Suggested Tips, Ideas, and Strategies for Engaging Online and In-Person Learners

Directions: Consider the following tips, ideas, and strategies for engaging learners. Select one of the suggestions and explain how you will adapt to activate learning with your online and in-person students.

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<tr>
<td colspan="3">The following suggestions were selected from 6 Tips of Teaching Online and In Person Simultaneously
https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2020/08/26/strategies-teaching-online-and-person-simultaneously-opinion
By Amy E. Crook and Travis W. Crook, August 26, 2020</td>
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<td>Tip</td>
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<td>How Will You or Do You Adapt This Tip for Your Online and In-Person Learners? Please include your name.</td>
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<td>1. Chat Mods</td>
<td>"Online students can struggle to get their [teacher's] attention over the more visible students in the classroom, and introverted students -- especially in an online setting -- may lose out on participation altogether. Online contributions need to carry the same weight as those in person to achieve a balanced learning environment.

To ensure that happens, assign chat moderators, or chat mods, to filter questions or other quality contributions from the online platform's chat. Already knowing which student is designated for this role for the day eliminates the time spent searching for an online student willing to speak and allows for smooth transition and curation of the best student contributions. Rotate this role among the students who attend online, potentially partnering two students per class session to serve at a time if necessary. Include specific checkpoints in your PowerPoint slides or lecture notes where you will purposefully elicit the chat mods to share with the class.

For this strategy to work, of course, online students need to provide content for the chat mods to filter. Assigning participation points can increase online student engagement and quality. The online students can earn points for contributing a question or example via the chat, and the chat mods can earn points for their successful presentation of the most popular or insightful contributions to the class at large. You can also save the chat contributions through default settings for easy grading after class.</td>
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<td>2. Breakout Rooms With Deliverables</td>
<td>Breakout rooms allow for peer-to-peer conversations online akin to those that occur in a live classroom. However, online breakout rooms are harder to monitor than small group discussions in the classroom. How can instructors make sure students are on topic while online? Have a clear deliverable from the group. Sometimes the deliverable may be the same for in-person and online groups; other times, it can be effective to give groups different objectives and let them know it. That way, the online students will be aware that their group's outcomes are distinct contributions to the larger class discussion and their voices are as important as those of in-person students.

If appropriate, you can direct all student groups (in person and online) to upload their deliverables to the learning management system as an assignment or discussion board entry for further asynchronous interaction. You can then increase cross-collaboration by having students comment on the other groups' contributions.</td>
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3. Interactive Tools	Polling is a good way to engage students in the classroom and online. Most online meeting platforms have limited polling functionality in the system, however, and are poorly suited to serving both students in class and online. Other options that permit a wider array of question types – such as open-ended responses, word clouds or clickable images – include Poll Everywhere and Sli.do. Those sites offer free polling services up to a limited number of participants and enable students to ask questions that can be voted up or down. Kahoot is another popular free option that offers playful, competitive quizzes that encourage student participation in class and online, declaring a winner based on speed and accuracy of responses at the end of a cycle. Kahoot also offers free basic analytics and tracking over time to allow you to review which academic material students are consistently missing and thus requires greater focus in future sessions. Additionally, it can track individual performance, helping you to remediate specific students or to ensure online students are performing as well as in-class participants. Note the following links that each contain multiple interactive resources for student engagement: • View **Edpuzzle**. See **Edpuzzle tutorials 2020**. • Examine **Flipgrid.** Here is a video on **How to Use Flipgrid**. • Review the **Padlet Gallery.** • Explore the **Nearpod Library.** Check out the **"how-to" Videos.** • Search resources on **Listenwise.** • Engage with **Newsela** resources. • Select a different digital tool to implement: **Seventy-Five Digital Tools to Support Formative Learning**.	

