

## Planning Instruction

Assessment

Evaluation

Visuals

Goals

Objectives

Personal Philosophy

Lesson Presentation

Preparing Students

Preparing Teachers

Classroom Management

*Planning a distance education course is a multifaceted process. Distance courses require more structure than in-person face-to-face courses. Planning for instruction considers aspects of the resources, levels of interactivity, the types of activities, and how well the instructor and students are prepared for participation.*

Planning a distance education course is a multifaceted process. Distance courses require more structure than in-person face-to-face courses. There are many issues associated with planning for instruction at a distance. The actual planning for instruction considers aspects of the resources, levels of interactivity, the types of activities, and how well the instructor and students are prepared for participation. We have found that attending to the following can help when planning instruction:

- Personal Philosophy
- Goals and Objectives for Instruction
- Lesson Presentation
- Visuals in Instruction
- Preparing Students for the System
- Preparing Teachers for the System
- Assessment and Evaluation
- Classroom Management

## Personal Philosophy

One's personal philosophy often determines one's approach to teaching at a distance. For instance, one's philosophical beliefs usually affect one's selection of goals and curricular emphases. An instructor who believes in the philosophical arena of realism, idealism, essentialism, or perennialism might see the teacher as the central figure in the classroom, delivering knowledge and modeling to students; in other words, they may adopt a teacher-centered approach. On the other hand, teachers who adhere to the philosophical genres of pragmatism, existentialism, progressivism, constructivism, and social reconstructionism often see students as the central figures in the classroom or as equal partners in the knowledge construction process. While one's philosophy will not predict success in the distance education classroom, successful teaching at a distance should place the students' needs ahead of organizational convenience and at the center of planning and decision-making. Some of these needs can be identified during a learner analysis (as discussed in Chapter 3).

## Goals and Objectives for Instruction

As touched on in Chapter 2, clearly identifying a course's goals and objectives is a helpful place to start the planning process. A course's goals, course objectives, and even a particular lesson's objectives often should not necessarily change simply because one teaches in a distance setting. Regardless of the medium, reasonable instructional goals and objectives should form the basis for instruction. It is helpful to share goals and objectives with students, helping them understand the intent of instruction. Objectives should clearly identify what knowledge or skill learners should possess by the end of instruction, and they should ideally be aligned

to the course's assessments. Experienced online course designers often conduct some type of course mapping process to help with this planning. Table 4.1 provides one example of what a basic course map might look like.

**Table 4.1**

*Example of a Course Map to Align Course Objectives with Module / Lesson Objectives, with Assessment*

Course Objectives	Module Objective(s)	Module Activities	Module Assessment
Module #: Name of module			
Insert information	Insert information	Insert information	Insert information
Module #: Name of module			
Insert information	Insert information	Insert information	Insert information

## Lesson Presentation

After goals and objectives have been developed, the critical elements of a module or lesson need to be outlined. While the key elements of planning are essential regardless of the medium of instruction, they are even more important in distance education because they need to be identified and set up for learners before beginning instruction. Further, there are also often time requirements (e.g., learners should spend X amount of time each week on class) as well as interaction requirements (e.g., regular and substantive interaction is required in the United States for credit courses eligible for federal loans) that one must keep in mind. Timing can differ for distance education courses that rely more on synchronous vs. asynchronous communication.

## Timing with Live Synchronous Classes

With live synchronous classes, many agree that the teacher's talk should be at most 10-15 minutes and should be varied with the use of visuals and questioning. An example of a 50-minute lesson might be structured as follows:

Activity	Time
Student/teacher interaction	9:00 - 9:05
Introduction of lesson	9:05 - 9:15
Student Activity	9:15 - 9:30
Questions and discussion	9:30 - 9:45
Conclusion of lesson	9:45 - 9:50

One should also consider what learners can do before a live synchronous class (e.g., read a chapter in a textbook or work on a series of problems) to help make the most out of the time an instructor and students have together in real-time. Finally, one should always plan for things to take a little longer than expected. It is also helpful to keep notes on how well the timing went during a lesson to make adjustments to the next lesson or the next time a course is taught.

