can be used for: content delivery, assessment, feedback, and social-emotional learning.

[Example Flipgrid: View the Flipgrid for this course.](#)

Click the plus sign and add a video sharing an introduction and one thing you have learned from the course so far.

Flipgrid is a great tool to be able to 'see' others asynchronously in an online course. Short videos are recorded on a shared board. The creator of the Flipgrid can set a time limit for the video recording too. I can't tell you how great of a tool it is especially for asynchronous online learning. Flipgrid helps with relationship development between teacher and student as well as student to student.



Flipgrid is available for the web and has an iOS and Android app.



Flipgrid has Immersive Reader built into it. Immersive Reader is a free Microsoft tool that uses proven techniques to improve reading for people regardless of their age or ability. Basically, it lets the reader customize the reading view. [This site allows you to try Immersive Reader and see what tools it is included in. This Microsoft Educator Community course titled "Accessibility tools: Meeting the needs of diverse learners"](#) expands on the immersive reader and Microsoft's Learning Tool suite.

Ideas for using Flipgrid for online learning:

- Reflections

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

- Responding to anticipatory set prompts/questions
- Introductions
- Relationship development
- Small group collaborative work
- Peer reviews
- Have a board for each student for the entire class that you can add feedback to
- Describe something related to the learning objective
- Formative assessment
- Reteach a concept
 - Divide topics to each student where each student is responsible for a specific chunk of content
- [More ideas by grade level and content area](#)

To learn how to use Flipgrid, view the following resources:

- [Getting Started - videos and step-by-step guide](#)
- [View a webinar](#)
- [Engage and Amplify with Flipgrid course](#)



Other Flipgrid Resources:

- [Remote Learning with Flipgrid one pager](#) and [website](#)
- [Flipgrid for Parents](#)
- Questions on Flipgrid? Reach out to one of their Education Leads:
 - Jornea, jerwin@flipgrid.com, [@Savvy_Educator](#)
 - Ann, akozma@flipgrid.com, [@annkozma723](#)
 - Jess, jboyce@flipgrid.com, [@jessxbo](#)

Forms

Forms can be used for: content delivery, assessment, feedback, and social-emotional learning.

[View and complete this sample form for this course.](#) This may look a little familiar to the virtual check-in form earlier in the course! Note this is a Google Form but the exact same form could be created with Microsoft Forms.

Forms (also known as surveys) are great for gathering data, and in an online course, you gather a lot of data. Think of all the times you ask your students to raise their hands to gather a quick poll. Then, remember you can't do that in an online course!

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

There are many, many form creation tools but most educators are going to use Google Forms (as it is built into G Suite for Education) or Microsoft Forms (as it is built into Microsoft 365).



One of the great things about forms is a form (from the majority of form-creation tools) can be completed in any web browser from any device.

Ideas for using forms for online learning:

- Course roster
- Check-ins
- Formative assessments
- Pre and post assessments
- Exit tickets
- Content delivery
- Gather course feedback - what is going well? What is challenging?
- Sign ins or sign ups
- Learning logs
- More ideas:
 - [25 practical ways to use Google Forms in class](#)
 - [7 Tips to use forms in eLearning](#)

To learn how to use Google Forms, view the following resource:

- [Your First Day of Google Forms](#) training from Google for Education
- [Getting Started with Forms](#) from Google for Education



[Automagical Forms](#) - an extension for Google Forms that turns a PDF into a Google Form. Check this out if you have PDF worksheets or other lesson materials.

To learn how to use Microsoft Forms, view the following resources:

- [Microsoft Forms Quick Start](#) from Microsoft Education
- Microsoft Educator Community Course: [Data collection and assessment: Create adaptive assessments in Forms](#)
- Microsoft Educator Community Course: [Microsoft Forms: Creating Authentic Assessments](#)



Microsoft Forms also has immersive reader built-in to it.

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Slides

Slides are a teacher's best friend as you can use slides for so much more than slideshows. The two slide creator tools are [Google Slides](#) and [Microsoft PowerPoint Online](#). I am mentioning PowerPoint Online over the desktop version of PowerPoint, because most of the features that make this an essential digital tool are in the online, collaborative version.

