

Instructional Design Tips

Category 1 - Learner Support and Resources

Information about being an online/hybrid learner ...

- Tips for being an online/hybrid student
- Quiz to self-assess readiness to be an online/hybrid student
- Link to Kennedy Library
- Instructions for how to conduct online research (if applicable)
- Instructions on how to write a research paper (if applicable)
- Link to the Disability Resource Center (DRC)
- Information/tutorials on how to use software required by class assignments
- How to forward campus email to another account
- Contact information for technical support from the Service Desk
- Minimum computer hardware and software requirements
- Tips for avoiding and dealing with computer viruses
- Sources for any required plug-ins
- Guidelines for forming groups (if applicable)
- Pointing to tutorials on Blackboard
- Netiquette guidelines

Course specific resources ...

- Contact information for academic department or advisor
- Contact information for the instructor(s) of the course
- Pre-requisites of course
- Link to El Corral Bookstore to order textbooks or other instructional materials
- FAQ site for course information
- Estimated amount of time needed for completing course requirements

Resources supporting course content ...

- Link(s) to web sites with supporting information relevant to course content
- Link(s) to web sites of organizations or associations related to course content
- Glossary of terms or links to definitions of new vocabulary
- Link(s) to learning objects external to course (e.g., MERLOT)

Category 2 - Online Organization and Design

Course navigability and organization ...

- Syllabus is easily located
- Links to other parts of the course or external sources are up-to-date
- Required instructional materials are easily located
- Organization and sequencing of the course content is logical and clear
- Topics are clearly identified and subtopics are related to topics
- Course schedule is available in a printer-friendly format for convenience
- Resources are separated into "required" and "optional" categories

Syllabus includes ...

- Course objectives
- Course completion requirements
- Course schedule is summarized in one place
- Expectations of students' participation, honesty, etc.
- Timeline for student participation is clear
- Faculty member(s) introductory information
- Expectations of availability and turnaround time for contact with instructor
- Assessment and evaluation guidelines

Aesthetic design ...

- Typeface is easy to read
- Sufficient contrast between text & background for readability
- Appropriate images supporting course content add visual interest
- Design of course pages has sufficient white space for better readability.

Consistency in course ...

- Layout of course is visually and functionally consistent
- Navigability is clear, simple and user friendly
- Spelling and grammar are consistent and accurate
- Sentences and paragraphs are brief
- Written material is concise
- Language of written material is friendly and supportive
- Clear instructions are given for each task or assignment

Universal accessibility ...

- Universal accessibility concerns are addressed throughout the course including transcripts of any non-text objects
- Images are optimized for speedy display and include alternative text
- Alternative formats of materials provided when possible (e.g., optional print packet of extensive reading materials, CD of audio clips used in course, etc.)
- Use of color adds interest but does not disadvantage color-blind students
- Longer videos or audio clips (i.e., over 3 minutes in length) are streamed

Category 3 - Instructional Design and Delivery

Promote interaction in the learning community ...

- Instructor introduces himself/herself to model interaction
- Students introduce themselves to the class
- Students are encouraged to respond to classmate introductions
- "Ice-breaker" activity included to allow class to get acquainted
- Students' input is not evaluated as "right" or "wrong"
- Netiquette is described and enforced
- Student participation is tracked and "wallflowers" drawn in to discussions
- Students are prompted by facilitator to expand on relevant points
- Facilitator may play "devil's advocate"
- Reading & writing requirements consistent with student abilities & unit load

Goals and alignment to learning objectives ...

- Pace of delivery of course content is managed
- Course content is "chunked" for more manageable learning
- Instructional design is made clear (e.g., is it self-paced, or group-paced?)
- Expectations for synchronous vs asynchronous activities are clear

Learning objectives and activities are integrated ...

- Reading assignments match learning objectives
- Activities lead to learning desired concepts
- Tasks and activities are designated as synchronous or asynchronous, sequential or non-sequential, and are clarified as such
- Instructional material may be reviewed repeatedly (built-in redundancy)
- Summary provided frequently (often at end of a topic) to reinforce learning

Activities to enhance student learning (multiple learning styles)...