## Timing with Asynchronous Classes

In an online asynchronous course, timeframes should be flexible so students can fit their learning into their own schedules. Online asynchronous courses are usually set up in modules; a module could last anywhere from one week to two-to-three weeks, in which students have several activities (e.g., readings, discussions, projects, etc.) to complete. A calendar and even checklists that include a list of tasks (e.g., "Post your response to your group") and due dates can help keep learners on task.

## Interaction Planning

Interaction planning, as well as teaching methods in general, should be based on the characteristics of the instructor, student, content, and delivery system. Due to the increased responsibility for learning placed on the remote student, methods that focus on the learner and incorporate interactivity have been shown to be most successful. For example, according to Dede (1990), complex "content can be conveyed more readily" by "multiple representations of material (e.g., animations, text, verbal descriptions, visual images)," giving "learners many ways of understanding the fundamental concepts" (p. 14).

Contextual factors must be addressed before methods are chosen. Some suggestions:

- If it works in a regular classroom, it probably will work in electronically mediated instruction with some adjustment.
- Consider a variety of techniques but think interactively so students feel part of a learning community, sharing common goals and purpose.
- Combine techniques, a new learning environment opens the door to creative planning.
- Don't be afraid to experiment, to explore, to be creative.

Whatever strategy is adopted to actively engage students in the learning process, a method that includes modeling, reflecting, and actively involving the student and development of a community of learners should be selected (Conrad & Donaldson, 2011).

Attention to levels of interaction (i.e., between and within students, groups, and instructors) is essential. Class discussions, whether asynchronous or synchronous, take time. Further, they need to be intentionally planned and facilitated. Some suggestions for improving learner activity include:

- Make interaction expectations explicit in the course materials.
- Provide equal opportunity to access the teacher.
- Create and list groupings for class activities.
- Utilize peer learning and peer coaching.
- Stress the importance of individual differences and contributions to group efficacy.
- Place group problem-solving in an authentic context.
- Encourage both the cognitive and affective aspects of learning.
- Provide consistent, meaningful immediate feedback.
- Foster active involvement to prevent students "hiding" in distant sites.
- Show an individual on camera as he/she speaks (if possible).
- Adhere to class size recommendations and limits.

Table 4.2 provides one way instructors can plan and balance interaction in a course. And then Table 4.3 lists some more specific learning activities one might use.

**Table 4.2**

### *Time and Interaction Planning*

Activity	Time	Type of Interaction
Module #: Name		
Activity Name		Instructor - learner; learner - learner; or learner - content
Brief activity description		
Module #: Name		
Activity Name		Instructor - learner; learner - learner; or learner - content
Brief activity description		

**Table 4.3**

### *Interactive Learning Activities - Quick Tips*

Activity	Description
Buzz Sessions	Small group; short discussion; report to class
Brainstorming	Creative thinking; free association of ideas
Panel Discussion	Limited presentation followed by Q/A
Small Group Project	Each site works outside of class; presents project; Q/A
Written/Visual Scenario	Each site works on a situation, presents project; Q/A
Simulation	Present cases, problems, scenarios, etc.; students role-play; analysis and discussion about resolving the situation
Games	Competition can be between sites or students
Incomplete statements	Incomplete statements handout provided; students complete handout; thoughts shared with all sites
Character Dialog	Individual assumes role of a character; carries on class discussion
Debate	Moderated, organized, civil argument; discussion may follow
In-basket	Memos, letters, reports provided; students write responses; discuss findings
Group Work Exercise	Students given problem or situation; 10-20 minutes to solve
Site Surveys	On-site poll of opinion/values; results tallied; responses discussed
Ice Breakers	Games/techniques to reduce stress, introduce subjects or people
Questions Hotline/FAQ	Public page of questions asked and answered
Student-generated Questions	Student questions listed at the beginning of class; answered as class progresses
Alter Ego	Students take stand on relevant issue; opposites paired between sites; debate their identified point of view

## Visuals in Instruction

Educators often do not place enough emphasis on creating and using visuals in their instruction. Visual literacy refers to the ability to interpret visual messages accurately and to facilitate the creation of visuals that prevent confusion. The visual component of instruction at a distance is very important.

