



GUIDE

TO TEACHING ONLINE

ESSENTIALS

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Introduction

UC San Diego Extension has offered a certificate program in online teaching for more than 15 years. When the pandemic struck, Extension's Education and Community Outreach (ECO) Department distilled this proven curriculum into an intensive training experience called *Teaching Online Essentials*. The training, supported by seed funding from the Girard Foundation, has been delivered free of charge to thousands of educators, giving them fundamental strategies and effective tools for remote instruction.

This guide summarizes key aspects of the *Teaching Online Essentials* curriculum, which reflects best practices in online and hybrid education, emphasizing creativity, connectivity and transformative experiences geared to the needs of diverse learners. To learn more about *Teaching Online Essentials*, contact ECO at unexeduc@ucsd.edu or (858) 534-9286.

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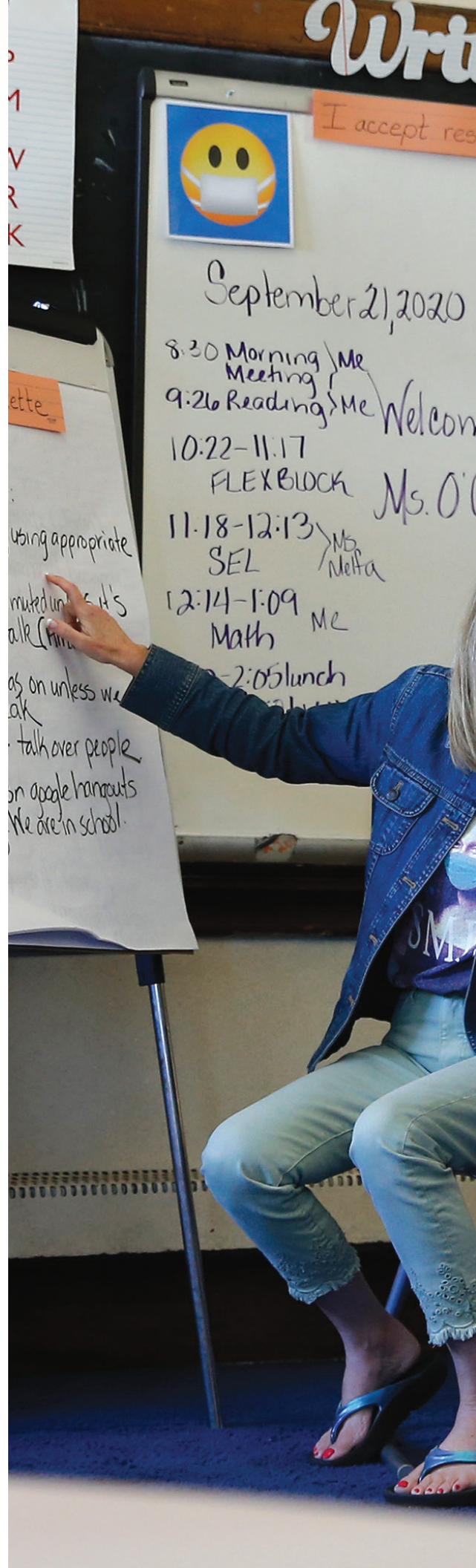
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Mission: Possible

When teachers make the transition to remote instruction, the No. 1 question they ask is, “Where can I find a list of best practices for online teaching?” What research tells us, though, is that effective teaching is not impacted by the learning platform. Effective teaching practices in the online environment are the same as those in the face-to-face classroom.

YOU CAN DO THIS!

The theme “Mission: Possible” runs through the *Teaching Online Essentials* curriculum. That’s because you, as a classroom teacher, already are using the high-leverage practices you need for success in online instruction. Once you identify the appropriate online tools, you will be able to adapt your solid instructional practices to your virtual classroom.



THE RIGHT TOOLS

One of the main goals of *Teaching Online Essentials* is to allow teachers to explore different types of assessment and instructional technology tools. These tools can be incorporated into lesson plans that target student growth regardless of the instructional model.

FOCUS ON LESSON PLANS

Moving online gives teachers a chance to regroup themselves in the fundamental best practices of their teaching, including their lesson planning. This guide explains how to take each piece of a lesson plan and tailor it for online delivery. For example, if you assess students’ understanding in your classroom by asking questions verbally, what tool would provide a comparable assessment in an online lesson?

