



How Do I Communicate with Students during Remote Instruction?

How do you replicate your on-site communication practices in an online environment? Since students are not interacting with the instructor in real time, providing ample opportunities for student-instructor communication is key to a quality learning experience for the student. Have a communication plan and stick to it. Here are some important elements to consider when putting your plan together:

Create Your Teaching Presence

- Create and maintain your “[teaching presence](#)” by communicating and interacting with students on a consistent basis.
- Connect using asynchronous means such as written or prerecorded audio and video messages or synchronously through online meetings that might include audio, video, and chat.
- Select tools in CoursePlus to connect such as the Discussion Forum and the Class Email tool. Other tools, such as [Zoom](#) and [VoiceThread](#), can also be considered for synchronous and asynchronous communications.

Set Expectations

What are your preferred methods of communication?

- Consider having students post all nonpersonal questions to the discussion forum first so that all students can benefit from the answers.
- Provide students with your preferred contact information on the course Syllabus Overview page under the Contact Information section.
- Let students know how soon you will respond. For most faculty, 24–48 hours is reasonable.

Provide Actionable and Timely Feedback

- Give students constructive, meaningful, and timely feedback to help them evaluate their progress and increase their intrinsic motivation. The feedback should be sufficiently specific to help improve future behaviors and reinforce what was done well. Note, providing this feedback as soon as possible after the learning activities—including assignments, quizzes, and exams—is important.
- Respond to cues (from emails and Discussion Forum posts) that indicate students are confused about an activity, assignment, or exam.



Manage Communications Proactively

- Send class emails each week about what to expect, including topics and activities, and how best to prepare for the coming week. Also, remind students of upcoming events and due dates for any projects or assignments.
- Use and maintain the [Course FAQs](#) page for information about course content, assignments, etc. Encourage students to check the FAQ page first before asking questions.
- Review and respond to questions and comments posted on the Discussion Forum within the 24–48 hour timeframe. [Subscribe to Discussion Forum](#) comments either by individual topic or daily digest.
- Utilize the [Announcement](#) tool to draw students' attention to important course information such as an article that you may have recently posted to the Online Library or a modified due date.

Hold Virtual Office Hours via Zoom

- Live “office hours” are a great way to interact with the students while answering their questions and concerns. Let students know well in advance when and how to connect with you during the agreed upon time. Encourage them to submit questions and comments to you in advance, so you can be prepared and use the time efficiently.

Keep the Communication Channels Open

- This helps to maintain the sense of community that students and instructors were used to in the classroom.
- Be supportive of your students' needs and be flexible in allowing for accommodations or extensions of deadlines, where warranted.

Further Resources

[Five ways to build community in online classrooms](#)

[Building community in online courses](#)

[Creating a sense of instructor presence in the online classroom](#)

[Facilitating your online discussions](#)

[The first decade of the community of inquiry framework: A retrospective](#)

[A discussion about online discussion](#)

[Netiquette guide for online courses](#)

Hattie, J. & Timperley, H. (2007). The power of feedback. *Review of Educational Research*, 77(1).81-112.

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