### Goals of visuals

Research has demonstrated that using visuals influences student learning (Bader & Lowenthal, 2018; Cohen et al., 1981). Good visual design tries to achieve at least four basic goals to improve communication between an instructor and students:

1. Legible visual information
2. Clarity of message
3. Increase learner engagement with visuals
4. Focus on the most important information

### Legible visual information

When considering legibility, it is important that all students can see or read the information easily. Using high-resolution images and visuals can help accomplish this. In a web-based environment, using a font and font size that are readable without excessive

scrolling facilitates the learners attending to the information. An HD Webcam and a document camera can also help when teaching in a synchronous format.

## Clarity of message

Using text and graphics to communicate can enhance the clarity of a message. More information can be presented using multiple visuals, such as several slides in a PowerPoint presentation, or by providing links to multiple visuals. One rule of thumb when creating PowerPoint presentations is the 6x6 rule. Making sure that there are at most six lines of text per slide and at most six words per line can improve the design of a PowerPoint slide by presenting learners with a manageable amount of text or information per slide. This can be addressed in a web-based environment by segmenting the information with targets or lines to divide the presented topics or areas. Another way of ensuring that visual information is readable in an online environment is to allow no more than one screen's length of information—that is, avoid forcing students to scroll too much so that they are not overwhelmed by the amount of visual information presented at any given time.

## Increase learner engagement with visuals

Visuals that are pleasing to look at or that are visually stimulating increase the potential for learner engagement. If students can connect what they are doing to what they are learning, they will find more value in the materials. Choosing graphics that enhance rather than distract from the message draws the learners into the visual, thus helping them use the visual information for their learning.

## Focus on the most critical information

Well-designed visuals can help students focus their attention on important information. Using techniques such as color or size can place emphasis where it is appropriate. Designing the visual to provide cues to the learner is one way a visual can help the learning process.

When using computer-prepared materials, preparing student handouts or documents that can supplement or enhance the visual information is simple. Providing students with handouts (e.g., a Word Document or Google Document) simplifies notetaking and ensures all the handouts are clearly visible.

Simply put, visuals are an essential means of presenting information to learners. Visuals can be a graphic outline of essential information for the learner. They serve as a reference for ideas. Attention to critical elements of their creation will assist students in more effectively learning the intended information.

## Designing Visuals

Decoding or interpreting visuals is affected by a visual's design elements. Seeing a graphic does not necessarily mean that one can learn from it, but a well-designed visual can assist learners in developing knowledge. We will briefly address a few elements to consider when designing visuals or any instructional materials.

### Fonts

The font style should be consistent and harmonize with other design elements. For informational purposes, a plain style is recommended. A sans serif font (such as Arial or Calibri) or a simple serif style (such as Times New Roman) should be used. Using more elaborate font styles can make it harder to read visuals.

In addition to font style, one should consider when and if to use all capital letters. Whenever using all capital letters, make sure it is only for short lines of text, such as a title. Do not use all capital letters for whole paragraphs of text, as this is difficult to read and can be interpreted as "shouting."

Letter or font size becomes less important in distance education environments. For instance, while it is better to use a larger font size and fewer words per line in PowerPoint slides presented in a face-to-face environment, in an online setting, font size is less critical, where learners can often customize the font size on their end as needed.

### Color

Color can be added to text to increase interest and ensure students find vital information. It is critical to use strong contrast (e.g., dark lettering on a light background) to improve readability. Be sure to use colors that do not compromise or distract the visibility of the visual for someone who might be colorblind. Also, be careful using animated text; it can potentially detract from the intended

message. A word of caution: use the color red sparingly; it tends to reverberate when projected onto any screen. There are contrast checker tools available online that can help (e.g., <https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/>).

## Alignment

Spacing or alignment is also essential. It is best to avoid crowding materials into a small space. Use plenty of “white space” around any visual, thus making sure that students can see particular elements. If the instructor puts too much information into too small a space, it may be difficult for students to identify what they should be looking at when viewing the visual. (See White Space is Not Your Enemy by Golombisky & Hagen for more information).