- Video clips of interviews, performances, news, documentaries, etc.
- Historical audio clips of famous speeches
- Screen animations for instructional exercises using software
- Personal interview reports
- Crossword or word search puzzles
- Matching and game-show-style trivia games
- Online scavenger hunts / WebQuests
- Annotated bibliography
- PowerPoint or video presentations as assignments
- Flash simulations

Activities to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills ...

- Discussions center on questions without a single correct answer
- Compare and contrast exercises
- Case studies
- Critique classmates' assignments
- Collaborative exercises

Category 4 - Assessment & Evaluation of Learning

Assess student readiness for learning ...

- Pre-requisites are defined and enforced
- Acceptable methods for completing assignments are identified (group work, open book, etc.)
- Consequences of cheating or plagiarism are clear

Learning objectives, instructional and assessment activities are aligned ...

- Criteria used to evaluate participation in online discussion groups
- Study questions or practice online assessments with evaluation are provided
- Quantity and scope of graded assignments is reasonable
- Authentic assessments

Multiple assessment strategies ...

- Students' bibliography or reference list includes a variety of materials such as URLs, books and journals, videos, etc.
- When possible, options among assignments are provided to allow for different interests, backgrounds, and personal learning styles
- Students are not assessed solely on tests/quizzes but are provided ample opportunity to demonstrate proficiency in different ways

Regular feedback ...

- Instructor models assignment
- Rich and rapid feedback - self-grading assignments released immediately
- Frequent and substantial feedback from the instructor
- Samples of assignments illustrate instructor's expectations
- Detailed instructions and tips for completing assignments
- Due dates for all assignments
- Rubrics for all assignments identify assessment guidelines
- Grading scale

Self-assessments and peer feedback ...

- Self-tests similar to the final evaluation instruments
- Students pose discussion questions, respond to others' discussion topics, later post answers to their own questions and respond to others' comments on their discussion topic
- Peer review opportunities
- Students apply rubric to their own work and describe/defend their score
- Clear guidelines for peer review, if applicable

Category 5 - Appropriate/Effective Use of Technology

Appropriate tools to facilitate communication ...

- Discussion boards
- Synchronous "chats"
- PowerPoint presentations
- Email
- Listserv
- Teleconferencing
- Group discussion areas, when appropriate for group activities
- Instant messaging

New teaching methods ...

- Instructor is open to trying new methods of delivery of instruction
- Instructor is open to new methods of students' preferred learning styles

Multimedia elements ...

- Flash illustrations
- Animated Viewlets or SnapzPro movies for screen captures of software programs
- Audio clips
- Video clips
- PowerPoint presentations
- CD-Rom or DVD supplemental materials

Engaging students throughout the course ...

- Students off-campus with modems are provided with low-bandwidth alternatives for downloading media
- Technology is used to engage students in learning -- not just for viewing but for interacting with other students or with the course content

Category 6 - Faculty Use of Student Feedback

Course content ...

- Evaluation survey at midterm and at the end of the course
- Student input sought at regular intervals
- Open-ended questions
- Students falling behind are prompted to determine what might be delaying their progress
- Students prompted to find web-based resources supporting the topic to share with classmates; the highest quality resources incorporated into the course

Online technology ...

- Instructor has an open door to students to point out flaws of delivery of instruction using technology
- Instructor solicits feedback on how delivery can be more effective for student learning (e.g., a discussion topic for student feedback)

Instruction and assessment ...

- Instructor is willing to modify course (live) as needed to improve or fix inadequacies
- Instructor is able to modify elements (e.g., fix bad quiz questions, extend deadlines, review methods of achieving course objectives)

*A BIG "Thank You" to Laura Sederberg - CSU Chico,
for sharing the CSU Chico Rubric Instructional Design Tips
that served as the basis for this document*