Let's start by viewing a few examples of learning tasks using slides. Since there are so many ways you can use slides I want to show you a few different examples:

- Elementary:
 - [Noun and verb sort](#)
 - [Word family activity](#)
- Middle/high school:
 - [Getting to Know You- collaborative introductory activity](#)
 - [The Diary of Anne Frank hyperdoc](#)
- Any:
 - [I am Poem](#)

Whether using Google Slides or PowerPoint Online, slides can be used for almost any learning task. Google Slides versus PowerPoint Online are comparable with both having a few features that the other does not.



Google Slides and PowerPoint Online are both mobile friendly with iOS and Android apps.

Here are three reasons I find slides to be such a powerful learning tool:

- Numbered slides - by having numbered slides, it creates organized "learning spaces." The numbers make it easy to refer learners to a specific spot. For example, "click on slide 2 and complete the instructions." This is easier and more convenient than pages in a word processing program such as Word or Google Docs.
- Better formatting - formatting (aka designing) is a lot easier in slides than a word processing program. It is easy to add images, move text around, etc.
- Collaborative - Both Google Slides and PowerPoint Online are real-time collaborative tools, which means you can have more than one learner working in the same slide file at a time. This is great for small group work or full class

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

collaborative activities. If facilitating a full class collaborative activity, assign each student a number. That number correlates to a slide that becomes their “space.” Scaffold instruction so students know they are not allowed to touch other people’s ‘space’ aka slide. They can look but don’t touch! Slowly scaffold in the option to add comments to other slides.

Ideas for using slides in online learning:

- Getting to know you/introduction activities
- Reflections - individual or collaborative
- Learning journals
- Show what you know about X in one slide
- Presentations
- Animated videos
- Stop-motion animated videos
- eBook
- Choose your own adventure learning activities
- Digital storytelling or story books
- Poems
- Digital portfolio for a class, unit, topic...
- Hyperdocs
- Certificates or badges
- Digital notecards or flashcards
- Comic strips
- More ideas:
 - [40 Interactive Slides Activities](#) from Ditch That Textbook
 - [Creative ways to use Google Slides in the Classroom](#) from Google for Education Certified Trainer Jennifer L. Scheffer
 - [Distance Learning with Google Slides](#) from Alice Keeler

To learn how to use Google Slides, view the following resource:

- [Your First Day of Google Slides](#) from Google for Education
- [Getting Started with Google Slides](#) from Google for Education

To learn how to use PowerPoint Online, view the following resource:

- [PowerPoint for the web quick start](#) from Microsoft

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Screencasting Tools

Screencasting can be used for: content delivery, assessment, feedback, and social-emotional learning.

Screencasting is a video recording of your computer screen and usually includes audio narration. If you have ever seen a how-to video for a website, software, etc. then it was most likely a screencast video.

Example: [Here is a short, informal tutorial video I made to show the new Google Meet and Google Classroom integration.](#)



Read TechSmith's [The Ultimate Guide: What is Screencasting and Why Use It?](#) for more information on screencasting as a whole.

Screencasting is a great way to quickly share information to your learners in an online setting. Think of all the times you show your computer screen on your projector or other external display in your classroom. Now think of screencasting as the same thing for online learning.

Ideas for using screencasting in online learning:

- How-to videos/tutorials
- To give instructions
- Instructional videos including content/lectures
 - Keep these short. Preferably under 5 minutes and definitely not over 10 minutes.
- Virtual tours
- Updates - maybe daily or weekly
- Answer a question
 - Tip: This can save you so much time versus typing an email!
- Learner feedback
- Demonstrate how to use a tool/website/software, etc.
- View metacognition by having students explain their learning via a screencast video
- More ideas:
 - [50 ways to use Screencasting in the Classroom](#) from Screencastify



lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

There are many, many screencasting softwares out there. For quick simple videos, my go-to screencasting tools are:

- [Fligrid](#) - has a built-in screencasting feature!
- [Screencastify](#) -
 - Chrome extension
 - Feature highlights:
 - Can choose to record webcam and or screen
 - Automatically saves to Google Drive
 - Direct upload to YouTube
 - Direct share to Google Classroom
 - Simple
 - Freemium - Free up to 5 minute videos
 - To learn: [A Beginner's Guide to Screencastify](#) from Screencastify
 - [More Screencastify resources](#) from Screencastify
- [Screencast-o-matic](#)
 - Free screen recorder download
 - Feature highlights:
 - Can choose to record webcam and or screen
 - Freemium
 - Free for basics such as unlimited videos up to 15 minutes
 - Can upgrade to get more features and unlimited record time
 - Record screen, webcam, or both
 - Trim start and end of video
 - Save as video file
 - Upload directly to YouTube
 - To learn: [Tutorials and Videos](#) from Screencast-o-matic



If you have a Windows 10 device, there is a built-in screencasting tool called the Game Bar. [This video shows how it works.](#) If your school has Microsoft 365, [Stream](#) has a built-in screen recorder.