## Texture

Adding texture to a visual or using a real object that has texture works well with a document camera. A scanned image where the digitized image can be viewed from multiple points of view achieves a similar experience for learners. It is possible to focus the view to highlight specific parts of an object, showing the learners precisely what is essential to view.

## Pattern

The pattern is critical when designing good visuals. Select visual patterns that include shape, balance, and style can augment the learner’s understanding of the material. Use shapes familiar to learners for arranging the information so that they can follow the direction of the material and not be confused. For example, use a triangle to present information to learners, with the most critical information at the top and the subsets of information across the bottom.

## Balance

Create visuals with a balance that is equal weight to the parts of the visual. Learners may need help to discern the information if it is difficult to read the material because it does not visually guide the learner across the material. By enlisting balance to visuals, learners will more likely not overlook information.

Different audiences or age groups might like different styles of visuals. Instructors may need to experiment to see what types of visuals their learners prefer. For instance, they may wish to have real objects or photographs, or they may prefer graphic representations because they prefer less complex visuals.

# Preparing Students for Distance Education

Preparing students for instruction is important in any teaching mode. Still, preparing students for settings where class participants are not located in the same physical classroom is especially important. While the learning environment will ultimately determine what items need to be addressed, Table 4.4 lists a few things to consider.

**Table 4.4**

*Time and Interaction Planning - Quick Tips*

Consideration Area	Items
Attendance or Participation Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Expectations</li><li>• Access to missed material for review</li></ul>
Classroom Management & Netiquette	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Expectations</li><li>• Consequences</li></ul>
Student Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Distribution</li><li>• Collection</li><li>• Evaluation</li></ul>
Testing Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Expectations</li><li>• Make-up</li></ul>

Consideration Area	Items
Technical Difficulties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who to contact for assistance</li> <li>• Online tutorials</li> </ul>
Classroom Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to instruction (e.g., LMS, Web conferencing software)</li> <li>• Required hardware and software (e.g., webcam, microphone)</li> </ul>

Students must also realize that attending an online class is very different from a traditional in-person class. Unlike in a face-to-face in-person class where any time spent on class outside of attending “class” is considered “homework,” in a distance or online class, students are always in “homework” mode. The perception that online classes take more time is exacerbated by the fact that the usual face-to-face time is now spent in front of a computer and possibly split up over multiple days in any given week.

It is important to remember, even with everyone’s experiences learning from a distance during COVID-19, that distance education may still be new to some students and teachers. Therefore, care must be exercised in preparing students to succeed with distance and online education.

## Preparing Teachers for Distance Education

Instructors preparing to teach a distance course should remember that they are expected to help each learner succeed. Presenting a “human” side is important since instructors and students usually do not have the opportunity to meet regularly face-to-face in person. Students’ perceptions of their instructors can affect their course participation and in the end the quality of their learning experience. Table 4.5 lists some things to keep in mind when preparing teachers to teach from a distance.

**Table 4.5**

*Teacher Planning - Quick Tips*

Consideration Area	Tips
<b>TECHNIQUES OF DELIVERY</b>	
Developing social presence and maintaining rapport with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get to know students</li> <li>• Admit mistakes</li> <li>• Regularly interact with students</li> </ul>
Class Format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a course schedule</li> <li>• Balance individual and group work</li> <li>• Plan for student-student and instructor-student interaction</li> </ul>
Timing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and adhere to a predetermined schedule</li> <li>• Post announcements and reminders</li> <li>• Provide timely feedback</li> </ul>
Usability and Visual Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make course content easy to access</li> <li>• Focus on making course and instructional materials visually pleasing</li> </ul>
<b>PERSONAL QUALITIES</b>	