EYE ON THE FUTURE

Try not to think of your transition to online teaching as a band-aid for a time of pandemic. The current crisis offers an opportunity to reflect on your teaching in general and take it to the next level. As you design online lesson plans and incorporate online tools into your teaching, think about how you will apply your new knowledge when you and your students return to your face-to-face classroom.

Read the National Standards for Quality Online Teaching:
<https://www.nsqol.org/the-standards/quality-online-teaching/>

Synchronous vs. Asynchronous Instruction

A key challenge that teachers face in remote learning is deciding how to balance synchronous and asynchronous delivery of content.

- Synchronous instruction is “live” instruction that occurs through an online platform. This means students are attending class with the teacher in real time.
- Asynchronous instruction happens when students are working on content at times that are convenient to them. They are not interacting with the teacher in real time.

Here are some guidelines to help you decide how to combine synchronous and asynchronous content in your lessons:

TIME WELL SPENT

One important thing to consider is how your time is best expended. It’s not possible to provide synchronous instruction full-time. Instead, you might record an introductory lecture and allow students to view it asynchronously. Then use your synchronous time to interact with students while discussing the content.

SYNCHRONOUS ADVANTAGES

Synchronous instruction comes closer to replicating the traditional classroom experience. It allows teachers to deliver active instruction, respond directly to questions and deliver feedback. Students are likely to stay more engaged.

Synchronous instruction also can help ease the feeling of isolation that students may be experiencing.

ASYNCHRONOUS ADVANTAGES

Asynchronous learning lets students explore content at their own pace and in greater depth. It also allows the teacher to promote collaboration between students by creating tasks that require them to work together.

CLEAR COMMUNICATION

Asynchronous learning creates an environment where questions can’t be answered immediately, so teachers must communicate directions clearly in writing. If the information is not clear, students and parents can become confused and frustrated. To avoid possible misunderstandings, write out the instruction and ask a colleague or other adult to read it before you provide it to students.

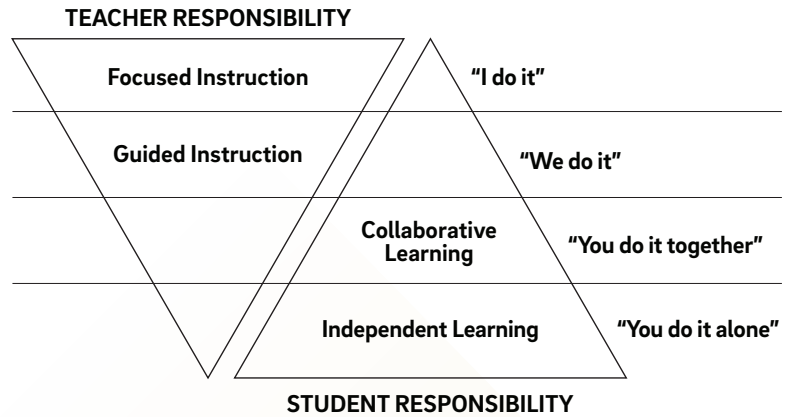
Read “*Synchronous vs. Asynchronous Learning in Online Education*”: <https://thebestschools.org/magazine/synchronous-vs-asynchronous-education/>



Structuring Online Lessons

A good way to get started in adapting lessons for remote learning is to construct a lesson plan using an established framework and then consider how to move each piece of the lesson online in a way that promotes student engagement and growth. The Gradual Release of Responsibility Instructional Framework developed by Nancy Frey and Douglas Fisher is a proven framework that can be particularly effective in an online environment.

A lesson modeled on this framework has four components, listed below. The model is not linear—the parts can be presented in a different order, as long as all four parts are included.



FOCUSED INSTRUCTION (I DO IT)

Here the teacher establishes the purpose of the lesson and models his or her own thinking. In a face-to-face classroom, the teacher often delivers this part of the lesson as a short lecture. In an online classroom, it might be presented as a recorded lecture for students to watch at their own pace.

GUIDED INSTRUCTION (WE DO IT)

In this segment the teacher interacts with students. The teacher releases responsibility to students by using questions, prompts and cues to help them deepen their understanding. In an online class, this part of the lesson works well in a synchronous session.

COLLABORATIVE LEARNING (YOU DO IT TOGETHER)

This step calls for students to work together on a project related to the lesson topic. In an online environment, the teacher needs to identify tools that will allow students to collaborate successfully. The teacher also must find a way to hold students accountable for their individual contributions to the group project.

