Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning

MASTERING TOOLS AND TECHNOLOGIES FOR ONLINE TEACHING

Teaching online does require mastering some basic technology skills, along with a willingness to explore the integration of technology into your teaching practice to explore possibilities on how to more effectively or efficiently achieve your learning objectives, as well as the ability to reach out when you need help.

ESSENTIAL SKILLS

- ✓ **File management:** Knowing how to create folders, save, upload, and download files, and organize student work (so that you can find it again), is integral to managing online instructor workload.
- ✓ **Word processing:** Most of us use word processing applications on a regular basis. When teaching online, the review functions, such as "track changes" and "add comments" come in handy when grading online student work and providing valuable feedback.
- ✓ **Presentation:** Applications like PowerPoint, Prezi, and Google Slides are excellent ways to share presentations and mini-lectures. Within Blackboard, use Kaltura and Kaltura CaptureSpace Desktop Media Recorder to add and create media to your Blackboard course.
- ✓ **Web navigation:** You will most likely want to locate and share online resources with your students when you teach online. Finding, evaluating the validity of, and citing these web resources are important skills to have.
- ✓ **Grade reporting:** Some institutions require that you enter grades outside of the learning management system (LMS). You will need to be able to locate, access, and use the grade reporting system to enter your final grades.
- ✓ **Online library:** If you are teaching ANY type of course, you should learn how to access the Mason Online Libraries and locate articles and other resources. Check in with your subject librarian in advance of teaching online. They can help you determine the best approach to integrating library resources into your online course in the planning stages.
- ✓ **Learning management system (LMS):** Knowing how to navigate and use key functions in the Blackboard LMS is critical to succeeding as an online instructor.

In Blackboard, the <u>basic</u> skills you need to master:

- ☐ Post the course syllabus.
- ☐ Access the course roster.
- ☐ Create and update course content pages.
- ☐ Add announcements.
- ☐ Send email and private course mail messages.
- ☐ Create and post to discussion forums.
- ☐ Manage student assignment submissions.
- ☐ Create and add questions to quizzes.
- ☐ How to set-up and use online proctoring tools (such as Respondus LockDown Browser).
- ☐ Set-up and use the gradebook.
- ☐ Hold online office hours.

If you aren't sure if you've mastered these basic skills, please see resources listed under **Getting Blackboard Help** for training, guidance and assistance.

"GOOD TO KNOW" SKILLS

These tools are not essential, but knowing how to use them will help you create an engaging online course, and help your online students meet their learning goals.

- ✓ **Screencasting:** These tools enable you to share and record what you're doing on your screen. For example, you can show your students how to create a pivot table in Excel by recording a screencast as you actually perform that function.
- ✓ **Social media:** Integrating social media applications can be a bit tricky, so you may want to wait until you have some online teaching experience before fully integrating them into your online teaching practice. Social media applications do have the benefit of opening up channels for communication and collaboration, and building community within the online space.
- ✓ **Mobile apps:** Many online students use mobile devices (smart phones, tablets) on a regular basis, and are used to working with applications on these devices. As you evolve in your online teaching practices, exploring different mobile applications related to your subject area will come naturally – that is if you use mobile devices yourself! Be careful, as not all students use mobile devices, and not all information is secure on these devices.

COURSE-SPECIFIC TECHNOLOGY SKILLS

If students need to **know or master a specific tool or technology** to succeed in your online course, you will need to take the time in the course planning stages to either check or find existing resources, or create new resources related to using that tool. For example, if your students need to learn how to do specific functions in Excel, you don't want to wait until they ask questions mid-semester — you will want to make sure that you build activities into your online course to check or guide mastery of the skills required with the use of the application.

GETTING BLACKBOARD HELP

The most important skills you need to have related to tools and technology are knowing where to turn when you need help, and knowing where to send your students when they need help. It is also helpful to know where to find resources that can support your students when they are working on their own.

How to get Blackboard Help at Mason?

Contact: E-mail courses@gmu.edu or contact the ITS Support Center at 703-993-8870.

Walk-in Support: ITS Learning Support Services, Johnson Center Room 311, The Collaborative Learning Hub.

Website: http://coursessupport.gmu.edu/ This website provides guidance, help and tips for Blackboard and additional online course tools at Mason. Bb information is targeted for Faculty and for Students.

Instructional Tech Trainings & Workshops: Enter the Trainings and Workshops site through CAS and then search for "Blackboard", "Kaltura" or "Online" to locate upcoming f2f or online workshops offered by ITS.

Blackboard Learn Help Videos (from Blackboard):

- For Faculty (Instructors)
- For Students

Additional Blackboard Resources for Faculty (ITS Learning Support Services)

- Blackboard Faculty Quick Start Guide

BE PREPARED

There are so many variables involved when teaching online, and you can be sure that at some point, you or your students will encounter technology obstacles. The learning management system may not be available, you might lose internet access, you may misplace digital files, or a trusted resource link may no longer be available online.

The keys to success in working with tools and technologies for the online instructor are having back-up plans and being flexible.

BELLS AND WHISTLES

Technology is, and always will be changing, and it is important that you do not become distracted by all of the "bells and whistles." Teaching online does not mean keeping up with every new tool and technology that is available. Teaching online enables you to integrate the tools that support the way you want to teach in the online space, to provide content, encourage interaction, and perform authentic assessment in your online classes.

The learning outcomes should drive the activities; technology and tools serve to support the outcomes and enhance the learning. In this brief video, see how educators have re-framed and updated Bloom's Taxonomy to include digital learning, tools and technology:

[What is Bloom's Digital Taxonomy?](What%20is%20Bloom's%20Digital%20Taxonomy?) (Common Sense Education)

Remember, technology should not get in the way of your teaching, or student learning. That holds true in every teaching and learning environment!

MORE TO EXPLORE

Tech Literacy II: Skills for the Online Instructor
To teach online, you will need to master basic Internet and computer skills that support the design, development, and delivery of your online course. This article shares an extensive list of skills and tools that you may want to explore.
http://www.onlineuniversities.com/articles/educators/tech-literacy-ii-skills-for-the-online-instructor/

Technology and Learning (The Stearns Center, George Mason University)

Technology is now a feature of every classroom, including online classes. Here is some guidance about how to choose the right technology tools that enhance your teaching, engage your students, and achieve your student learning objectives.

https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/teaching/technology-and-learning

Teaching with Technology (CTL, University of Washington)
When done well, the integration of educational technology can deepen the impact of learning by supporting instructional objectives. However, it can be challenging to select the "best" tech tools while not losing sight of your goals for learner engagement. This site explores how technology can help every instructor create a more engaging, authentic learning experience.
http://www.washington.edu/teaching/teaching-resources/engaging-students-in-learning/teaching-with-technology-2/

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