Consideration Area	Tips
Interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid becoming a “talking head”</li> <li>• Maintain eye contact</li> <li>• Let your personality show</li> <li>• Guide students to solve their own problems</li> <li>• Provide ongoing constructive feedback aimed at improving performance</li> <li>• Use various interactive techniques to involve the entire class, whether the course is asynchronous or synchronous.</li> </ul>
Voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not rush instruction (whether live or recorded)</li> <li>• Allow time for reflection and assimilation</li> <li>• Show interest and enthusiasm</li> </ul>
Appearance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dress professionally</li> <li>• Avoid distracting clothing; wear solid colors; avoid red</li> <li>• Avoid distracting backgrounds</li> </ul>

## Assessment and Evaluation

A well-designed learning experience has evaluation embedded into it. The two critical components of evaluation are: student assessment and design evaluation. Assessment is essential to measuring learning. Evaluation is important to future design. Explanations can provide directions for accomplishing tasks and for understanding the expectations for completing assignments. Rubrics and checklists are connected to assignments and are valuable tools in helping learners to understand their responsibilities for the learning tasks and can serve as data-gathering instruments for evaluation.

Matching learners' success with the actual objectives or standards is a way of identifying how the various tasks and events helped learners reach the outcomes. Other approaches can be incorporated into evaluation. Keeping a record of the events within each learning experience is helpful. A mid-course and/or end-of-course survey requesting feedback from students related to the course design is another means of gathering the data to use for course improvement.

The purpose of assessment and evaluation is not only to assess learner outcomes but also to evaluate both the instructor and the learning platforms' effectiveness.

## Assessing Students

To begin the assessment process, instructors must consider the intended learning outcomes identified when planning the instruction. Some advocate to design assessments at the time goals and objectives are being prepared (which is sometimes called backwards design). Others feel this stifles the creative process for the design and implementation of instruction. What is important here is the return to the intended outcomes. To design good assessments, one needs to determine what needs to be measured and how to best go about that process.

## Formative assessment

The assessment process has several formats. In the more formal assessment venue, daily quizzes or unit tests can serve as gauges of progress. Less formally, online discussions and questioning within a live synchronous class session give an instructor an idea of how well the students are progressing within the context of a unit of instruction (Simonson et al., 2019). This formative assessment process allows the instructor to understand how well students are doing with the content. Further, especially for those returning to an educational setting after a long period of working, this formative assessment allows individual students to conclude how well they are doing within the context of a formalized class. Often, they feel much better knowing how much they have learned in smaller steps rather than waiting until an end-of-term test or formal paper or project.

Another benefit of more frequent assessments is that instructors can rely on multiple assessment procedures. By providing students with several different ways of demonstrating their knowledge and skills, students can overcome any problems associated



with a particular assessment tool (Savenye, 2004). Students like having the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding and use various assessment tools. Thus, formative assessment is a valuable tool for both the instructor and the student.

## Summative assessment

End-of-unit or end-of-semester testing or projects assess students' overall understanding of the content as a whole. It allows the instructor to revisit areas of the content addressed earlier in the term and help students draw upon their knowledge to generate a complete understanding of the content.

## Online assessments

Technology can support many different types of assessments. The primary issue is how error-critical the information is for students. If students must demonstrate specific skills or sets of knowledge, there may be a better approach than using an online format for testing. The instructor needs to consider the students' experience in terms of assessment procedures and technology. A student unfamiliar with multiple-choice formats for testing may be uncomfortable with an online test. However, this same student can learn to overcome those feelings when provided "practice" taking an online test. It is the instructor's responsibility to be sure that any assessment procedure is familiar to the students and that when using technology, the students can easily access and complete the assessment.

A significant advantage of using technology to administer traditional assessments (e.g., multiple-choice, short-answer, etc.) is that certain limitations can be imposed. For example, one way to control cheating, a concern of instructors, is to have a timed test. Limiting the time necessary for a student to take a test makes it less likely that students will try to use resources or materials to help select responses. It is possible to have more items in a test bank, thus ensuring that there are random items, thus making it more difficult for two students to have the same test in the same order. An instructor can limit the test access options (e.g., no preview option, no printing option, etc.). There are many ways in which a traditional test can be administered electronically and still maintain the integrity of the testing situation. There are now online proctoring tools and plagiarism tools instructors can use, such as SafeAssign, Turnitin.com, or general technology such as screen sharing or video. However, keep in mind that educators increasingly criticize some of these tools for violating student privacy or highlighting problems with traditional forms of assessment.