INDEPENDENT LEARNING (YOU DO IT ALONE)

Finally, students work on their own to apply what they have learned. This part of the lesson can serve as a formative assessment, allowing the teacher to check for understanding and see if the subject needs to be retaught. A variety of tools can be used to assess students' understanding remotely.

Watch a video about the Gradual Release of Responsibility Instructional Framework: <https://youtu.be/cjURdvzty4c>

Promoting Rigor in the Online Classroom

Teachers starting out in online instruction often feel overwhelmed. As they work to get their bearings and overcome technical obstacles, promoting academic rigor may be the last thing on their minds. Karen Young, co-developer of the *Teaching Online Essentials* curriculum, explains the challenge this way:

When you transition to online teaching, it is like waking up one morning having lost your vision ... Your exhaustion level is going to be over the top because your other senses have to increase to compensate for your vision being lost. The move to online makes teachers realize how much their vision of students in the classroom was part of their formative assessment.

In spite of the difficulties, teachers can still set a high bar for their students. Here are some strategies for maintaining rigor in remote learning:

KEEP YOUR EXPECTATIONS HIGH

In the early days of the pandemic, schools were struggling just to make sure all students had access to technology. Now that the situation has stabilized, teachers can turn their attention to promoting rigor. They can implement lessons that require students to be critical thinkers, to cite readings and to give reflections.

MAKE YOUR EXPECTATIONS CLEAR

Allow students and parents to see in quick bullet points what your expectations are. When classes move online, teachers typically see a huge jump in emails because students and

parents can't ask questions directly. The clearer you are about your expectations, the fewer questions students and parents will have.

PARTNER WITH A COLLEAGUE

Take the time to work through making your directions as clear as possible. What exactly are you asking students to do? Have a partner teacher review your directions and use their feedback to clarify your wording further.

CHALLENGE YOUR STUDENTS

Don't hesitate to create challenging assignments. If you use project-based learning in your regular classroom, you can do the same online, giving students a chance to collaborate and think critically. You just need to identify the tools that work best for these lessons.

TAKE TIME FOR SELF-CARE

Teaching is a marathon, not a sprint. Pause and ask yourself: Am I taking time to walk and get some fresh air? Am I taking a break to have a healthy snack and stay hydrated, away from the computer? Am I giving myself the grace to make mistakes, learn from them and move on?



Read "*Best Practices in K-12 Online and Hybrid Courses*": <https://www.gssaweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Best-Practices-in-K-12-Online-and-Hybrid-Courses.pdf>





Understanding Learning Styles

Research shows that teachers tend to deliver instruction the way that they prefer to learn. For example, a teacher who is an auditory learner may present a lecture with no visual aids. To engage all students, teachers must incorporate a variety of forms of information delivery. When you're presenting online lessons, it's especially crucial to build your instruction to serve the needs of different kinds of learners.

KNOW YOUR STUDENTS' STYLES

One system of classifying learning preference uses the acronym VARK:

- **Visual** learners respond best to a graphic depiction of information, such as charts or diagrams.
- **Auditory** learners learn most successfully when information is presented vocally.
- **Reading/Writing** learners learn best from the written word, such as a handout or bulleted items on a PowerPoint slide.
- **Kinesthetic** learners retain the most by taking a hands-on, physically active role in the learning process.

If you're not sure about your own learning style, take the VARK assessment. You can also have your students take the assessment to give you a better handle on their learning styles: <https://vark-learn.com/the-vark-questionnaire/>

SIGNS OF TROUBLE

If students in your online classes aren't engaged or aren't meeting the learning goals you have set, that's a signal to step back and think: How did I present the lesson? Was it all just me talking? If your students are predominantly visual learners and you spent the whole time talking, you didn't really provide access to the content.

MIX IT UP

Make a conscious effort to present information in different ways. Visual learners and reading/writing learners may have trouble focusing on a live Zoom lecture if it's just a talking head. Instead, accompany your spoken lecture with a PowerPoint containing charts and graphs and a written summary of key points.

A NEW TAKE ON TECHNOLOGY

We are asking students to learn a new way of using technology. In the online classroom, students aren't just sitting and receiving information as they would when watching a YouTube video. Instead, we're starting to train them to utilize technology for growth and achievement. You can support this process by using a variety of different tools and engaging a variety of learning styles.

