

Teaching Online for Adults
Belfast Senior College
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Since very few people in Higher Education have had teacher training, here are some suggestions for online teaching of adults (see “Five Tips to Creating a More Engaging Online Course for Adult Learners” Jacqueline Crockford, *Faculty Focus*, Feb 26, 2021

<https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/online-education/online-student-engagement/five-tips-to-creating-a-more-engaging-online-course-for-adult-learners/>;

see also David Gooblar, **The Missing Course: Everything They Never Taught You about College Teaching**, Harvard U Press, pb 2021).

- 1) Create community:** have people introduce themselves at the beginning of the course. Then start each class session with brief social conversations. This will become a pattern especially if people can check in before the host arrives.
- 2) Pick assignments that encourage conversation:** work from shared documents and discussion threads. Start every class or topic from participant interests, e.g. questions posted online before each class, or gleaned from class.
- 3) Recognize different learning styles:** When working with students who are e.g., visual learners, encourage them to draw their own pictures or schematics of difficult concepts. Use asynchronous learning with e.g. pre-recorded short

videos on topics for the course. Auditory and verbal learners will benefit from e.g., a (coffee) conversation where they can ask and answer questions with their peers. Facilitate the formation of study groups by asking interested students to submit their contact information into a shared document. Then email the group to ensure they connect for the first time and let them take it from there.

4) Use synchronous and asynchronous materials to create blended learning that can be implemented by assigning reading and work before the class meets. Using the break-out room functionality available in many video conferencing systems that allows you to break the class into small discussion groups to discuss different themes and topics.

5) Adult learners have life experience and can use this to come up with different approaches to the material fostered by encouraging their autonomy and self-direction. Encourage participants to select a topic to briefly teach to a small class group or to the whole class.

6) (If relevant) Assign a final project that gives options in format, or allow students to create their own assignments, thereby instilling a sense of ownership. The assignment should align with their future roles, which will help increase their enjoyment and future application of learning.