## Alternative assessments

Alternative assessment formats used in the traditional instructional setting can be adapted easily to a distance learning environment (Simonson et al., 2019). When using alternative assessment formats, it is essential to consider the resources and access available for students. Can they obtain the materials they will need to prepare the product that will demonstrate their learning? Further, technology can be used to prepare and submit these types of alternative assessment devices. For example, students can prepare web pages with their materials. Or they can create a portfolio using Google Drive or Dropbox, or a website tool like Google Sites. As with traditional testing approaches, instructors need to be sure that their students have experience and sufficient practice before using a new tool for any high-stakes testing.

## Evaluation of Class Effectiveness

Distance education aims to evaluate technology as an effective way to provide a learning experience. There must be more than assessing learner outcomes to declare distance learning effective. Online educators should consider conducting self-evaluations and having their students complete end-of-course evaluations. Three important things to consider when evaluating online or distance courses are the instruction, the course content, and the technology.

### Instruction

Teacher self-evaluations should be both formative and summative. Formative evaluations are conducted during the course of instruction, ranging from daily reflection to a more formal periodic assessment. Summative evaluations are conducted to draw conclusions about course effectiveness. These evaluations will result in the enhancement of the quality of learning.

In the formative evaluation process, two questions need to be considered. The first relates to reflection on the action or activity that occurred: "Is this working?" (Schön, 1987, p. 125). To evaluate effectiveness, distance educators need to consider what has happened within the instructional event. All experiences, both those considered to be positive or negative, have some element of surprise. It may be that expectations were achieved; it may be a serendipitous event that led to another altogether different, albeit pleasant, outcome. Whatever the nature of the event, it is essential to reflect upon what has happened.

Reflection may take the form of a critical assessment of the events, satisfying curiosity about the nature of those events. It may consider the success of the learning situation. Reflection brings the teacher into a state of knowing about the learning event. It is now possible to move into the second question of the formative evaluation process, considering how to improve the situation.

The second question is, "How can I improve this?" The instructor needs to examine the instructional event in terms of what worked and what appears to have been a problem. The second phase of the formative evaluation is concerned with helping the teacher ensure a more successful educational experience for students. The teacher needs to consider issues such as the learning task, the instructional materials, and the teaching strategies and where the technology may play a role in the instruction.

When examining effective instruction, it is essential to look at how the technology impacted the delivery of instruction. The teacher must consider the hardware elements and their effect on the students. If a problem occurs with the lesson because of the system's hardware components, what is the nature of the problem? Was the problem a temporary issue? Can the hardware be improved? Can things be done to the interactive instructional resources to aid instruction in the future?

If the problem does not relate to the hardware, then what was the problem? Perhaps the students need to be better informed about how to use the equipment. It may be that students needed preparation for the lesson. Perhaps the teacher may need to prepare other types of handouts manipulatives, or orientation videos to ensure students can accomplish the tasks. The instructor may need to select an alternative teaching strategy to improve interactivity and student outcomes.

Because many different factors affect the interactive learning environment, reflective teaching practices play an even more significant role in developing effective teaching practices. To consider what has transpired and how to change it creates a dynamic educational experience for both the teacher and the learners. Formative evaluation is essential for successful interactive instructional experiences.

Summative evaluation is an overall judgment at the end of the course. The teacher reflects on how well the instructional experience went. Considerations about teaching strategies, types of materials, and assessment are among those things a teacher needs to consider for determining the instruction's success. A summative evaluation provides closure to the instruction and a basis upon which to build when offering a course through distance education in the future.

## Course Content

Evaluation is a critical part of any curriculum. Distance educators need to examine the content, sequence, and lesson design to ensure that the content aligns with the larger curriculum. In any distance learning environment, one particular issue, time constraints, makes it necessary to examine the essential elements of the course content closely. The instructor must balance content with limited time for learning activities and remove extraneous nonessential information.

