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| **Purpose** | To heighten the awareness of important actions online teachers may consider before, during, and after their online course. |

There are specific actions online instructors should perform at different intervals throughout their course. Due to the unique nature of online learning, such as the teacher to student separation by geography, time, and senses, intentional pre-planning by the instructor is critical. This does not mean online teaching is harder or requires more effort compared to on-campus classes; it means online teaching demands a carefully crafted and purposeful approach.  
  
Online instructors should establish their instructor presence early on in the course and model for their students the level of engagement they expect from them. Teacher participation before the course begins and during the initial two weeks is of utmost importance. Consider leveraging this checklist and keep it handy by your workstation as a reminder to perform specific actions and routine behaviors. Better yet, add the larger actions to your work calendar and use the automated reminders to your advantage. Beginning on page two, you will find a list of suggested actions to perform. This is not a be all or end all list. Rather, a short collection of promising practices to guide your online teaching journey.

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These are a suggested list of actions. You will always want to adhere to your college or department-specific policies. Make the list your own, add to it, personalize it, and keep it living as you gain more online teaching experience.

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### **Before Your Course Begins**

*Before you launch the course for student consumption, you should pay careful attention to certain actions which will decrease the amount of issues your students experience, save you time, and ensure a successful start for your students and you. Always assume your students have never taken an online course before. Focusing on prevention before your course begins may reduce the amount of intervention you apply after your course starts.*

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| **Checklist** | **Action** |
|  | Familiarize yourself with the list of teaching expectations from your college or department. |
|  | Familiarize yourself with the [Canvas learning management system (LMS)](https://unthsc.instructure.com/courses/10017)--start with the basics and save the “bells and whistles” for later. |
|  | Familiarize yourself with the curriculum, especially larger projects and assessments. Review the course calendar and due dates. |
|  | For quick reference, print out the syllabus, program and course calendar, module introduction pages, and your student demographic data. Keep this information readily accessible near you such as in a binder. |
|  | Add the contact information for your institution’s support system to your phone such as the [instructional design team](https://www.unthsc.edu/center-for-innovative-learning/instructional-design-and-technology/) or [Canvas Help](mailto:canvas@unthsc.edu). |
|  | Download the [mobile teacher application from Canvas](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-11975-67952772361). |
|  | Reflect over and frame out your time management routine. |
|  | Create your [notification preferences inside Canvas](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-13111-4152719738). You can adjust this later as you need. |
|  | Upload a picture to [your user profile](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-13104-4152719731) in Canvas. |
|  | Determine the tool you will use to call students such as [Remind](https://www.remind.com/), office phone, etc. |
|  | Complete your instructor biography information within the course. |
|  | Introduce yourself to the students by delivering a welcoming email or phone call. This simple action sets a positive tone. |
|  | Prepare and post a [welcoming video](https://www.unthsc.edu/center-for-innovative-learning/students-faculty-and-staff-are-getting-a-new-studio-space-for-videos-webcasts-distance-learning-and-more/) to the course home page or announcements. Highlight your credentials, interests, hobbies, and the course overview. |
|  | Ensure [embedded course links](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-12770-4152476605) point to the correct file or site using the Canvas Link Validator. |
|  | Ensure embedded course resources have proper copyright attribution. |
|  | Minimize what you display on the course’s [left-hand navigation menu](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-12933-415257079). Only make visible the essential tools; keep it easy for the students to navigate. |
|  | [Hide all content from student view](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-12796-4152180494) which you prefer they do not have access to. |
|  | Drag and drop all assignments into the [appropriate gradebook category](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10149-415241291). |
|  | [Ensure assignments have appropriate values and accurate open/closing dates.](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10113-415241285) |
|  | If you are using quizzes or exams in your course, determine if you need electronic proctoring with [Respondus LockDown Browser & Monitor](https://www.unthsc.edu/center-for-innovative-learning/respondus-lockdown-browser/). |
|  | [Embed a course scavenger hunt](https://www.unthsc.edu/center-for-innovative-learning/wp-content/uploads/sites/35/2019/03/Scavenger-Hunt-Introduction-Activity_CMN10.docx), specific orientation activities unique to your class or require learners to complete a quiz reviewing the policies. |

### **Weeks One-Two**

*The first two weeks are all about reducing learner risk along with building a strong, positive sense of class community. During these first two weeks, it is important to assume your learners have no prior online learning experience and to support them accordingly. For this reason, online staff need to integrate purposeful, intentional actions during week one. Beginning immediately, you want to start showcasing your instructor presence, personality, and foster relationships between your students and you and the students with one another. Ensure all instructions are explicit with related support resources such as “how to” links.*

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| **Checklist** | **Action** |
|  | Showcase your instructor presence and personality by [creating a “Getting to Know You” discussion activity](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-13016-4152724374). Throughout the course, reference the responses to build a connection with the learners. |
|  | Invite and bring attention to your course question and answer forum. (Optional--Only if you use a Q & A Forum). |
|  | Review the level of student engagement by examining the [course analytics](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10299-415266790). [Contact directly all students who illustrate minimal participation](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-12690-415255001). |
|  | Check your email daily and respond to all inquiries within 24 hours. You do not need to maintain this sense of urgency throughout the entire course. |
|  | Deliver a student [pre-course survey](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-13126-415268346) and examine the data. Consider printing the data for quick reference. Where applicable, answer questions unique per student through email. If you received a common pattern of questions, address the questions to the class as a whole. |
|  | Deliver an online readiness assessment survey and examine the data. Use the information to intervene proactively compared to reacting weeks or months later after the student becomes more at-risk. |
|  | Remind your students of key information:   * Course drop/withdrawal policies * Course late work policies, grading categories, and the general structure of the course * How and when they may contact you * How and when they may contact tech support   Try not to assume your students will read your syllabus. Draw attention again to the most important details from your syllabus. |
|  | Host an optional [virtual office hour session](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-12687-415241306) to field general questions and reduce the anxiety of your new online learners. |

