

Top Three Tips of Communicating with Your Students While Teaching Remotely

Shifting unexpectedly to remote instruction requires as many human solutions as technology solutions. Here are some tips on how to communicate with your students while teaching remotely:

1. Be kind. Extra, extra kind.

Be kind in your communication to students. They are all in some degree of shock. They might not be able to easily follow directions. They might need extra help in basic problem solving, or they may act emotionally.

Be kind in your communication to colleagues. Nearly everyone who works on a college campus right now is facing a world of pain, uncertainty, and difficulty. Understand that colleagues can be showing stress responses, and be kind about that.

People are working long hours and having to “lead” in a situation that is evolving quickly and for which most of us have made few or no preparations. Folks are scrambling behind the scenes to make the lives of students and instructors as workable as possible under such unusual circumstances. Show kindness and appreciation for that.

2. Be precise.

Avoid saying we’re “going online.” Instead, say “we’re moving to remote teaching.”

Tell students exactly, step by step, what you want them to do. People under stress can need extra direct and concrete step-by-step guidance.

Don't get pulled into trying to find resources to design a proper online class that meets online pedagogical standards; students and instructors will not find this helpful in the current situation (though it may provide you with some good and useful information). Use the college's resources.

3. Be clear.

Indicate to students ahead of time (if possible) how you intend to communicate.

Explain how you expect students to contact you, the time frame when they can expect responses, and the availability and preferred format for office hours and individual student support requests.

Adapted from:

“Keep Calm and Keep Teaching” by Jody Greene:

<https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2020/03/17/shifting-unexpectedly-remote-instruction-requires-many-human-solutions-tech>

“Resources and Strategies for Teaching Remotely” by the University of Pennsylvania Center for Teaching and Learning: <https://wwwctl.upenn.edu/resources-and-strategies-teaching-remotely>