Sequencing of information also needs examination. Several variables, characteristics of the learners, the essence of the content, time, and the number of students in various locations, are all critical when deciding the order of presentation. Because the instructor and some or all of the class are separated, the material must be sequenced logically.

Students can provide insight into the design of lessons. Students can give feedback on lesson design and instruction delivery. The instructor can examine the information from all students involved in a distance class to determine if the presentation mode was effective for everyone. Evaluating these responses gives the teacher the learners' perception of the content.

## Technology

Assessing the use of technologies in a distant setting is essential. In any distance learning environment, technology becomes the most critical concern for the instructor. The teacher must be familiar with the hardware and the nuances of the technology to use it effectively. Once the technology becomes transparent in the learning setting, the instructor can reflect on the lesson quality and outcomes and plan for subsequent lessons.

The instructor must consider several elements when teaching in a distance learning mode. First are the basic operations of the equipment. In an online course, the instructor needs to be familiar with the software used to deliver the course and be able to help students troubleshoot when they cannot access the resources or course materials. Further, the instructor must ensure that the distant student has the hardware and software resources to access the course materials without undue burden. The teacher needs to know the processes for communicating with all students and to ensure that the course runs smoothly, keeping the technological issues to a few unanticipated problems.

Evaluating the equipment should be ongoing throughout the lessons. The instructor must be aware of the consequences of any technology choices made in the lesson. The types of interactivity possible within the lesson are another consideration. Upon

completing the lesson, the teacher should assess the quality of the lesson in terms of the types of experiences provided and how different these experiences might have been from other choices in the types of technologies used.

Finally, the teacher must be prepared with alternatives for each lesson in case of problems. What will the students do during the lesson if the technology is not operating correctly? The teacher and students must be prepared for times when the entire platform is not working correctly. Preplanned contingencies should continue the learning process even though the technology is malfunctioning. Alternative lessons must always be ready, but hopefully never needed. Students need to be able to move into the subsequent phases of the learning process while maintaining time and patience with the course. Organizing the alternatives for learning as backup or contingent on system failures is critical. Students need to understand that they are expected to participate in the planned activities, not to withdraw from them using technology as an excuse not to participate. If the technology is operating appropriately, students should be expected to use the original plan for the learning event.

But, sometimes, there are problems. For example, if you have a Zoom session set for a specific time, but students are unable to log in, or Zoom isn't working, make sure your students know ahead of time your alternative plan (e.g., a backup platform or watch their email for a message from you). Remind.com is one tool that allows the instructor to text the entire class (provided they signed up ahead of time; we suggest doing this on day one) without the students knowing the instructor's private cell phone number. <https://www.remind.com/> Remind has two-way communication, and the free version currently lets you have up to 10 classes at a time. Another possible backup plan to an LMS is to store files in Google Drive; you could share them with the students just by sharing a folder. You could then use other Google tools to discuss, write documents, or other interactive activities with your students. Whatever you choose as your backup plan, make sure it is in place at the beginning of the course, and your students know what it is, so it is ready when you need it.

**Table 4.6**

*Sample Teaching Evaluation Form*

**Please use the following scale to critique the lesson:**

**1=Not Applicable; 2=Needs Improvement; 3=Average; 4=Very Good; 5=Excellent**

#### **Design**

1. Developed content [1 2 3 4 5]
2. Prepared instructional materials [1 2 3 4 5]
3. Encouraged student participation [1 2 3 4 5]
4. Enhanced retention and transfer [1 2 3 4 5]
5. Provided assessment criteria [1 2 3 4 5]

#### **Implementation**

1. Used effective teaching strategies [1 2 3 4 5]
2. Gained the attention of the learner [1 2 3 4 5]
3. Informed the learners of the objective(s) [1 2 3 4 5]
4. Connected to prior learning [1 2 3 4 5]
5. Asked probing questions [1 2 3 4 5]
6. Provided for learner interactivity [1 2 3 4 5]
7. Checked for understanding [1 2 3 4 5]
8. Summarized the lesson [1 2 3 4 5]