### **Recurring Actions Throughout the Course**

*There are a few actions you should consider implementing consistently throughout the full duration of the course--whether week one, week four, week eight, etc.*

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| **Checklist** | **Action** |
|  | Send students a [weekly announcement](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10405-415250731)/reminder message. Consider creating your announcements on the same day per week using a similar template. Consistency will help increase learner confidence, reduce confusion and ensure the equity of each message sent. Save your messages for future use. |
|  | Moderate the discussion forums. Aim for a 10-20% reply rate; only enough to showcase your presence without dominating. Provide general summaries of the discussion posts and weave in student responses. Refrain from broad instructor posts and aim to challenge the viewpoints and extend discussion. |
|  | Publicly and privately recognize the exemplary work or gains of students. Provide shout-outs to students or select a student of the week and explain why you selected this student inside your weekly message. |
|  | Maintain [accurate gradebook](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10241-4152220009) reporting inside Canvas. Provide timely, authentic, and varied feedback. |
|  | Review the [Canvas student analytics](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10297-415266791) and use the data to jumpstart a conversation with a student(s): Minimal time logged, poor discussion board participation, low assessment scores, inadequate pageviews, rushing through assessments, consistent late work, etc. |
|  | Keep your student services or departmental director in tune to larger issues. |
|  | Respond to all student requests within 24 hours M-F or 48 hours over the weekend. |
|  | Proactively engage all learners not only those at-risk. Initiate conversations with students; help support them to reach their learning goals. Review your communication analytics per student and ensure you are initiating conversations with everyone on an individual basis. |
|  | If you utilize the [module list view](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-12937-4152322062), unpublish or drag down expired content so students do not have to scroll to access the current unit. |
|  | Differentiate your communications and the medium used to deliver your message whether all students, sub groups, or individual learners. |
|  | Continue utilizing the data from the student pre-course survey and online readiness assessment to personalize the learning environment. |
|  | Examine your [assessment analytics](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10299-415266790) for validity and address any issues such as faulty questions or the need to go back and re-teach specific material. |
|  | Challenge yourself to raise the bar of your instructor presence. Provide feedback in varying mediums such as audio or screencast. [Create video microlectures](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-15970-41521018585) recorded from your home, community, or around town. Always strive to reduce the feeling of student isolation and show your presence. If you prefer, utilize the [One University Studio or Voiceover Booth](https://www.unthsc.edu/center-for-innovative-learning/students-faculty-and-staff-are-getting-a-new-studio-space-for-videos-webcasts-distance-learning-and-more/) to create your videos. |
|  | Leverage the [tools inside Canvas](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-12690-415255001) to provide automated feedback to groups of students who have missing assignments, a low test score, or those on the reverse side who exceed expectations. Begin developing a list of “canned” responses you may use and refer back in future courses. |
|  | Remind students to use the question and answer forum to decrease the number of messages you send and remind learners to check the forum for answers first before contacting you. |
|  | Within reason, remain flexible with students. Recognize many learners chose the online medium because they are consumed with many other life factors. Students, like adults, have personal responsibilities. Always respond with empathy, a positive tone, and address the student by name. |
|  | When communicating negative or heavy constructive criticism, consider delivering the message through a phone call or screencast video. Remain cognizant of perception and how your messages might be interpreted by students via email--you and they don’t have the luxury of body language. |

### **Mid-Weeks (Weeks 6-9)**

*The middle point of the course serves as an opportunity to help challenge advanced learners and hold their interest while motivating AND retaining struggling learners.*

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| **Checklist** | **Action** |
|  | Deliver an [informal mid-course survey](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-13126-415268346) AND act on the results. If you don’t plan to use the results, then don’t deliver the survey. |
|  | Host an [optional video conference session](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-12687-415241306). |
|  | Review progress for each student. Email each student a PDF of their grade and highlight their strengths and weaknesses. Educate them about the weaknesses and use it as a teaching opportunity. Remember, many students are not used to learning in this environment and struggle with time management, self-advocacy, organization, and resilience. |

### **Final Two Weeks**

*These are example actions to implement which will help your learners finish the course successfully.*

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| **Checklist** | **Action** |
|  | Host an optional [virtual video conference](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-12687-415241306) for students who need extra review for the final exam or assessment. |
|  | Inform your students when and how they will receive their final grade. |
|  | Remind students to [download all work from the Canvas they prefer to retain](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10606-4212366521). |
|  | Send students a closing message thanking them for the opportunity to teach, highlight the major accomplishments of the class, and showcase your institutions other online offerings. |
|  | Make a final call home to all students in danger of failing. (If applicable). |
|  | Prepare and deliver “call-to-action” message to your students. Your message may include:   * Deadline dates * Final week expectations, reminders, and tips * Final exam instructions * End of course student survey |
|  | Invite students to share a “parting gift” with one another inside the discussion forum--favorite book, favorite app, a personal research study, etc. |

**After the Course Ends**

*While the course and your experience remain fresh, there are a few actions you may want to consider taking which will help improve your future courses.*

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| **Checklist** | **Action** |
|  | Ensure the accuracy of all final grades. |
|  | Take time to reflect on your experience and review the positives and negatives. Consider all aspects of the course: managerial, pedagogical, social, and technological. Record your thoughts electronically and reference them in the future for your course shell revisions. |
|  | Clean out your Canvas inbox. |
|  | Review your student end of course survey data with the director. (If applicable). |
|  | Take time to celebrate your accomplishments. Teaching online is not easy and requires multiple “hats.” |