Read "*Learning Styles and the Online Environment*": <https://www.uis.edu/ion/resources/tutorials/instructional-design/learning-styles-and-the-online-environment/>

Assessment in Online Learning

In the face-to-face classroom, the teacher relies on being able to see students to assess how well they are learning. The teacher can observe as students answer questions or can ask them to give a thumbs up to indicate that they “get” a concept.

In an online environment, especially in asynchronous sessions, there are no visual cues to show whether students are struggling or are having that “aha” moment. That’s why it’s imperative to build assessment tools into online lessons.

OPT FOR VARIETY

Student learning styles vary widely, and their strengths and challenges with respect to assessment vary as well. Teachers need to consider that variation as they choose assessment tools. If you vary the way you assess student understanding, you are more likely to offer opportunities for every student to demonstrate their knowledge.

FORMATIVE AND SUMMATIVE

Teachers can select online tools that provide formative assessment by demonstrating what students are earning in the moment. Other tools can provide summative assessment by showing what students have taken away at the end of a unit.

PROVEN ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Here are some assessment tools that teachers have found particularly effective in online classrooms:

- **Edpuzzle:** Instructors can turn any video into a lesson by inserting questions that freeze the video; students have to answer the questions before they can move on.
- **FlipGrid:** The teacher puts up a question and students record a video answer. Student can also give feedback on each other’s answers.
- **Google Forms:** This is a go-to tool for many teachers that makes it simple to create and automatically grade quizzes.
- **Kahoot!** Students enjoy this game-based learning tool, which allows teachers to choose from thousands of learning games or easily create their own.
- **Poll Everywhere:** When the teacher asks a question, students can watch as the changing answer data is displayed in a dynamic graph or chart.
- **Seesaw:** This tool, aimed mainly at younger elementary grades, allows students to build an online portfolio that parents can view.
- **TED-Ed:** Teachers can pull a TED-Ed video into a lesson, and then students can respond to discussion questions posted in the video.



Learn about other online assessment tools that get high ratings from teachers:
<https://careermetis.com/best-online-assessment-software-teachers-2020/>

Instructional Technology Tools

There are so many instructional technology tools out there that choosing the best ones can seem overwhelming. Here are some ideas on how to narrow the field and pick the tools that are right for your online lessons.

LESS IS MORE

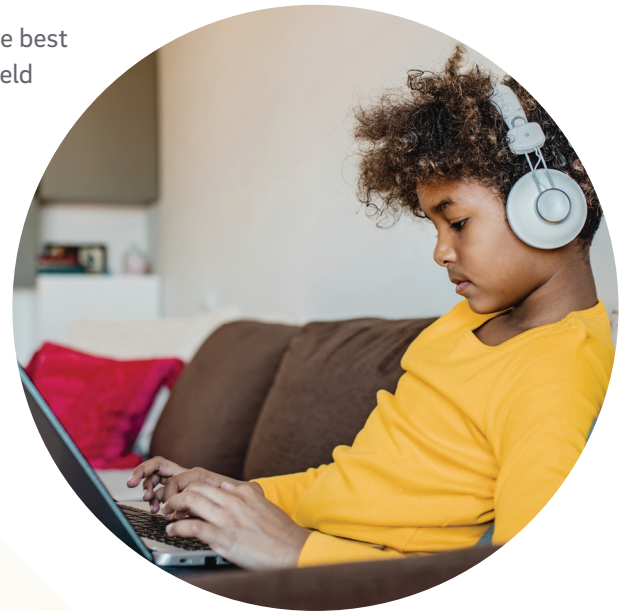
Choose three or four tools and use them repeatedly throughout the year. That way, students will be focused on interacting, collaborating and digging deeper into their learning rather than on trying to figure out how to use a bunch of new technologies.

CONSIDER YOUR STYLE

When you're selecting online instructional tools, think about which ones match your teaching style. Every teacher instructs differently, so look for tools that reflect your personality.

MATCH THE TOOL TO THE TASK

Think back to the Gradual Release of Learning Instructional Framework summarized on page 5. Here are some examples of online instructional tools that can be used in each stage of a lesson.