If you are ready to take your videos to the next level and want to add in editing or pop-ups such as arrows and text, I would recommend SnagIt or Camtasia. Both of these softwares cost money but are worth every penny. SnagIt is great for the “next step” and Camtasia is great if you are creating really in-depth, professional videos. There is more information on each tool below:

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

- [Snagit](#)
- [Camtasia](#)

Other Digital Tools To Enhance Online Learning

If you are ready for next steps and are craving more digital tools to ramp up your online courses, here is a list of some favorites organized by type.

- Build Interactive Content/Lessons
 - [Nearpod](#) or [Pear Deck](#) - create interactive slideshows (both tools are very similar), both tools include immersive reader
 - [EdPuzzle](#) - create interactive videos, add assessment/reflection points within a video
- Collaboration
 - [Padlet](#) - a collaborative digital sticky board wall
- Interactive Formative Assessments/Quizzes
 - [Quizizz](#) or [Kahoot](#)
- Gamification
 - [Classcraft](#) - gamification tool for middle and high school aged learners
 - [ClassDojo](#) - gamification tool for elementary aged learners
- Design and Desktop Publishing
 - [Canva](#)
 - [Google Drawing](#)
- Open-Source Content
 - [cK12](#)
- Multimedia Rich Content Creation
 - [Sway](#) - included in Microsoft 365 Education
 - [Buncee](#) - includes immersive reader

What digital tools do you have access to at your educational institution?

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Office Hours

Office hours means time that is scheduled where you are available to answer ‘live’ questions (most likely via a video conferencing tool). Offering office hours as part of your online course is beneficial for many reasons:

- Reduce the number of emails
- Set expectations for answering questions
 - Help you as an online learning instructor develop a healthy work-life balance, so you don’t feel that you are at the beckon call of your students
 - Especially important if you have an asynchronous course where learners are working at varying times of day and night
- Develop personal connections
 - Especially important in an asynchronous course where this may be the only ‘live’ interaction with your students



Office hours is a term that was taken from higher education. If you are teaching online in the K-12 space, you may want to call office hours something more friendly and fun that jives with your age of learners. For example, if you are an art teacher maybe you have ‘studio hours.’

How often you offer office hours will vary depending on the length of your course, course organization, and the age of your learners. However, don’t offer more than one hour at a time (for your sanity!). Offer at least two options of days and times, especially for an asynchronous course where learners may have widely varying schedules.

Offer the same days of the week and times throughout the course. This will save you time communicating times with your students and make it easier for your students to plan for these time slots.

Most likely you will want to use a video conferencing tool to offer your office hours. There are many video conferencing tools out there. In this section, we will focus on the three that are most commonly used in education: Google Meet, Teams, and Zoom.

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



Safety and Privacy in the World of Video Calls

Before we discuss the specifics of each video call tool, it is important to talk about safety and privacy of video conferencing tools. No matter which video conferencing tool you choose to use, ensure that tool is safe and protects student PII. This is a great resource from COSN that outlines the considerations to make: [Privacy Considerations for Video Conferencing Tools](#).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, video call ‘bombers’ and hijackers came out in full force. It became clear very quickly that we must ensure video calls are secure. The settings you need to establish will vary a bit between tools; however, this resource from the FBI has overarching tips for keeping video calls secure: [FBI guidelines on keeping video calls safe](#).

Parents, guardians, or other adults supporting learners at home should not be allowed on a video call with other students in the class.