#### **Assessment/Evaluation**

1. Provided verbal and/or written feedback [1 2 3 4 5]
2. Offered timely feedback [1 2 3 4 5]
3. Used effective assessment techniques [1 2 3 4 5]
4. Solicited student feedback to ensure learning [1 2 3 4 5]
5. Used assessment data for evaluation [1 2 3 4 5]
6. Frequent reflection on instructional effectiveness [1 2 3 4 5]

#### **Personal**

**Please use the following scale to critique the lesson:**

**1=Not Applicable; 2=Needs Improvement; 3=Average; 4=Very Good; 5=Excellent**

1. Kept within the time frame [1 2 3 4 5]
2. Created a positive learning setting [1 2 3 4 5]
3. Balanced interaction among participants [1 2 3 4 5]
4. Created good rapport with students [1 2 3 4 5]
5. Used good "listening" techniques [1 2 3 4 5]

#### **Technology**

1. Used a variety of media effectively [1 2 3 4 5]
2. Provided visualization of lesson content [1 2 3 4 5]
3. Operated the equipment with ease [1 2 3 4 5]

## **Classroom Management**

Poor classroom management can inhibit the best-planned instruction. Classroom management involves establishing an environment in which learning can occur. Educators make decisions related to the organization and structure of any class, as well as how to manage or handle situations when things don't go well. In the distance setting, the issue of classroom management becomes an even more critical issue to address because of the separation of instructor and students.

What is effective class management? Merriam Webster's Dictionary (2020) defined it as: "(1a) control gained by enforcing obedience or order," and "(5) a rule or system of rules governing conduct or activity." These varying definitions illustrate the divergent views on the topic. However, elements of good disciplinary techniques are often viewed as necessary strategies for managing any class. For example, establishing guidelines for appropriate responses, routines, and expectations, as well as timelines and due dates, will help to facilitate the management of the class (Starko et al., 2003).

Proactive strategies imply anticipating situations and planning appropriate measures to avoid situations rather than assuming a reactive approach to class discipline issues (Starko et al., 2003). When taking the time to consider the types of students who enroll in the course, an instructor can design the instructional strategies and the appropriate response patterns to ensure that the course will move along smoothly.

People are different, settings are different, and both are constantly changing. Class management procedures that effectively outline student performance need to reflect those differences. One set of procedures cannot always be effective. The more the instructor knows about the learners prior to beginning instruction, the more likely he or she will be in selecting appropriate class management techniques. This information can be gathered through discussions with prior instructors or pre-course questionnaires.

**Table 4.7**

*Management Guidelines - Quick Tips*

1. Work with students to establish class rules.
2. Prepare a few rules prior to meeting students.
3. Keep the list of rules limited in number and scope.
4. Establish and maintain class routines.
5. Maintain a sense of humor.
6. Learn about the members of the class.
7. Learn the policies of other institutions if they are involved.
8. Use video when possible.
9. Privately address concerns to individuals.
10. Be yourself.
11. Use reasonable requests.
12. Vary class activities.
13. Avoid over-generalizing responses.
14. Be cautious about using sarcasm.
15. Be a positive, active model.
16. Be aware of personality conflicts.
17. Recognize students who are having problems and contact them individually.
18. Be aware of differences among the students.
19. Be cautious of expectations at sites when you don't have enough information.
20. Spend time anticipating issues and plan for them.

## Additional Reading and Resources

<https://roomtodiscover.com/online-classroom-management/>

<https://www.teachthought.com/pedagogy/online-classroom-management/>

<https://www.edutopia.org/article/extending-classroom-management-online>

[https://journals.lww.com/nursingmadeincrediblyeasy/fulltext/2016/07000/online\\_class\\_teaching\\_tips.2.aspx](https://journals.lww.com/nursingmadeincrediblyeasy/fulltext/2016/07000/online_class_teaching_tips.2.aspx)

## Chapter Summary

In this chapter, you learned about the multifaceted process of designing interactive distance education. You specifically learned more about things such as the importance of developing goals and objectives for instruction, preparing students for learning, and the role of formative and summative assessment and evaluation. In the next chapter, you will learn more about distance education learning environments.





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