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4. Real-World Mysteries	Give learners the opportunity to become amateur sleuths by incorporating real-world mysteries. This involves relevant case studies, stories, and examples that tie into the subject matter. Omit the ending of the story and let them draw their own conclusions. Better still, divide them into groups and allow them to discuss possible solutions with their peers. After they've explored all possible outcomes, reveal the ending of the story and ask them to compare or contrast it with their response.	
5. Thought-Provoking Stories	Stories are a powerful learning tool. They pull the online and in-person learner in and make them feel for the characters and their plight. A well-written story can even influence a learner's beliefs or assumptions, prompting them to reevaluate their perspectives. This is the basis of active learning. It requires learners to ask questions and challenge the status quo. To create thought-provoking stories, focus on a specific challenge or problem that learners can relate to. Integrate characters that resonate with them and give them unique personality traits. The goal is to make online and in-person learners connect to the story on a deeper level so that they actually care about the outcome.	
6.Brainstorming Sessions	Some of the most brilliant ideas come from group brainstorming sessions. Since your online learners don't have the option to meet up with in-person learners in a physical classroom, you have to bring the brainstorming to them. Invite your in-person learners to join your online learners virtually. Provide a list of suitable topics or challenges and encourage them to brainstorm. It's also wise to set some ground rules and define expectations. Divide larger groups into smaller breakout groups. Appoint a leader to moderate the online discussions and ask each member to share at least one idea. That way the brainstorming stays on-topic and everyone gets the chance to participate.	

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7. Presence Through Clarity	In a 2015 analysis of nearly 50 studies on teacher clarity, researchers found that "higher levels of clarity are associated with higher levels of student learning." Clarity wasn't limited to a clear explanation of ideas: The researchers distinguish between content clarity—"My teacher is clear when presenting content"—and process clarity—"My teacher communicates clear expectations for the assignment." Communication, however, is more likely to break down in distance learning, particularly as classrooms become increasingly asynchronous and are mediated through a learning management system (LMS), online documents, email, and other digital forms of communication. It's easy to forget that online classrooms, like in-person classrooms, must also be navigable and easy to understand—and that your online teaching presence is often communicated not by posture and tone, for example, but by your virtual classroom's organization and clarity. Having a strong teaching presence online might mean, for example, that you spend time setting up your LMS so that there's a central hub where the resources are gathered—students won't get lost as frequently—or that you walk students through common tasks like how and where to submit assignments, where to ask questions, and how to use the suite of tech tools you've settled on.	
8. Get Student Feedback and Respond	In a 2019 study, researchers found that successful online instructors frequently collected student feedback to identify what was and was not working. "An important element in the development of an award-winning course was the way in which instructors had collected data on the course or engaged with existing evaluation data, reflected on how to improve the course, and made improvements," explain the authors of the study. If you want to improve your online teaching presence, you should communicate to students that their opinions matter. After surveying the literature, here are six questions we recommend that you ask your students: 1. On a scale from 1 to 5, how comfortable do you feel using technology in our virtual classroom? 2. Have you encountered any technical issues, such as not being able to hear me, or not being able to connect to the Internet? 3. Are my lessons well organized and my assignments clear? 4. Can you easily find what you need? 5. Do you feel like your voice is heard? 6. What can I do to improve our online and in-person classroom?	

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<td>9. Focus on Surfacing Connections and Building Relationships</td>
<td>There are dozens of ways to create a sense of human connection in your online and in-person classroom. On Edutopia, Kristin Zenkov describes effective approaches for nurturing an online classroom community. John Thomas, an elementary school teacher in New Hampshire, starts every day with an informal morning meeting. While it can be done synchronously—with all students participating at the same time—Thomas uses the digital app Seesaw to record and share a video greeting students can respond to on their own time.

"Every day in the classroom, we notice little details as our students come in—we keep a finger on the pulse of our learning community," Thomas explains. "But from miles away it isn't easy to know how students are truly doing." Simple yet effective strategies—like greeting students at the door; doing a rose and thorn check-in; or asking students to share an appreciation, apology, or aha!—can make the difference between students feeling alienated or welcomed into your virtual classroom.

Above all, teacher presence is about connecting with your students: If they know you, they are far more likely to trust you and to feel that you're there for them. For Sarah Schroeder, a professor at the University of Cincinnati, it's important for teachers to remember that during the pandemic, some students feel isolated and may struggle academically and emotionally.

