

Title

Online Facilitator Training I: Mastering the Skills of Online Teaching

Target Audience

This course is intended for K-12 classroom teachers, university faculty, or pre-service teachers who are preparing to facilitate online courses.

Prerequisites

To successfully participate and complete the assignments in this course, the learner must:

- Have past experience using a computer.
- Have past experience working with the Internet, including opening and navigating between multiple browser windows.
- Be familiar with taking an online course or have completed the PBS "Practice Learning Online with TeacherLine" course.
- Be comfortable sharing thoughts and experiences through text.
- Be a self-directed learner, able to schedule time to meet deadlines, and willing to ask for help with technology or course assignments, when needed.

Course Description

Online facilitators take on many important roles and, thus, wear different managerial, technical, social, and pedagogical hats. Effective facilitators must know how to provide formative feedback, offer technical guidance, foster community, and communicate "from the side" in a way that encourages learners to construct knowledge together. This course will formally introduce you to those roles and provide you with the opportunity to try on and practice wearing several of these hats. Through research-based articles and readings, discussions, collaborative projects, and other interactive experiences, you will have multiple opportunities to build and master online facilitation skills. A simulation environment ("Facilitator Training Lab") will give you an opportunity to practice specific facilitator skills. To synthesize all your learning, you will create a case study based on the experiences of a hypothetical online facilitator as your final project.

Instructor/Facilitator

To be determined.

Credits

To be determined by college or university.

Goals

Participants in this course will learn about the many roles of the online course facilitator and experience wearing several different facilitator "hats." They will conduct research to find Web resources for online course facilitation. In addition, they will practice skills in the Facilitator



Training Lab. Finally, learners will produce a case study, which will allow them to synthesize course experiences.

By the end of this course, learners will understand and be able to use the following when facilitating an online course:

- Techniques for deepening online discussion.
- Techniques for online, text-based communication.
- Strategies to foster online community building and collaborative learning.
- Strategies for delivering effective, formative online assessment.
- PBS TeacherLine's course facilitation and administration policies.
- Strategies for evaluating Web-based resources.

Outline of Content and Assignments

After previewing the documents in the Course Information area, learners will proceed to Course Content to complete the following six sessions, working through each session in order. Throughout the sessions, learners are asked to articulate their ideas in various forms: they are encouraged to reflect on their ideas and experiences in their online journal; the discussions in the discussion forum are designed to allow learners to glean information from other learners' experiences. As a final project, learners will review the case study methodology in order to conduct an analysis of a case, identifying both strengths and weaknesses.

This course was co-developed with the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), and meets the following National Education Technology Standards (NETS) for Teachers: IA, II B, IIC, IIIB, IIIC, IIID, IVA, IVC. These standards define the fundamental concepts, knowledge, skills, and attitudes for applying technology in educational settings.

Visit http://cnets.iste.org/teachers/t_stands.html for a full list of the ISTE's *Educational Technology Standards and Performance Indicators for All Teachers* and more information about these standards.

Session 1: Models of Online Learning

In this first session, learners will investigate models of online courses and the role of online courses in teacher professional development. As a future facilitator of an online course, learners will assist other teachers in their professional growth. What resources are available on the Web for online teaching and learning? What is the role of the facilitator in shaping the learning experience? Learners will look at these questions throughout the course as they try on the many hats of an online facilitator.

Because community building is an important starting place for many online course models, learners will participate in introductory assignments designed to foster community.

Learners will:

- Define their professional goals and expectations for this course in the online journal.
- Explain their prior knowledge and experiences with online learning and teaching.
- Apply a particular online voice to achieve a goal.
- Identify types of online learning and their role in teacher professional development.
- Describe how online courses make use of Web resources.

Read

- "Toward a theory of online learning"
- "The Case Method in Teacher Education: Alaskan Models"

Participate in an online discussion

- Introduce themselves to other learners in a "Get to Know Each Other" forum.
- Discuss types of online learning, including elements that learners recognize from face-to-face classrooms.

Complete assignments and activities

- Field trip to course samples

Write in online journal

- Reflect on expectations for the course.
- Reflect on prior experiences using online communication and collaboration tools and activities.
- Reflect on what they liked, disliked, or were surprised about in the sample courses.

Session 2: Facilitating a Course Designed by Others

In this session, learners will examine the pros and cons of facilitating a course developed by others. In online courses, the facilitator must be knowledgeable in appropriate online facilitating techniques in order to provide a meaningful course experience for learners. One appropriate technique, which learners will practice, is the ability to ask thought-provoking questions that elicit rich discussions. Learners will use a simulation environment ("Facilitator Training Lab") to complete particular skills.

Learners will:

- Compose a professional introduction as means to building community.
- Employ full spectrum questioning techniques within learners' dialogue.
- Create a discussion forum and topic.
- Analyze implications of teaching a course designed by another person or team.

Read

- "Full Spectrum Questioning for Critical Thinking"
- "Teaching Courses Developed by Others"
- Final Project Case: Sheryl's Story

Participate in an online discussion

- Discuss how a facilitator can personalize a course.

