

Teaching Online for Adjuncts

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Adjunct faculty are sometimes put in the challenging position of having to teach an online course that they didn't develop, with little prep time, and limited experience in online teaching.

This resource provides some structure and support, focusing on the up-front tasks that an instructor must complete to get his or her course off to a successful start.

Additional support

Adjuncts are not in this alone—additional support is available through [Teaching and Learning Services](#):

- myCourses [getting started page](#)
- Documentation for [other academic technologies](#)
- Scheduled [training classes](#) through Teaching and Learning Services
- [Meeting](#) with an Instructional Designer or Academic Technologist
- Request [video hosting and captioning](#)
- Discuss teaching with peers in the [Teaching and Learning Commons](#)

Getting ready

Your students will be able to log into the course *one week* before the first day of class. While it's not necessary to have every element of the course ready to go at that time (though it is advisable), these steps can help ensure that the course is prepared for your students when they enter.

- Use the [Course Preparation checklist](#) to help ensure that all of the pieces of your course are in place.
- Modify the course syllabus with your information—contact information, expectations, etc. [This site](#) provides some information of creating a student-centered syllabus.
- In addition to—or instead of—a printed syllabus, many online courses use a Course Introduction module to enable students to find important information quickly. The [myCourses Semester Template](#) provides a structure and customizable text for your Course Introduction Module.
- Check the weekly course schedule against the calendar to determine which weeks may require extra time from you and build that time into your schedule. You can look at the [RIT Academic Calendar](#) to help you correlates course week numbers with calendar dates.

More information, tools, and resources are available at the [online course design website](#).

Welcoming your students

Courses are available to students one week before the first day of class. It's important that students who log into the class early see that you are an active presence in the course and are ready to start working with them. While you don't have to share actual course content before the class begins, the course should already have:

- A **News item** introducing yourself and the course
- A **student activity** that allows them to introduce themselves
- Your **Course Introduction** module and syllabus

Establishing and maintaining a course presence

Course **presence** is a critical part of successful online teaching. As in the classroom, the "tone" and general "feel" of each class can be unique, and the manner and level of interaction of each online class can be different as well. However, these practices can combine to give students the feeling of an active and involved instructor.

- **Check emails every day** You don't necessarily have to reply to every student email within minutes of receiving it—and, in your course introduction and syllabus, you should have set expectations for when you will respond to email—but you do need to check your RIT email account, where student emails will go, every day. To minimize the amount of general course questions coming to you, a Course Q&A discussion area can enable students to help each other out with some questions so you don't have to.
- **Use the News widget** Since the News is on the home page of your course, updating it once a week is an easy way to keep your course from looking "stale"—especially if you include a graphic or two. More importantly, it gives you a place to regularly share general feedback and reminders about course work, as well as links to new articles, videos, or other current material that relates to what the class is doing.
- **Participate in discussions** You don't have to respond to each student post, but you do need to keep an eye on discussions to ensure that they remain productive, on-track, and don't propagate incorrect information or misunderstandings. One good practice is to provide a summary at the end of each discussion, clarifying main themes and recognizing individual students who made valuable or insightful

contributions (you can also deliver your discussion summary as a news item).

- **Give feedback** Especially for major assignments, you should provide specific feedback to students, in addition to simply a grade. You can do this easily in dropbox assignments, providing a level of individual attention. If you have used (and shared) a grading rubric for the assignment, it can help you organize your feedback. You can also give markup feedback on written assignments through myCourses or with other technologies.

Increasing student interaction

Student interaction is a critical factor in effective online learning. Without the informal give-and-take among students that happens naturally in the classroom, it can be up to the instructor to provide opportunities for interaction. While this often is done through group projects and assignments, there are ways to encourage student interaction without creating or redesigning activities.

- **Student introduction** activities are always a good way to start; they are expected by students and can be easily modified or customized to relate to the course.
- The **Course Q&A** can sometimes become an active social space; that's good for student interaction, but requires more observation and possibly moderation by the instructor.
- **A course wiki** provides an area for student collaboration you can use for either a low-stakes or a major assignment. A [Teaching Element](#) about the RIT Wiki is available with other ideas.

The article [Facilitating Collaboration in Online Learning](#) by Caroline Haythornthwaite provides definition and research about the importance of collaborative learning, along with strategies and examples for promoting collaboration online.

If you would like to learn more about any of the strategies or ideas discussed here, [request a meeting](#) with Teaching and Learning Services.