"A common concern is feeling disconnected in online learning. We don't want learners to feel like they are engaging with a computer. They are engaging with each other. With you. With content," writes Schroeder.</td>
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10. Flip Your Classroom to Stimulate Deeper Discussion	Forrest Hinton, a high school math teacher, says he found that a blend of asynchronous and synchronous instruction worked well to stimulate student discussion during remote learning. First, he taught new content asynchronously through recorded videos and online activities. At the start of his live class, students briefly summarized the concepts they had learned together and then divided into breakout rooms to solve related problems in small groups. Flipping his classroom allowed Hinton to spend less class time in direct instruction—and listening to students at the start of class and in small groups helped him identify, and then address, where his students were struggling. "This has allowed me to clarify concepts in a more targeted way and better assist students," said Hinton.	
11. Project-Based Learning and Think, Pair, Share	Ryan Tahmaseb, director of library services, says he found that giving more project-based learning activities to his elementary and middle school students—and allowing them more autonomy over assignments—naturally encouraged richer discussions in virtual learning. "If we give students as much freedom as possible to experiment, research, and pursue interests within our content area, then they inevitably have a lot more to say," said Tahmaseb. When it came to class discussions, Tahmaseb adapted think-pair-share to Zoom. Students were given a prompt, broken into groups, and then placed into breakout rooms to discuss and record their answers on a group specific Google doc, which allowed students to share and develop their thinking with one another. Since Tahmaseb wasn't in each breakout room to listen to the conversations, the Google doc kept students accountable and allowed Tahmaseb to monitor and comment on student progress. Once the breakout groups returned to the whole class, volunteers from each group shared their answers with everyone.	
12. A Twist on Show and Tell	Brittany Collins, the teaching and learning coordinator at Write the World, a global online writing community for middle and high school students, converted the familiar show-and-tell activity into "think, write, share."	

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	In one activity, Collins asked middle and high school students to find a photo, painting, or drawing that represented intergenerational connection and independently respond by writing to the following questions from the Making Thinking Visible Framework before discussing them over video as a class: What are we looking at? What makes you say that? What do you notice (see, feel, know)? What more can we uncover? What do you wonder? "It helps to break the ice in a virtual learning setting where unplanned participation can prove challenging for some students," said Collins.	
13. Back-and-Forth Dialogue (Asynchronous)	Angelina Murphy, a high school English teacher, said she used Google Classroom's question feature to get her class to respond to readings and discussion prompts during remote learning this past spring. When each student commented, Murphy replied with clarifying questions to create a back-and-forth dialogue and also asked every student to respond to at least two of their peers' comments to create a broader base of discussion. Fifth-grade teacher Raquel Linares said she used Nearpod Collaborate (Apple, Android), a virtual collaboration board, to get students to share images or write a response to show what they had learned about an article they read. To inspire connection and reflection among classmates, Linares also used Flipgrid (Apple, Android), so that students could hear their peers' voices even though they were remote.	
14. Virtual Gallery Walks (Asynchronous)	Virtual "gallery walks" give students an opportunity to view their classmates' projects while learning from each other, according to Joe Marangell, a high school social studies teacher. After his students presented their own projects through five-minute screencasts, they were then required to give feedback to at least two other students on theirs.Using Google Sheets, students provided feedback to their peers by answering the following prompts: • What's something new I learned about this topic? • What's something that surprised me about this topic? • What's something that confused me about this topic • What's something I liked about this presentation? • What questions do I have about this presentation? The online format gave every student the opportunity to see their peers' work and their peers' assessment on their own work, which led to deeper reflection.	

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15. Playlist Model	The playlist model presents learners with a sequence of learning activities through which they can self-pace. Teachers can create a playlist around a unit of study, a formal writing assignment, or a project. Playlists integrate different types of media and learning modalities to keep students engaged while freeing the teacher to work with individual learners. For more on playlists, check out this blog. Benefits of the playlist model: • Shifts control over the pace of learning to students. • Paths can be differentiated or personalized. • Creates clarity about the trajectory of work. • Mixes media and learning modalities. • Affords the teacher time to conference with students. • Pulls feedback and assessment into the classroom or synchronous virtual sessions. Tips for using the playlist model in a concurrent classroom: • Allow students to work independently or strategically pair your online and offline students to create a support network as they work. o If you strategically pair students, create a digital space (e.g., Google Document) where they can connect to chat if they have questions or need support. • Meet with online students for "teacher check-ins" using video conferencing software. • Post a "may do" list for students to work on if they are waiting for their teacher check-in. • Create a pathway for all students to let you know when they have hit a "teacher check-in" and need to conference with you (e.g., Remind or ClassroomQ). • Consider posting your playlist on a Google Hyperdoc.	

