

Students in online or blended courses want two things:

- a course that is clear and well organized
- a professor who is present and responsive

Four key teaching principles from online learners:

1. Make me care.
2. Tell me what I need to do and when.
3. Be present and responsive.
4. The rest is up to me.

Make Me Care

1. Begin with the Syllabus
 - a. Write your syllabus as if speaking to your students on the first day of class.
 - b. Explain each of the course requirements and the rationale behind it. Help students "buy in" to it.
2. Write the Introduction to each module to motivate and prepare students for the work ahead.
 - a. Avoid the drill sergeant routine. "Welcome module 5. Read Chapter 5. There will be a quiz!"
 - b. Open each module by explaining what students are about to learn and why it is worth learning. "Make me care!"
 - c. Make each module visually interesting. Plain text is dull and quickly causes eye fatigue.
3. Take every opportunity to teach!
 - a. Introduce any link, file, or video with your comments. Tell students what you want them to learn and why. Take the time to put them in the right frame of mind before they visit a website or read an article or watch a video. You would do this in class. Do the same online.

Tell me what I need to do and when

1. Begin with the course schedule.
 - a. The schedule should present a concise list of every requirement and every deadline.
2. Write an Assignments page for each module.
 - a. This page provides a list of everything due in the current week.
 - b. Instructions for completing the assignments for the week can appear on the assignments page or on subsequent pages.
 - c. Everything students need to complete the assignments should appear in the current module. (This includes all instructions, files, links to articles or websites, assignment dropboxes, quizzes, and links to the discussion forum).
3. Give me what I need to get right to work.
 - a. All instructions and resources needed to complete the assignments should be available (or linked) within the module.
 - b. No weekly scavenger hunts! (as it was in the old days :-)
4. Be efficient with your time
 - a. Put dates in one place in the module, usually the assignments page. This makes it much easier to update your course each semester.
 - b. Use efficient redundancy. Example: write your **discussion grading criteria** and save as a PDF file. Upload that file into the content collection of your course. You can then link to the discussion grading criteria as many times as you want from anywhere in the course. But, there is only one file to update. (Remember to go to the content collection to upload the new file and overwrite the old one. Then all links will point to the new version. This is efficient redundancy.)
5. Discussions
 - a. Use two deadlines per week. Require the first post by mid-week and follow-on replies to peers by the end of the week. Otherwise most discussion posts will occur during the last 24-48 hours. That's an assignment, not a dialog.

Be present and responsive

Creating Presence

1. Use a Course Information Page to advertise your course and give important information to prospective students.
2. Send a pre-semester email to welcome students into the course.
 - a. Some faculty ask or require students to respond to the email.
3. Post an announcement to welcome students into the course. Give clear instructions on where to click to get started.
 - a. Add a message to the homepage banner (optional).
4. Automate presence
 - a. Set announcements on timed release. They will automatically appear at the date and time you specify, for example to kick off each new week.
 - b. Resend announcements as email messages to students' MC email addresses.
 - c. Set email announcements in Outlook on "delay delivery." BCC yourself so you know that the email has been sent.
 - d. Set discussion forums on timed release so they automatically appear with the discussion prompts at the beginning of each week.
 - e. Change the author of your discussion prompts from "anonymous" to you.
 - f. Create videos to kick off each week.
 - i. We recommend Screencast-O-Matic.
5. Get to know your students.
 - a. One of the biggest indicators of student retention during their first year is developing a relationship with a professor.
 - b. Use a student survey. What do you want to know about your students?
 - c. Use feedback surveys.
 - i. Mid-semester feedback surveys
 - ii. Student polls
 - d. Use the study guide to get to know your students. Add questions that require students to connect to the information or extend it by thinking of examples or.... (It can make the study guides more interesting to read.)

Being Responsive

1. Reply to email messages with 48 business hours.
2. State your availability. Tell students when you won't be available. They will be ok with it and appreciate your honesty. Get them to assist each other.
3. Have students install the Outlook app.
 - a. Carla Naranjo walks students through installing the Outlook app on their phones during the first week of class. She no longer has a problem with students not checking to Montgomery College email. This is worth doing in every class on campus, online, and blended.
4. Set your own routine to login daily or 2x per day to check email, discussions, and grade.
5. Set Bb as a new tab in the browser.
 - a. This requires logging in at the direct URL. You can change your password for the direct URL on the My Blackboard tab. In the Tools channel in the upper left, click Personal Information then click Change Password. Note: this will not affect your MyMC password.
 - b. Students should login only through MyMC.
6. Consider using Remind or Group Me to create camaraderie and better enable students to help each other.

The rest is up to me

Yeah, right. Anyone who is a parent or has been teaching long enough knows better. ;-)

1. Use online tutorials
 - a. Link to the Blackboard Student Tutorials
 - b. Use the MC Library Tutorials (Academic integrity/plagiarism and so much more!)
<http://cms.montgomerycollege.edu/edu/sub1.aspx?id=15559>
 - c. Student Success Tutorials on time management, SQ3R study method, personal responsibility and a quiz on each.
2. Use the Running Total feature in the Bb Grade Center. It will calculate each student's total score to date. It can present as a number, a percentage, or letter grade. Note: an indicator of student success is number of times a student checks grades.

3. Exam wrapper

This activity helps students see the relationship between time and effort spent studying and their grades. See <https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/design/teach/examwrappers/>

Resources:

- Course Information Pages – students use these pages to “shop” for their next online course.
 - Course Info. Pages: <https://cms.montgomerycollege.edu/distance/cip/>
 - Example: <https://cms.montgomerycollege.edu/distance/cip/bensonchem109/>
 - CIP Request Form: <http://cms.montgomerycollege.edu/elite/forms/cipr/>
- Course Standards – Standards for online courses at Montgomery college. <https://cms.montgomerycollege.edu/elite/resources/ded/> (click the link to Course Standards)
- Ideas for Online and Blended Course Syllabi <https://cms.montgomerycollege.edu/elite/resources/iobcs/> This document contains policies specific to online and blended courses. Select the ones you like. Edit at will and add them to your syllabus.
- MC Library Tutorials (Academic integrity/plagiarism and so much more!) <http://cms.montgomerycollege.edu/edu/sub1.aspx?id=15559>
- Screencast-O-Matic <https://screencast-o-matic.com/home> This free tool enables you to create your own videos.
- Student Feedback Surveys <http://fod.msu.edu/oir/mid-term-student-feedback> see Section III Models for Midterm Student Feedback.

Blackboard Student Tutorials

See: <http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLontYaReEU1seUE3ACG3sEc3zR7Br7URU>

There are two options:

A. Create links to the specific videos that your students will need. To find the URL, open a video, and then copy the URL at the top of the video window.

or

B. Link to the student tutorials page and direct students to view specific videos.

Note: Do not send your students to the Blackboard student videos page without clear guidance. There are too many videos on that page and students will not know which are important and which are not. They should not have to figure it out on their own.

Edit the sample text below as needed:

If you have not used Blackboard before, I recommend viewing the student video tutorials. They are each only a few minutes long.

Click on the first video playlist: Working in Your Course.

Watch the following videos: (Note: The course in the videos may look different from our course.)

1. Global Navigation and My Blackboard
2. How to Take a Test Online
3. How to Submit an Assignment in Blackboard Learn
4. How to Check Your Grades
5. How to Use Blackboard Discussions
6. How to Send and Receive Course Messages (Course Mail)