Video Conferencing Tools

- [Google Meet](#)
 - If your school uses G Suite for Edu, [Google Meet](#) may be the tool for you as it integrates with Google tools such as calendar and Classroom. Also, if your school already uses G Suite for Edu, Google Meet is included under the privacy agreement with your school since it is a tool within G Suite (of course, assuming your school has that set up).
 - Mobile friendly with iOS and Android apps
 - Includes live captions
 - [Use captions in a video meeting](#) from Google
 - How to use Google Meet:
 - [Your First Day of Google Meet](#) training from Google for Education
 - Getting Started with Google Meet from Google for Education
 - [Google Meet Guide](#) from educator J. Cauthers
 - [How to set up Meet for distance learning](#) from Google
 - [How to use Google Meet for online learning](#) from Ditch that Textbook
 - [Google Meet Student Expectations](#) from educator Ashley Yazarlou
- [Teams](#)

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



- If your school uses Microsoft 365, [Teams](#) may be the tool for you. Teams performs many functions but has Teams meetings built into it. Also, if your school already uses Microsoft 365, Teams is included under the privacy agreement with your school (of course, assuming your school has that set up).
- Mobile friendly with iOS and Android apps
- Includes live captions
 - [Use live captions in a Teams meeting](#) from Microsoft
- How to use Teams meetings:
 - [How to create and join a Teams meeting](#) from Microsoft
 - [Microsoft Teams meetings for the classroom - what to use now, and what is coming soon](#) from Microsoft Education
- Information on the security of Teams: [Security and Microsoft Teams](#) from Microsoft

- [Zoom](#)

- Zoom is currently the leading video conferencing tool.
- Mobile friendly with iOS and Android apps
- How to use Zoom:
 - [Zoom Video Tutorials](#) from Zoom
 - [Zoom Info for Teachers](#) from Zoom
- Information on the security of Zoom:
 - [How to prevent 'Zoom Bombing'](#) - information provided by Zoom
 - [easures taken to ensure security and privacy](#) from Zoom
 - Zoom lets you set virtual backgrounds. Add a picture of your classroom as the background (if you have a physical classroom). Have students add virtual backgrounds to protect privacy.

If you have students with internet speeds that won't support video calls, most video tools will allow you to create a 'call-in' number that students can call into with a phone to join the meeting.

No matter which video conferencing tool you choose, you will create a call and copy the link to that call. Share that link with your students in your course homebase - perhaps in the calendar. To make your life easy, create one link for the entire course and use it over and over again.

Will you provide office hours? If so, what will you call it? If not, what will you do instead?

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Learner Choice

Keeping learners engaged and motivated in an online learning environment is extremely important for learner success. Typically in K-12 face-to-face learning environments, the teacher has control over most, if not all, aspects of the learning environment - time, space, learning goals, etc. In online learning, control of time and/or space is shifted to the student. Of course, how much control the learner has over time will depend on whether the course is synchronous, asynchronous, or a blend of both. However, even if the course is synchronous or has a synchronous component, the learner will still have more control over time than in a face-to-face learning environment. Because of this, in order for learners to be engaged in online learning, it is critical that control over other aspects of the learning environment shift to the student.

One aspect of the learning environment that is fairly easy to shift towards the learner is choice. In online learning, learners must have choice in their learning as choice is key to online learning motivation; it is especially important in an asynchronous course to give students autonomy over their learning. Luckily, offering choice is especially easy in asynchronous courses since time is not a constraint. It doesn't matter if one student chooses a method of learning that takes longer than another, because they are working on their own time!

Choice Boards

Choice boards (or learning boards/menus) are a great strategy for offering learner choice. View this example choice board:

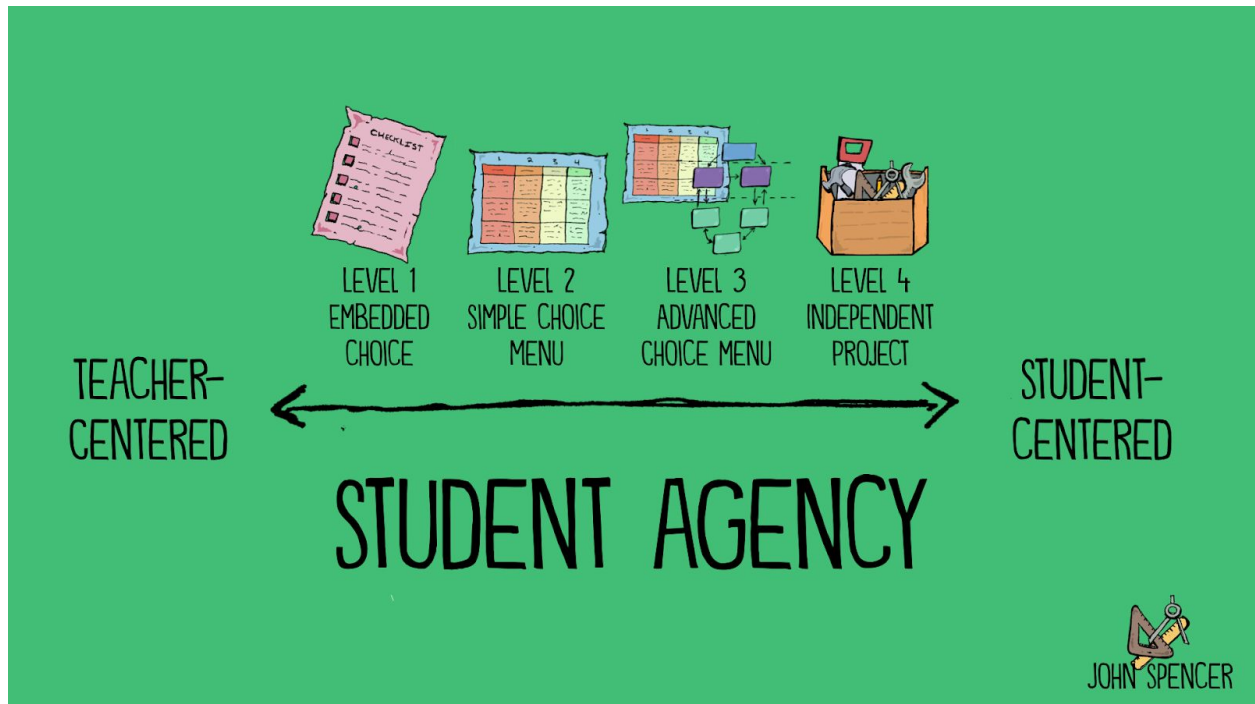
["Show What I Know About Taxes" Choice Board](#)

There are many different ways to create choice boards. The taxes example offers choice in product.

In this article, "[4 Ways to Craft Choice Menus in Distance Learning Classes](#)," John Spencer explains choice menus on a continuum of four levels of student agency moving from teacher-centered to student-centered. This is a good model for strategically designing choice boards to have the level of choice that works for your situation:

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



Source: [4 Ways to Craft Choice Menus in Distance Learning Classes](#) by John Spencer

Here are a couple examples of choice boards along the continuum:

Example 1:

[“Show What I Know About Taxes” Choice Board](#)

Level 2 - Simple Choice Menu

This is an example of a level 2: simple choice menu. If your learners need to be mastering the same learning outcome this is a great option for providing learner choice. And, did I mention it is simple?

I took the taxes choice board and plugged it into a [Hapara Workspace](#) to show another option for presenting a choice board: [All About Taxes Workspace](#).

Example 2:

[Online Learning Tic Tac Toe for Art](#)

Level 3 - Advanced Choice Menu

This example was created by educator Rebecca Recco for her online art class. Students start in the Google Doc and choose a topic. Each topic has a Hapara Workspace associated with it. This would be an example of a level 3: advanced choice

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

menu, because learners are picking their own learning outcomes based on their choice.

Creating choice boards is one simple strategy you can accomplish tomorrow to increase learner engagement in your online classes.



If you are interested in exploring the idea of learner choice boards more, check out “[The Teacher’s Guide to Digital Choice Boards](#)” by Shake-up Learning. In addition, here are choice boards for different grade bands K-8:

- [Grades K-2 Choice Boards](#)
- [Grades 3-5 Choice Boards](#)
- [Grades 6-8 Choice Boards](#)

Genius Hour

If you really want to empower your learners, move to level 4 of student agency and complete a Genius Hour project. Genius Hour is based on the idea of passion projects or 20% time. Asynchronous online courses are a great time to conduct passion projects since time is not a constraint. John Spencer gives tips for facilitating Genius Hour projects in a distance learning environment in, “[Seven Reasons to Pilot Genius Hour Projects.](#)”



You can learn more about Genius Hour on the [Genius Hour website](#).

