

Strategies for Teaching Online

- 1) Teachers may have to consider working with shorter timetables. It is highly unlikely that children will attend 40-45 minute online lessons daily and be expected to stay engaged for a 7-hour school day. You may be asked to divide what you normally teach into bite size pieces, with 20 minutes of asynchronous material (i.e. learning materials students can engage with at their own time, like homework/tasks) and at least 10 minutes of live Q&A or discussions.
- 2) Prepare home and reading materials with an open mind. It will not be necessary to pass out papers or limit reading to assignments to what is available in textbooks. In an online environment, extend reading to TED talks, YouTube, relevant blogs, and online journals. Use online links and resources as much as you can to extend and develop the breadth of knowledge to make the topic interesting.



While communicating the course materials, explain 'why' you teach the material – not just the 'how'. They will need to know 'why' as well as the 'how' to help you translate verbal lectures into online material/slides/videos etc.

- 3) Consider team teaching. It can take the pressure off you as a single teacher in the vast space of online teaching. If you share the same materials and year groups with another teacher, bring all your students together into one virtual space to set context. 20 students to a class are no longer restrictive in an online space. Together, teachers can cover ground and support one another.

Class sizes can also shape asynchronous (homework) vs. synchronous (live) course material. Can the technology you use allow for breakout groups that can be presented by one teacher while another takes a lead with a bigger group?

- 4) Communication during school hours? All teachers have office hours and online teaching makes no exception although may be more flexible. Make sure your students know how to get in touch with you either through email or video conferencing methods. Will you need to host a live discussion forum once a week? What about when your lesson ends? Will you need a live Q&A forum to cover ground that was not clear? Whichever it is, ensure that your school has established systems for student check-in's, so that all communication is carried out 'within school grounds'.

Ambiguity is tough on students. It is therefore important to establish a schedule for the course and have clear expectations, especially in an online classroom where things may feel less formal and clear.

- 5) It is highly plausible that students may miss a class and truthfully, this is how it may start. Ensure that you have materials/resources/lesson materials ready and uploaded for students who have missed their online session due to unavailability, time difference or unforeseen circumstances. Class recordings of live sessions and comprehensive asynchronous content can help students stay abreast of class material. Remind students of their responsibilities and what is expected from them.

- 6) There is always the question of dress code. Dress code should remain consistent with school policy where staff are expected to be smartly dressed. To expect students attend online school in their uniform may be too ambitious and difficult to enforce or police. This protocol will vary accordingly from school to school but to expect students to be dressed and presented appropriately may be sufficient.

- 7) Online classes have traditionally been asynchronous where students engaged with course materials in their own time. With the introduction of easy to use and effective video conferencing tools, Skype/Zoom/Teams to name a few, it is not possible for teachers and students to meet online for a live-streamed lesson and/or discussion. While this can be beneficial to students who stand to benefit from in-class discussion with students, it can be quite overwhelming for a teacher who is conducting this manner of teaching for the very first time. If this is you, here are a few tips to keep in mind:
 - Get to know your technology. Do a test run first before the real thing. Get to know all the functions and actions that you may need to know for you to deliver your lesson efficiently. Do you know how to share your screen? Do you know how to record your lesson to share it with students at a later date? If working from home, you may want to blur your background. Can your video conferencing tool do this? Ensure that you have had some training or had a chance to understand the technology before you begin to use it with your class.
 - Perfection is impossible so don't feel the need to strive for that. We are in the profession of teaching not video editors or animators, so if you are annotating on a presentation or drawing squiggly diagrams, this is OK. If it is ok to do this on the whiteboard/interactive panel in the classroom, then its perfectly fine to do the same in an online lesson or discussion.
 - There is no easy way to say this but don't be intimidated by the whole process. Be as natural as you can – this is how your students know you. It can take a while to learn what works best for you so try a couple of online discussions with your colleagues first to get rid of your doubts. It can take a while to find what style works best for you and eventually teaching an online class will come naturally. What a great skill to learn in these times!
 - Plan ahead and start early. Take advantage of your IT support. If you have IT support and help available, don't hesitate to ask for it. Simply knowing there is aid around the corner will help you relax and enjoy your first class a little more.
 - While many of us think we may be working for longer hours, this doesn't necessarily have to be true. Embrace the flexibility. Planning is key and while some days may be more light touch, others may require slightly more of your time and dedication. Patience, generosity and a can-do attitude will be required to make online learning a success.