Complete assignments and activities

- Facilitator Introduction
- Scavenger Hunt
- Full Spectrum Questioning in Facilitator Training Lab

Session 3: The Facilitator's Many Hats

In this session, learners continue to reflect on additional roles—the many "hats"—of the online facilitator, including pedagogical, managerial, social, and technical roles. In each role, communication is key and facilitators must employ different writing styles. Learners will practice one specific facilitator post, the landscape, which serves to sketch the online dialogue without summarizing it.

Learners will:

- Describe and discuss the roles of the online facilitator.
- Craft a facilitator intervention, employing a specific technique.
- Evaluate a colleague's post using a rubric.
- Identify strengths and weaknesses of an online facilitator in a sample case study.

Read

- "Key Facilitator Roles"
- "Why Don't Face-to-Face Teaching Strategies Work In the Virtual Classroom? How to Avoid the 'Question Mill'"

Participate in an online discussion

- Discuss the roles of the online facilitator in the Facilitator Training Lab.

Write in online journal

- Reflect on which facilitator role feels the most intimidating/most rewarding.

Complete assignments and activities

- Landscape post
- Peer review one landscape post
- Strengths and weaknesses table: Final Project Part I

Session 4: Communication and Collaboration

Learners continue to focus on the importance of facilitator communication and reflect on tones of voice in online writing. Facilitators also routinely communicate with learners through course announcements, which learners will practice in the Facilitator Training Lab. Finally, learners consider the role of collaboration in online courses as they participate in a two-part collaborative project with their co-learners.

Learners will:

- Apply particular tones of voice to online writing.
- Analyze the role of online facilitator in encouraging collaborative learning.
- Collaborate with others to create a list of resources.
- Evaluate Web-based resources.
- Create an effective announcement.

Read

- "Tone"
- "BE VOCAL: Characteristics of Successful Online Instructors"

- "Successful Online Discussion and Collaboration: Techniques for Facilitation"
- "Tips to Evaluate Internet Resources"

Complete assignments and activities

- Revise the Landscape Post in a different voice(optional)
- Webliography Project, Parts I and II in Facilitator Training Lab
- Post Announcement in Facilitator Training Lab

View interactives

- Tones of Voice
- WRITE Way – Five key qualities of online communication

Participate in an online discussion

- Share thoughts on the WRITE and VOCAL strategies for communication.

Session 5: Grading and Providing Feedback

In this session, learners look at the role of the facilitator in assessing learners. Learners will have the opportunity to try on another "hat" of the online facilitator and experiment with the grading tool in the Facilitator Training Lab. They will also complete the collaborative activity they started in the previous session.

Learners will:

- Describe and discuss rubrics for assessing online collaboration
- Reflect on the value of formative feedback
- Evaluate a sample learner post and provide a rationale
- Identify PBS TeacherLine Procedures and Policies.
- Create a Webliography

Read

- "Assessment and Collaboration in Online Learning"
- PBS TeacherLine Facilitator Handbook

Complete assignments and activities

- Grade and Rationale Post
- Grades Tool in Facilitator Training Lab
- Webliography Project, Part III in Facilitator Training Lab

Participate in an online discussion

- Discuss how PBS TeacherLine's discussion rubric encourages collaboration and in-depth discussions.

Write in online journal

- Reflect on what it was like to get feedback from a facilitator and from a co-learner.

Session 6: Changing Hats: from Learner to Facilitator



This final session will provide learners with the skills necessary to change hats one last time: from a learner in this course to a facilitator in a future online course with virtual learners of their own. Learners will pull together all the concepts they have learned during the course through the completion of the final project.

Learners will:

- Analyze the strengths and weaknesses of an online facilitator in a sample case study.
- Document and evaluate their personal growth and knowledge about online learning and teaching in light of a sample case study.
- Discuss the world of the virtual learner from both research perspective and personal experience.
- Assess their learning in this course by comparing their prior knowledge and acquired knowledge.
- Analyze the learning experience in this course by reflecting on their professional goals and expectations.

Read

- "Working with the Virtual Student"

Complete assignments and activities

- Get Your Wings
- Case Study: Final Project Part II
- Written Reflection Paper: Final Project Part III
- Collect Resources
- Complete course Evaluation Survey

Participate in an online discussion

- Share ideas concerning teaching learners how to learn in online environments.

Write in online journal

- Reflect on acquired knowledge.
- Reflect on professional goals and expectations.

Schedule

It will take about 45 hours to complete this course. Each session should take approximately 5-8 hours.

Requirements

Learners are expected to:

- Complete all assignments by their deadlines.
- Maintain an online journal.
- Participate and actively engage in discussions with fellow learners while contributing to the social construction of knowledge.
- Collaborate on team projects.
- Practice skills in a Facilitator Training Lab.
- Submit a final project.
- Be self-directed and self-motivated.
- Ask for assistance when they need it.

Materials (hardware, software, plug-ins)

Technical Requirements

- Word processor
- Internet service provider
- E-mail
- Adobe Reader (free download at <http://www.adobe.com>)

Standards of Academic Integrity

The standards are listed online at:

http://teacherline.pbs.org/teacherline/help/help_template3.cfm?subID=197

Evaluation

This course is evaluated on a letter grade basis, and may be available for graduate credit. See graduate credit details pertaining to specific graduate credit institutions.