

Using an Online Classroom

1. Explore the system thoroughly

To get the most out of the online classroom, you need to know exactly what features the system offers for facilitating learning and for managing the session and its participants.

2. Ask a more experienced colleague to co-moderate a session or two with you

For extra support, why not ask a more experienced colleague to assist with the technical elements of the session, a 'button buddy' or ask them to participate in a practice session.

3. Prepare a specific session delivery strategy

To capitalise on the opportunities of an online classroom environment, an appropriate delivery strategy needs to be developed. Think about the course content and the features of the system and then build a strategy that is specifically designed for online learning.

4. Start Simple

Flashy bells and whistles do not necessarily improve learning. In fact, if learning objects are too complex or they do not work as expected, students will soon become frustrated and disengaged. Keep it simple and appropriate to the task at hand and build up as your confidence grows.

5. Assist students to succeed

Develop a short 'how to guide' which covers the basics of session access, pre-session preparation, troubleshooting and where students go for help. Display this information in a prominent place, such as the Moodle course page.

6. Allow sufficient preparation time

Allocate time in the first session to familiarise students with the interface, its key features, ground rules for use and most importantly how to engage with session content and with each other.

7. Mix the session up

To increase student engagement, break the session up with activities that require student participation. For example ask students to answer a quiz, complete small group tasks or brainstorm ideas on the interactive whiteboard.

8. See the session as they do

Having a second computer logged in as a participant will allow you to monitor for example, the flow of the session, any issues with content download or transfer and allow you make necessary adjustment to maximise the learning experience.

9. Monitor individual participation

It is important that each student is afforded a voice in the session. Monitor the participant box and chat areas and if necessary draw students into the session.

10. Capture the 'Key Points' of a session

Capturing the key points of a session, for example in the text chat area, can be useful for both monitoring student understanding and for future study purpose. Preface the text with a pre-arranged convention such as 'KP' and ask students to type short succinct messages that summarise discussion.