Hyperdocs

In addition to choice boards, Hyperdocs are another strategy that can be an easy way to offer learner choice. A hyperdoc is basically a digital, interactive lesson replacing the worksheet method of delivering instruction. Typically, a hyperdoc was created using a Google Doc but could also be created using a variety of tools such as [Google Slides](#), [Google Drawing](#), [OneNote](#), [Word Online](#), [Microsoft Teams](#) (via channels), or [Google Sites](#).

[Example hyperdoc with choice: Earth Day](#)

Note that simply by creating a hyperdoc you are automatically providing choice. Many hyperdocs don’t offer choice. However, you can easily design or tweak a hyperdoc to add elements of choice.

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



Learn more about hyperdocs on the [official hyperdoc website](#). This website includes a plethora of examples and templates.

As” [Learning to Choose, Choosing to Learn](#)” by Mike Anderson explains, in addition to increased motivation and engagement, there are many other benefits to learner choice in a learning setting:

- Students engage in deeper, richer learning.
- Students display more on-task behavior.
- Students' social and emotional learning increases.
- The learning environment becomes more collaborative.

No matter which strategy you choose for offering learner choice, make sure that your choices do not try to replicate face-to-face instruction in an online environment.



How will you provide learner choice in your online course?

Reflection

As stated in "[Teaching Strategies of Award-Winning Online Instructors](#)" from Edutopia, "reflection and metacognition are essential to learning in any setting, and in an online setting teachers must be intentional about helping students reflect."⁶

Metacognition is awareness or analysis of one's own learning or thinking processes.⁷ Simply put, metacognition is thinking about thinking and understanding the way you learn.

Reflection is essential to online learning because of the need to shift control of learning from teacher to student. Crafting self-assessments that boost metacognition is critical in an online learning environment where teachers are not present and students are in charge of their own learning.

[Learning journals](#) as discussed earlier in the course as a method of cultivating connections with learners, are also a great strategy for embedding reflection into online learning.

The reflection questions embedded throughout this interactive notebook are a metacognitive strategy to help you apply the information to your professional life.



There are many other metacognitive strategies in addition to reflection. If you would like to learn more, this article from Edutopia, "[Metacognition: Nurturing Self-Awareness in the Classroom](#)" offers more metacognitive strategies.



How will you embed reflection or other metacognitive strategies into your online course?

⁶ [Teaching Strategies of Award-Winning Online Instructors](#)

⁷ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary>

Supporting Parents/Adults/Guardians

When you teach fully online, the adults in your learners' lives, whether that be a parent, guardian, grandparent, nanny/babysitter... will become a sort of co-teacher or learning coach. Remember to support these adults as best as you can. You may have to teach them as much as students! Many of the tools you have already learned (such as screencasting video) can be used to create parent resources too. Below are a few parent-specific resources that may help you in your journey:

- [Parent's Guide to Google Classroom](#)
- [Flipgrid for parents](#)
- Office 365/Microsoft resources for parents:
 - [Parent Support](#)
 - [Family Learning Center](#)



How will you support the adults or 'learning coaches' that support the learners in your online course?



More Resources for Online Learning

- [Ditch that Textbook has a large list of e-learning resources](#)
- Virtual field trips: Just because you are teaching online doesn't mean you can't take field trips! Check out this list of virtual field trips: [Virtual Field Trip List](#)
- Virtual guest speakers: Just because you are teaching online doesn't mean you can't have guest speakers! Check out the [Skype in the Classroom](#) site as a great way to connect with virtual guest speakers.
- If needed, you could provide planner templates or guides to your learners.
Examples:
 - [Daily schedule planner](#)
 - [Daily Agenda](#)
- Educator Remote Learning Groups:
 - [Facebook Educator Temporary School Closure for Online Learning](#)
 - This group was so popular they have created sub-groups for different content areas, grade levels, specialists, etc.. [Links to join the specialty groups are in this doc.](#)

G Suite for Edu (Google) Districts

- [Google Teacher Center distance learning resources](#)
- [This slidedeck is a great intro to what you can do in G Suite for remote learning.](#)

