

Best Practices for Quick Transition to Teaching Online

1. Maintain community with your class: Communicate!

- a. If you haven't already, reach out to your students (preferably through Blackboard email) to check in and reassure them. You don't have to have everything figured out yet but they'll feel better knowing that you're working on a plan. We will share a template you can modify for this initial communication.
- b. Ask your students to let you know about their Internet access, what kind of electronic device they have, what time zone they're in and whether they have any specific concerns to share with you (confidentially) about online learning. This information will be important as you figure out a realistic synchronous class schedule. Pay particular attention to students with disabilities and accommodations and see the recommendations from the Office of Disability Services.
- c. Make sure students are aware of best practices for learning online (this will be on the student resource page as well as faculty Keep Teaching page; Student Affairs is also working on a guide to help Bentley students be successful online learners during this unusual time).
- d. Have fun! For example, during this period ask students to send their favorite emoji of how they are feeling or some fun (non- explicit) memes about learning online.
- e. Positive reinforcement is extra important for students as they adapt: Remember to communicate frequently with your class (more frequently than you would during a typical semester) and make an effort to strike an encouraging, caring tone.
- f. Create a human connection with your students. For example, you may offer virtual "Coffee Breaks" where you'll be on Zoom and students can drop in.

2. Pivoting to Online: Adjusting Your Course to an Online Format

- a. Prioritize the learning goals for the course and assignments so you can tailor appropriately given the new limitations.
- b. Prepare one structured class outline and use it throughout this period. For example, start class with a poll, have a brief discussion, move into small, collaborative breakout groups, and come back together to discuss as a larger group. If you follow the same pattern for a few classes, students will settle into a routine and begin to focus on the learning outcomes.
- c. Be as supportive and flexible with students as possible while maintaining the appropriate academic rigor of your course.
- d. Ask for feedback from students on their learning experience and solicit suggestions on what to keep doing or what to change.

3. First Day of Online Class: Keep it Simple!

- a. Create a welcoming environment that maintains the community you've already created in your class. Be honest with your students about your own level of experience with online teaching and let them know that you'll be learning too. Although you may have doubts or

concerns about teaching in this format, it's important that we model positivity, resilience and adaptability for our students.

- b. Get students comfortable with participating on line immediately by having them practice (e.g., ask everyone to say hello, their physical location, and whether they've taken a course online before).
- c. Go over the remaining syllabus with students and help them understand what adaptations will be made and how they will receive feedback on their work during this period. Be clear with your students about your expectations during this period: attendance (including accommodations for those who have technology limitations), class participation (again, recognizing that not all students have equal access to technology), and class assignments.
- d. Ask your students to reflect silently and then perhaps talk with each other or you about questions such as: what their own goals are in this course, what is one thing they think will be hard about online learning, and a strength they bring to this situation (e.g. from their top 5 strengths in StrengthsFinder! The vast majority of Bentley students have taken the StrengthsFinder assessment by now).
- e. If you want to take this further, you can assign them to link that reflection to a concrete plan for how they will go about accomplishing their goals in this course for the remainder of the semester. This could be something you'll ask them to submit before the next class meeting.

4. Subsequent Online Class Sessions

- a. Keep students engaged: Tell them you will call on them during class and expect them to respond. Consider a live discussion board you can moderate with speech if students are apprehensive to respond verbally.
- b. Consider managing large discussion with the use of breakout rooms for smaller discussion groups that can then report back to the class.
- c. Recap learning at the end of every class or via an email of key take-aways or a short follow up video of yourself. This can also include a summary of what is coming in the next class.
- d. Pair up with another faculty member. One professor talks while the other monitors questions in the chat function like a TA would do – and then throws up a polling question (easy to do in Zoom) and then the other one picks up the lecture/discussion for a while.

5. Stay in touch with your campus resources!

- a. If you are looking for more ideas or wondering how to adapt a specific classroom activity to an online environment, reach out to campus resources. You might contact your department chair or other departmental colleagues, the [Badavas Center for Innovation in Teaching and Learning](#), the [Bentley Learning and Teaching Council](#) or the [Academic Technology Center](#).

Note: This is a collection of suggestions from various resources and colleagues. Specific citations are not included but acknowledged.