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**Article topic*: Challenges in teaching English online***

**Abstract:** This article is related to the actual challenges every teacher is facing at the moment. Here teachers can find some advice about managing their online classroom. Instructions how to handle the lesson process are common. The author tried to help teachers, so feel free to use it.

**Keywords:** challenges, online, lessons, teaching, students, assessment

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In the middle of the coronavirus pandemic, many teachers were forced to base their instruction online to allow teaching and learning to continue. If you’re a teacher who teaches hundreds (or even dozens) at an institution with tens of thousands of learners, this can present new challenges—especially if you’re being asked to teach an online course for the first time. Thankfully, the move to online teaching can be relatively painless, even in times of significant disruption.

As an experienced teacher of English, I attended online courses to get ready for the challenges.

Here are three challenges you may face in your teaching as an online teacher and some useful instructional strategies to help you navigate through them.

**The challenge: passive students**

Unless thoughtfully crafted, online instruction can turn students into passive observers rather than active participants. Although these unengaged students may acquire the lesson content, they aren’t able to apply their learnings outside the [virtual classroom](https://tophat.com/blog/virtual-classroom/). They might pass assessments and complete learning activities, but they aren’t planning on using their new knowledge to make connections with previous material or real-world examples. For learning to be effective, students must be engaged in the quality, breadth and depth of their learning.

**Instructional strategy**

In online learning environments, it’s important to help students engage with course material in a way that makes sense for them. Providing them with ample flexible opportunities to reinforce course concepts will ensure that [learning material sticks](https://tophat.com/blog/strategies-to-make-online-teaching-and-learning-stick/) with them, even after they’ve completed their summative assessment.

Especially when students are learning remotely, teachers must recognize that students will only engage with course materials if they see them as valuable. With digital courseware, online teachers can adopt or create a customizable interactive textbook to extend active learning outside of class meetings. With in-line interactive questions, it is easy to track completion and comprehension of course content. These questions can be used to introduce new concepts, reinforce students’ understanding of topics and assess learning. Instructors can also easily export grades and participation data to their learning management system (LMS).

**The challenge: staying connected with students**

In an online classroom, much of the learning is completed asynchronously and students often feel disconnected from their instructor, as well as their peers. It can be difficult for instructors to teach online when they struggle to gauge how students are comprehending course content, and whether they are participating in learning experiences.

**Instructional strategy**

Feedback loops are key to building strong connections with learners in an online environment. When students complete a task, they get feedback and make adjustments accordingly. Feedback is meant to be non-evaluative and focused on a specific course learning objective. To give effective commentary, instructors must explain why a student is receiving the feedback, and suggest how they can improve in the future. This process also encourages students to reflect on that feedback, thus creating an iterative loop focused on individual progress and improvement over the course of a semester. Since this is an ongoing process, regular online formative assessments can build a continuous feedback loop. Using tools such as online assessments or platforms like Top Hat, you can provide specific, immediate feedback to students, giving instructors the chance to evaluate student performance.

Classroom response systems can also help faculty members understand how students are performing. When questions are posed to the class, for example, students can respond anonymously through their personal devices—the responses are then displayed on the screen in real-time. Some [online learning platforms](https://tophat.com/classroom/online-learning-platform/) also offer [weekly course reports](https://tophat.com/features/#learning-insights) to track student comprehension, outlining where they performed well and where they need more work. This can make it easier to identify students who are struggling and allows faculty to reach out with additional resources and support.

**The challenge: encouraging collaboration**

Interaction among students is one of the single most important elements of successful online education. Collaborative engagement motivates learning and promotes a deeper and more critically aware approach to the subject matter. Unfortunately, collaboration is one of the most difficult things to achieve when students are not physically present together.

Many discussion assignments do not support organic conversation. Posts are asynchronous, formal responses to prompts and so the required “discussion” of other students’ ideas is understandably forced. Such forums are more akin to prepared response papers than group exercises, and this may well be appropriate for your online content.

**Instructional strategy**

To encourage collaborative problem-solving, consider giving students a more specific task than simply “commenting” on each other’s ideas. Ask directly for constructive feedback about their classmates’ submissions. For example: “Focus on one claim in a colleague’s response that you think deserves to be developed in more depth. Suggest how that claim could be further developed and supported with evidence.”

Problem-based learning is a collaborative learning strategy that gives students the opportunity to apply course material to real-world case studies in small groups. This method, whether used in group learning or individually, helps students build upon their creativity and critical thinking skills. Students are invited to analyze, synthesize and then critique the information presented. By drawing on one another’s expertise and through seeking out online resources and tools, students who use problem-based learning can reach their course’s learning objectives in collaborative, meaningful ways.

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