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TIPS AND STRATEGIES FOR FINE ONLINE FACILITATION

Online learning provides flexibility for students, but also introduces unique challenges. Students are at the mercy of technology, and they require self-discipline to succeed. Below are helpful hints for facilitators to encourage effective digital learning.



DEFINE EXPECTATIONS

Be clear with learners from the start. Explain how and when you will communicate with them and be available for them to reach you. State how much time and effort learners should expect to put in and provide a schedule so they can slate their calendars efficiently.



HEED THE PRESENTATION

Digital learning environments must be user-friendly. Ensure learners have the tools and skills to navigate the technology. Consider cognitive load in the presentation of content by limiting clutter and acting like valve to regulate information flow into digestible chunks.



CREATE ENGAGEMENT

Interested, inspired, curious, and happy students will be more motivated. Keep learners attentive using a variety of media for presenting materials and for learning activities. Offer choices within assignments. Scaffold social interactions, group work, and forums. Consider using tasteful comedy. Provide relevant content and a welcoming venue for students to demonstrate learning.



BE THE COACH

Mentor your students and encourage them to take a hands on approach to their learning instead of passively watching lectures and reading course materials. Provide opportunities for learners to apply and contextualize their knowledge in a personal way, moving from content awareness to content acquisition.



FOCUS ON LEARNERS

Remember your purpose in facilitating learning is to help learners grow, not to demonstrate your expertise. Stay learner-centred and be empathetic to learners' needs. Respect diverse learning styles, recognizing students have different skills and strengths. Maintain quality communication and provide helpful and timely feedback.

When learners know what to expect, can comfortably interact with technology, and are engaged and encouraged through thoughtful facilitation techniques, the stage has been set for a beneficial and satisfying digital learning experience.

FURTHER READING:

- Ten Best Practices for Teaching Online (Boettcher, 2013).
<http://www.designingforlearning.info/services/writing/ecoach/tenbest.html>
- Eight Roles of an Effective Online Teacher (Bull, 2013).
<https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/online-education/eight-roles-of-an-effective-online-teacher/>
- Online educators' recommendations for teaching online: Crowdsourcing in action (Dunlap & Lowenthal, 2018).
<https://openpraxis.org/index.php/OpenPraxis/article/view/721>