

TABLE 3.1

Ten Best Practices for Teaching Online

Best practice 1	Be present at the course site.
Best practice 2	Create a supportive online course community.
Best practice 3	Develop a set of explicit expectations for your learners and yourself as to how you will communicate and how much time students should be working on the course each week.
Best practice 4	Use a variety of large group, small group, and individual work experiences.
Best practice 5	Use synchronous and asynchronous activities.
Best practice 6	Ask for informal feedback early in the term.
Best practice 7	Prepare discussion posts that invite responses, questions, discussions, and reflections.
Best practice 8	Search out and use content resources that are available in digital format if possible.
Best practice 9	Combine core concept learning with customized and personalized learning.
Best practice 10	Plan a good closing and wrap activity for the course.

Best Practice 1: Be Present at the Course Site

Being present at the course site is the most fundamental and important of all the practices. Over time, we have learned to quantify what it means to “be present.” The best online faculty, according to students, are faculty who are present multiple times a week, and at best daily. No matter how expectations are communicated regarding faculty availability, the default mode is twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Students expect online faculty to be present when they are there, no matter the day or the time, unless explicitly told otherwise.

Thus, one of the most important expectations for online faculty is—if at all possible—to be present in some way every day. These expectations can be modified, and students will be very accepting if their faculty clearly states personal policies on presence and provides notice if family or professional events cause deviation from these policies.

Liberal use of tools, such as announcements, discussion board postings, and faculty blogs, lets students know just when the faculty member will likely be present for fast turnaround on questions and potentially available for live interaction by phone or collaborative online tools. These same tools can communicate when the faculty member may be away for an extended time—say, two days or more. Strategies such as assigning a student or a team of two students to monitor question forums or blogs can