

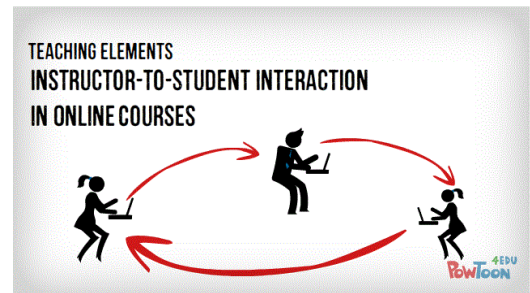
TEACHING ELEMENTS INSTRUCTOR-TO-STUDENT INTERACTION ONLINE

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ARE YOU LOOKING FOR OPPORTUNITIES AND TECHNIQUES TO INTERACT MORE EFFECTIVELY WITH YOUR ONLINE STUDENTS?

The instructor is usually the focal point in the classroom—lecturing, questioning, guiding, and responding to students. However, online courses can lack this immediate connection, since students are usually interacting with a variety of online learning resources rather than a live instructor. Without meaningful interaction with the instructor, students can feel disconnected and become demotivated.

However, instructors can design online courses that enable them to interact with and teach students in meaningful ways to move them toward learning goals and begin thinking in new and more profound ways (York & Richardson, 2012).



WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE THAT INSTRUCTOR INTERACTION HAS A POSITIVE IMPACT ON LEARNING?

Research shows that online courses with high levels of instructor-to-student interaction have a positive impact on student satisfaction and learning. For example:

- Students who perceived that they had high levels of interaction with the instructor also had high levels of satisfaction with the course and reported higher levels of learning, compared to students who thought they had less interaction (Swan, 2001).
- An active presence on the part of the instructor—one in which s/he actively guides and coordinates the discourse—relates positively to both a students' sense of connectedness and learning (Shea, Li, & Pickett).
- The role of the instructor in course interactions is among the most critical for student success in online courses (Arbaugh, 2008; Eom, Wen, & Ashill, 2006).

INSTRUCTOR-TO-STUDENT INTERACTION IN ACTION

The main opportunities for online interaction are similar to those in the classroom; the difference is that instructors must perform them through a Learning Management System, which requires different ways of designing instruction and interacting with students.

Welcoming the class

As in the classroom, the “first day” goes a long way in setting the tone for the course. Your Course Introduction message, which should be ready the first time the student logs into the course, is an important element of building your presence and creating a sense of community in the course. Learn more about [Introducing yourself and your course](#).

Participating in discussions

In many online courses, discussion forums are the major interaction channel. The level of instructor participation in class discussions varies on the course, the nature of the discussion, and the instructor's style. However, instructors can participate through necessary comments when students are on the wrong track, or with a summary at the end of the discussion.

Providing feedback

In addition to grades, individual feedback lets students know that the instructor has closely evaluated their work. myCourses [dropboxes](#) allow instructors to leave confidential, personal feedback to students.

Office hours

While even on-campus students may not take advantage of office hours, students like the reassurance of knowing that there are times when they can contact the instructor with questions or problems. Online, this can be as simple as setting a time when students can contact you by email and know that they will get a quick response. Other options for online office hours include using myCourses chat, Adobe Connect, Skype, or other web chat or conferencing applications.

Consistent communication

Unlike teaching in the classroom, it's easy for an online instructor to "disappear." Even if you are checking into the class, reading and grading assignments, monitoring discussions, and responding to individual emails, these activities are invisible to students. The News area is an easy place to communicate with the entire class, even if only once a week. News items can include:

- Reminders or previews of upcoming assignments
- Comments on or a summary of a current discussion
- General comments on how the class did on a test or assignment
- Remediation on a misunderstood or muddy learning point, based on student work
- A link to a relevant video or article
- Personal news you'd like to share with the class

A general course discussion area can also serve to provide this type of ongoing communication with the class.

While instructors can accomplish this interaction through text-based tools in myCourses, you may also want to also investigate using video, real-time conferencing, electronic markup, and other technologies to interact with your online students.

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

BOOKS

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