Microsoft 365 for Edu Districts

Microsoft Teams for Education

- [Remote Learning Team - Complete this form to join](#)
- Getting Started:
 - [Get started with Microsoft Teams for remote learning](#)
- Educator/Student:
 - [Remote teaching and learning with Office 365](#)
 - [Schedule a Parent-Teacher or Staff Conference Using Office 365](#)
 - [Use Microsoft Translator to Host a Multilingual Parent-Teacher Conference](#)
 - [Engage Students in Distance Learning with Apps and Content from Microsoft's Partners](#)

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

- Training/Tips:
 - [Teams EDU Webinars](#)
 - [MEC: Getting Started with Online Learning in Office 365](#)
- Microsoft Teams for EDU Scenarios:
 - [K12](#)
 - [MEC: Professional Development OneStop](#)

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Parting Thoughts

Don't try to create an online course overnight. Slowly build the course piece by piece. See what works/what doesn't work and make small edits along the way.

Educators are very creative and you will find a way to teach things that you never would have thought could be taught in an online setting. Public speaking has been taught as a college online class since about 2000 (yes, that's 20 years)! I saw a video of students practicing swimming techniques without a pool!

Most of all, enjoy the process. Don't forget to have fun and focus on maintaining/developing relationships with your learners.



[Please complete this form to provide feedback on the course.](#)

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Sources

Thank you to the following resources for contributing to this guide in some way:

- [The Noun Project](#)
- [Bitmoji](#)
- <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>
- [McGraw Hill Education and COSN](#)
- [Allison Yang](#)
- [John Spencer](#)
- [Christensen Institute](#)
- [Good Fonts for Dyslexia](#)

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Appendix: Dos and Don'ts of Online Learning

This graphic sums up many of my thoughts and tips for online learning:

Online Instructors @ KIS

Objective Responsibility Expectation Organization

Do This 	Not That
<p>Asynchronous learning Teachers create learning experiences for students to work at their own pace and take time to absorb content</p>	<p>Synchronous learning Teachers and students meet online in real time through videoconferencing or live chatting</p>
<p>Less is more Assignments likely take twice as long to complete at home because of different factors; prioritize and be realistic</p>	<p>Being unrealistic Assign "class work" and "homework" every day and request students to complete according to short timelines</p>
<p>Give explicit instructions Outline deliberate instructions and specify the length of time to complete the session of learning</p>	<p>Being unclear and vague Communicate in lengthy paragraphs with instructions that may be difficult to follow or tasks that are overly vague</p>
<p>Specify expectations Specify task requirements and length clearly (e.g. 2 minute audio recording with a bulleted checklist)</p>	<p>Being too open-ended Assign tasks that are too open ended (e.g. make a video about the moon; write an essay about pollution)</p>
<p>Be empathetic Assign a reasonable workload; encourage students to balance online with offline and connect with one another</p>	<p>Be overly task-oriented Assign online classwork followed by extra homework without a clear focus on student wellbeing</p>
<p>Communicate consistently All instructions and assignments must be communicated via ManageBac, our online hub</p>	<p>Mixed communication Use multiple platforms inconsistently (e.g. email followed by Google Classroom w/ MB submission)</p>
<p>Be online for office hours' Be online during office hours to provide support, answer questions, or clarify confusion via a system.</p>	<p>Stand by at all times Respond to every email right away and leave no break for yourself (unless it's urgent, it can wait until office hours)</p>
<p>Seek student feedback Seek student feedback about their workload, emotional state, learning preferences, and learning pace</p>	<p>Use the same approach Teach in a way that does not give students voice and/or choice, leaving them feeling overwhelmed</p>
<p>Boost learning retention Curate multimedia materials to boost learning retention and use digital tools to create interactive lessons</p>	<p>Try new & unused tools Trying new tools that you've never used may lead to technological difficulties and increase challenge</p>
<p>Identify lesson objectives Be intentional and identify clear learning objectives and assessment outcomes (formative and summative)</p>	<p>Give random activities Keep students busy doing online activities and do not think about the lesson objectives and assessments</p>

Online Teaching @ KIS: Do This, Not That by Alison Yang is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License. In short, you can share the work, but you must attribute the work. The work is no derivative and not for commercial purposes.

Source: [Alison Yang](#)

lindy@intechgratedpd.org
[@lindyhockenbary](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)