

# T4T

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## Tools for Teaching

### Facilitating Online Learning

#### What is Online Facilitation?

You're about to teach an online course. What are some facilitation techniques you can expect to use to make this experience easier on yourself and your learners? And what is your role as an online facilitator?

Simply put, facilitation is the process of enabling a group to accomplish its goals. This means ensuring the online experience of all participants is one of enriched learning, optimized by high levels of interaction and collaboration. In a nutshell, your job is to make it easier for a group to do its work by maintaining a healthy online community. This Tip Sheet will look at some of the skills and strategies you can use to succeed as an online facilitator.

#### What are Some Useful Facilitation Strategies?

The White and Weight (2000) WRITE model of online communication offers some useful guidance:

- W**armth: Help learners connect to you as a person by describing who you are in introductory information, sharing stories, conveying a range of emotions in written text, and using lots of examples in describing important concepts.
- R**esponsiveness: Decrease learner stress by setting manageable deadlines, being timely and consistent with feedback, setting up a regular rhythm of communication, and providing occasional reminders of upcoming topics and deadlines.
- I**nquisitiveness: Enhance learner engagement and active problem solving by asking questions rather than providing direct answers.
- T**entativeness: Ask questions framed in a non-aggressive manner to reduce defensiveness.
- E**mpathy: Increases cohesiveness by consider the situation of the learners and cutting them some slack from time to time.





## Any Other Tips on Facilitating Online?

- Establish clear participation guidelines that participants discuss and agree to support.
- Let learners know when you will be available (virtual office hours).
- Be clear about how participation will be evaluated and how it figures into the grading scheme for the class if appropriate.
- Be clear about how much time is involved in participation.
- Be a good role model by being visible on at least a daily basis.
- Be willing to step in and set limits if participation is waning or is heading in the wrong direction.
- Be willing to make phone calls or emails to people who are not participating to ask why and to draw them back in.
- Appeal to learners' life experiences, vested interests and ambitions.
- Be careful with your wording when giving feedback as critical comments appear more harsh when written down compared to when these comments are provided verbally.
- Direct all content discussions through the course website but use e-mail or phone to talk to learners about personal issues.
- Ask learners for feedback halfway through the course. You can ask them what is working, what is not, and how you might better meet their needs.



## Any Other Tips on Facilitating Online?

Addesso, P. (2000). Online facilitation: individual and group possibilities. In White, K. and Weight, B.H. (ed.) *The Online Teaching Guide: A Handbook of Attitudes, Strategies, and Techniques for the Virtual Classroom*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon, pp. 112-123.

CTET's *Facilitating Courses* site. <http://learn.royalroads.ca/CTET/academic/facilitating.htm>.

On this website, you will find:

- Information about the [RRU Teaching Philosophy](#)
- Tips for [Online Facilitation](#)
- Tips on [Resolving Team Conflict](#)
- Instructional strategies to help you create [meaningful dialogue](#)

CTET's Learning Opportunities site.

[http://learn.royalroads.ca/CTET/academic/learning\\_opps.htm](http://learn.royalroads.ca/CTET/academic/learning_opps.htm)

On this website, you will find tutorials, workshops, and more!

Hamilton, D. N. (2008). Towards a Scholarship of Teaching, Learning and Leadership . *Transformative Dialogues*, 2 (1).

Smolenski-Nelson, C. (2004). [Teaching Online: How NOT To Get Overwhelmed](#). Retrieved Sept. 28, 2008.

White, K.W. & Weight, B.H. (2000). *The Online Teaching Guide: A Handbook of Attitudes, Strategies, and Techniques for the Virtual Classroom*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.