STAGE OF LESSON PLAN	EFFECTIVE TOOLS
Focused Instruction (I do it): This is when the teacher delivers instruction and students observe. It is often effective to deliver this part of the lesson asynchronously.	Tools that allow the teacher to create or select instructional videos include YouTube, Screencast-O-Matic, Khan Academy and TED-Ed.
Guided Instruction (We do it): In this part of the lesson, the teacher guides instruction while students participate.	Tools that help teachers and students interact in real time include Zoom, Google Meet, EdPuzzle, Nearpod, Pear Deck and Classkick. You can also use Google Docs, sending a link to students and then sharing the document so they can watch themselves actively interacting.
Collaborative Learning (You do it together): Students work together as they apply and consolidate their understanding of the content.	Tools that support student collaboration include Google Docs and Seesaw. On FlipGrid, students can post videos and respond to each other's posts. Another possibility is Padlet, an online corkboard where students can pin ideas and responses.
Independent Learning (You do it alone): Students independently complete a task that provides an assessment of how well they understand the lesson.	Tools for independent assessment include Google Forms, Socrative, Padlet, Poll Everywhere and Kahoot!

Learn more about tools for distance learning: <https://parentology.com/best-edtech-tools-for-distance-learning/>

Sparking Student Engagement

In online teaching, it's crucial to engage students' attention and make them active participants. The book "Teach Like a Champion" by Doug Lemov offers great tools for promoting student engagement. Here are some ways to take these tools online. Many of these techniques also provide a formative assessment of students' understanding.

- **Entrance Ticket:** Requiring an entrance ticket ensures that all students are prepared to begin the lesson. Post on the online whiteboard, "Please have a paper and pencil ready for today's lesson. Write 'entrance ticket' in the chat when you're ready to begin." If you notice certain students failing to post entrance tickets, follow up to see what is going on.
- **Waterfall:** First, disable chat so students' responses can't be seen. Ask a question. Count to 3 then enable chat. Students' answers will cascade in the chat box like a waterfall. If you do not have the ability to disable chat, have all students answer in chat at the same time.
- **Everybody Writes:** Ask a question and tell all students to write an answer and share it by holding it up to their webcam. Alternatively, share a Google Doc with a table that has a numbered box for each student. Have them type their responses in their boxes on the table.
- **Cold Call:** Ask a question and then display a random name or number generator to select an unsuspecting student to answer. This technique keeps students on their toes and gets them involved in the excitement of waiting to see whose name or number comes up.
- **Peer Interaction:** Pair students up as "elbow partners." Then ask a question and tell students to send a response as a private chat message to their elbow partner. If students don't have access to private chat, they can use Padlet. Partners are responsible for sharing each other's responses with the class.
- **Take a Stand:** Gets students to actively make judgments about their peers' answers by saying, "Stand up if you agree with Alexa" or "Thumbs up if you think John is right." Getting students up and moving helps promote engagement.
- **Exit Ticket:** Have students complete an exit ticket to demonstrate understanding before they are excused from the session. For instance, create a Google Form or survey and send a link to students. Then say, "Monica, I got your exit ticket, you can leave."

Visit the *Teach Like a Champion* website: <https://teachlikeachampion.com/>



Creating a Sense of Community

Successful educators know the value of creating a sense of community within a school. Promoting that feeling of belonging among your students takes on a special urgency in an online environment, where students are physically isolated from you and from each other.

It's possible to create a sense of community even in an environment that is 100 percent virtual, but it requires a conscious effort on your part. Here are some ideas to help you build a supportive classroom culture.

GET TO KNOW STUDENTS

Set up purposeful sessions to interact with your students and get to know them. You can do this at the beginning of each day. Announce whose birthday it is or ask students about what they did over the weekend. When you give students the opportunity to share, it helps them feel a part of a larger community.

LET STUDENTS GET TO KNOW YOU

Make sure that even though you're online, your personality and your style come through just as much as they do in the physical classroom. Giving students a sense of who you are strengthens the relationships you're building with them.

CELEBRATE SUCCESS

Make a point of reaching out to students individually to recognize academic successes. For example, after a live session, follow up with an email to five students who were right on point. When you call students out by name and celebrate what they are doing, they feel a sense of belonging.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Look for ways to incorporate social and emotional learning in your online classes. In these disrupted times, it's particularly beneficial for students to focus on self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, responsible decision-making and relationship skills. One tool that helps bring social and emotional learning into the online classroom is **7 Mindsets**, based on the book of the same name. It offers online classes for students and teachers.



Watch Rita Pierson's video "Every Kid Needs a Champion": https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=110&v=SFnMTHhKdkw&feature=emb_logo

