

Course Technology

In all likelihood, the technologies involved in your course will be determined by the LMS. These require a considerable period of adjustment before we become proficient users. We've probably all experienced the frustration of getting used to a new computer operating system or having a software upgrade disrupt our interaction with a familiar program. At first, it's awkward and takes a great deal of thought and exploration before we find our comfort level again.

The same is true in online teaching. You won't know where to find things, how to post them, or how to navigate the course until you've used it for a while. Your students will also experience the same frustration. Be patient with yourself and with your students. Many LMS providers embed tutorials of how to use the system, which both you and your students should access to familiarize yourselves with the online learning environment.

Make sure you keep the email address and phone number for tech support handy and provide these to your students in an email or document that they can access even if they're locked out of the online classroom. After all, the time you really need tech support is when you can't use your tech, so posting contact information only in the online classroom can be counterproductive.

You might also want to create and share a map of where to find the information students might be looking for. When students email me with questions about where to find things, I'll take a screenshot of the item open on my computer, annotating the path of how to arrive at the specific location and email this along with a detailed response to the question.

Technology is wonderful unless we can't make it work for one reason or another. Then we sometimes want to throw the laptop out the window. Our students feel the same. If we plan for these occasional frustrations, we're better prepared to handle them successfully.