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Steps	**Description** *Note: For a variation on the following teacher created videos, consider having students work in small groups to produce content-rich videos for one another.*	**How Will You or Do You Adapt This Tip for Your Online and In-Person Learners? Please include your name.**
Step 1: Chunk Instruction	Great teachers have a lot to say about their subjects. When it comes to video creation, however, time is of the essence. Research on instructional videos shows that learner engagement with videos begins to drop after the 6-minute mark—and it falls dramatically after 9. So it's essential to chunk instruction such that each video covers a single learning objective or task, and nothing more. Multiple short videos are better than one long video. For example, this video on inference by middle school English teacher Toni Rose Deanon introduces an important concept, provides several examples, and gives the students a task—all in just over 4 minutes. Her colleague Emily Culp's video on four-box notes is equally concise, walking students through an example and teaching a note-taking strategy in 3:25. In a world of short attention spans, videos like these make their points clearly and quickly.	
Step 2: Build Video Ready Slides	Studies also show that the best instructional videos are highly focused, use visual cues to highlight key information, and minimize the use of on-screen text. The slides that a teacher would use in a lecture may not work in a video—it's critical to build a slide deck that is clear, simple, and visually compelling. (We have templates for math/science and English/history.) In her video on the big bang theory, high school science teacher Moira Mazzi uses compelling visuals and clear annotations to explain a complex idea to her students. This keeps student attention on what Mazzi is saying and gives students an idea of the key terms and ideas they need to record in their notes.	
Step 3: Record	There are many tools you can use to create a strong instructional video. Here are a few that can really simplify the process and enhance the quality of the video. **Recording device:** Ideally, you have a touch-screen tablet or laptop with a high-quality stylus. This ensures that you can easily annotate visuals and show work. Handwriting also adds a nice personal touch. But if you have a non-touch-screen laptop, or a tablet but no stylus, you can still make your own videos.	

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	Screencasting program: The best programs, like Explain Everything, allow educators to pause and re-record specific segments of their video easily, which removes the pressure of getting a perfect take. Look for a program that has a robust video editor and an embedded annotation tool. **Microphone:** This is often forgotten, but it's really helpful to have a pair of headphones with an external mic—these headphones help you improve the sound quality and ensure that your videos don't contain background noise. In this video on digital sound production (note: video is in Spanish), music teacher Zach Diamond uses highlighting, annotating, and a computer screencast to show students how to create their own songs using a program called Soundtrap. The clarity of Diamond's voice and the video helps students follow along, even with a complex task.	
Step 4: Enhance Engagement	Simply sitting and watching videos can lead students to lose focus—the best instructional videos keep them actively engaged. Research shows that when students take notes or answerguided questions while watching, they retain material better than students who watch passively. Embedding questions in your instructional video using programs like Edpuzzle can improve student interaction and provide you with invaluable formative assessment data. Students should think of video-watching as a task they perform actively in order to learn. In this video on the Pythagorean theorem, math teacher Michael Krell embeds frequent checks for understanding and provides feedback for students who get those checks wrong. Students are free to jump ahead to key points in the video to test their mastery of the material, if they so choose. Krell makes paper copies of the video slides for his students so that they can take notes as they watch.	

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Step 5: Be Yourself	Perhaps the most important element of a strong video is authenticity. The most effective blended instruction isn't pretty—it's personal. Don't be afraid to make mistakes, and make sure your authentic personality shines through. Research shows that videos in which the instructor speaks in a natural, conversational manner, with an enthusiastic tone, are the most engaging. In our experience, students really appreciate knowing that it's their actual teacher behind the video. In this video on states of matter, for instance, middle school science teacher Demi Lager lets her personality shine through. No matter how interested students may be in solids, liquids, and gases, her warm tone and sense of humor are likely to keep them engaged. Learning to create a high-quality instructional video doesn't happen overnight—it requires continual trial, error, and innovation. We've been recording videos for years, and we still often struggle to be compelling and concise. Yet we keep trying, because we believe that teacher-driven blended instruction is what's best for our students. So start planning, grab some recording software, be yourself, and have fun!	