

BEST PRACTICES FOR REMOTE LEARNING FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DIFFERENCES

Landmark College Institute for Research & Training (LCIRT)

The Landmark College Institute for Research and Training (LCIRT) and the Educational Technology and Online Programs divisions have compiled the following list of tips and resources to help educators prepare remote learning content. These “best practices” inform how we design and teach the courses in our [Online Programs](#). Although we often use these strategies, principles, tips and tricks to support students with learning and attention challenges, they are widely adaptable and will enhance the experience of all learners.

1. UNDERSTANDING THE ONLINE PLATFORM

- Ensure students are familiar and comfortable with navigating within the online platform that your school/college is using. It is important that students know what to find and where to find it, in digital space.
- Use screen shots and short videos to show how to navigate. Do not overwhelm with too many instructions.
- Keep consistency in the form and format of the courses.

Example: Use similar symbols across assignments for ease of understanding.

2. DISPLAYING INFORMATION ONLINE

- Chunk information. Break down content, especially learning activities, into short manageable steps.
- Minimize the amount of “text” on a given screen and make use of white space to accommodate students with visual-perceptual difficulties.
- Videos are great but keep them short (3 min or less).
- Students lose positional memory when they have to scroll through a document they are reading on screen, so build-in memory cues by adding links to mnemonics, or a short YouTube video of yourself giving help for the activity.

3. SOCIAL PRESENCE OF INSTRUCTOR

- Let your students know you’re there. Some students are anxious and confused and benefit from knowing you are right there with them.
- Be active with announcements, discussion board posts, email, etc.

Example: Provide video introductions of the week’s objectives, learning activities, etc.

4. COMMUNICATION

- Be explicit with directions. Give students instructions on how to find what they need, especially assignments and due dates.
- Timely feedback is essential in online learning. You can use various types of feedback (oral, written, video).
- Over communicate rather than under communicate. Respond frequently to student posts, questions, and comments.
- Describe how students can communicate with the instructor one-on-one and to the full group.

5. STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

- Provide multiple options for participation and assessment
- Provide rubrics and link to the rubric from within the assignment. Provide comments, and if appropriate grades, for both formative and summative assessments.
- Provide multiple touch points for synchronous communication
 - Online office hours
 - Group lessons for direct instruction
 - 1:1 student meetings with a clear agenda
- Recognize quality work publicly
- Use principles of “gamification” to engage students.
For example, a paper on a given topic can be defined as a “quest.” Use leaderboard and badges for gamification of your course. For more information, read the article: [6 KILLER EXAMPLES OF GAMIFICATION IN ELEARNING](#)

6. SELF-MONITORING

- One of the biggest challenges in online learning for students with Learning Disabilities is self-monitoring and keeping pace with assignments and due dates. Remind students of due dates more frequently than in a face-to-face setting.
- Provide a syllabus for each course. It is never too soon to introduce students to the concept of a syllabus.
- Provide weekly a suggested study and work schedule with due dates. Allow flexibility so that students can adjust based on personal preferences and monitor as a coach using a non-directive approach.
- Suggest tools to avoid distraction and multi-tasking, such as:
 - [RESCUETIME](#)
 - [STAYFOCUSED](#)
 - [FOREST](#)
 - [BOOMERANG](#)
- That said, do not overload students with suggestions. Select a short list that you are familiar with and introduce it to your students.

7. ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility is a shared responsibility. Adhering to web accessibility guidelines while editing and teaching your course will benefit all students, including those with visual, hearing, mobility, and learning disabilities.

Here are a few resources for making course readings and materials accessible

- [HOW TO CHECK FOR ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES IN MICROSOFT DOCUMENTS USING ACCESSIBILITY CHECKER.](#)
- [HOW TO CREATE ACCESSIBLE POWERPOINT PRESENTATIONS.](#)
- [HOW TO CREATE ACCESSIBLE WORD DOCUMENTS.](#)
- [HOW TO CREATE ACCESSIBLE PDF DOCUMENTS.](#)

Make Online Content Accessible

- Content should be easy to navigate and comprehend. Folders, files, and modules should have informative labels.
 - **Example:** “Week Two: Topic” instead of “files.”
- Ensure your graphics contain alternative text (“alt-tags”) so they can be accessed by screen-readers. This text should describe the image so that important information reaches the learner.
 - [Read the “All about ALT Text guide,”](#) from Penn State University
- Attach transcripts and closed captions to videos.

Additional Accessibility Resources

- [DOWNLOAD OUR ACCESSIBILITY QUICK GUIDE](#)
- [Watch an interview](#) with Manju Banerjee, VP of Educational Research and Innovation, with the Learning Disabilities of America Association (LDA), on “Remote Learning and College Students”