

CONVEYING CONTENT in remote/online settings

IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS

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This material has been created to provide teachers at all levels with a resource to inform the design of aspects of their conveying content online to students. While some of the insights and considerations included in this document are specific to remote/ online settings, most are more general and applicable to face-to-face learning contexts as well.

Please note that the considerations and options identified here are not intended to be comprehensive, but rather are offered as a starting point. Therefore, we invite you to “personalize” the analysis provided here by adding your own insights as well as eliminating options less relevant to you and substituting them with new ones you may have identified as more valuable for your context. You can capture these changes by downloading and editing this Word file – as this is an open source document you are allowed to use and modify, provided you cite its original source.

The best way to get better at this practice, though, is to reflect on the decisions you make when implementing it and their implications. To help you keep track of and reflect on your instructional decisions when “Conveying Content Online”, on our webpage you can find a template to structure a Reflective Journal specific to this practice.

Introduction

You can save precious synchronous class time by having students access most of the course content asynchronously online. This could involve presentations and other materials you created specifically for your students, or “published” multi-media content you selected for them. Each of these options, as well as the specific media you choose, has its own advantages and disadvantages, which you need to consider when making decisions about the online resources you assign to your students.

Potential benefits of *Conveying Content Online* we want to maximize:

- Freeing up class time for activities requiring synchronous interaction.
- Enhancing students’ understanding of the materials by providing them with the opportunity to review content at their own speed, interrupting and repeating as needed, stopping to take notes, and possibly using different modalities that may be more conducive to their learning preferences.
- Leveraging the unique affordances of different media to conveying content/information to students in the most effective way possible.
- Allowing for more choice and differentiation
- Preparing students to be life-long independent learners by empowering them to access content online on their own

Potential challenges (and how they may be reduced):

- Long readings may be more intimidating/ less accessible than live presentations:
 - *Use a variety of formats*
 - *Share with students techniques to more effectively read complex texts*
- Preparing online materials can take a lot of time (and not be easy to create):
 - *Limit the documents you have to create to a minimum*
 - *Develop an expectation that what you create is not “polished” as published materials*
- Finding the “right” materials to include as online multi-media readings (as there are so many out there!):
 - *Develop strategies to search for online content (including asking colleagues, join user groups, etc.)*
 - *Leverage your librarian’s expertise!*
- When content is conveyed fully online, students do not have the immediate opportunity to ask clarifying questions to the instructor:
 - *Provide students with opportunity to ask questions via email, discussion boards, chat, etc.*

Other things to consider:

- Value of using a variety of media to engage students' attention and appeal to diverse learning styles
- Power of giving students choices whenever possible
- Importance of "knowing your students", so you can provide them with content of appropriate level of difficulty and quantity
- Quality of video or scanned text matters
- Value of "introducing" students to the online content you want them to engage in
- What you ask students to do with the online content will make a big difference!

Key instructional decisions to be made – along with possible options and their pros & cons:

Type of MEDIA:

Option:	Advantages	Limitations
<i>Written text (different genres)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be easily annotated • Can be easily skimmed and revisited • Easy to modify/create excerpts of • Teacher can choose the genre that is most appropriate to the topic and audience • Familiar to students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long readings may feel intimidating • Some students have difficulty processing written text • Reading a text online may be tiring (but it could always be printed!) • Less accessible to younger students
<i>Annotated PowerPoint</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can provide a visual aid as well as written text • The slides may help provide a summary • Slides can be easily skimmed and revisited 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not as effective as a live or recorded presentation
<i>Video</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many students prefer this modality • Can be more engaging (especially if professionally produced) • Can include visuals and/or animations that make explanations of complex phenomena easier • Can be used to replicate what done in live lectures • Ideal to show phenomena and processes that cannot be replicated in the classroom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes more time to create or to edit the portion you want students to watch • Very difficult to annotate • Difficult to skim/ revisit
<i>Hyperlinked multi-media documents</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows immediate and "organized" access to a combination of multimedia • Easily allows for choice and differentiation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to control students' access if it is a public domain website • May be confusing for young learners • Takes more time and technical skills for a teacher to create

AUTHORSHIP:

<i>Option:</i>	<i>Advantages</i>	<i>Limitations</i>
<i>Published materials</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional quality – especially for videos! • Can accomplish things teachers may not be able to do on their own • Brings in external credibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It may be difficult and time consuming to find exactly what you are looking for • You may need to provide sufficient orientation and scaffolding to use what available
<i>Teacher</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be created to match your specific goals and audience • Helps create “teaching presence” and personal connection with the teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May take significant time to create • Will not be of the same “professional quality” as published materials
<i>Students</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enables students to learn from each other • Helps create a learning community • Students may be able to explain something in ways that are more accessible to their peers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May contain errors/ misconceptions – so the teacher may need to vet before sharing, or be prepared to deal with the potential errors
<i>Guest speakers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brings in specialized expertise, with a personal dimension and opportunity to ask questions • Brings in external credibility • Teacher can prepare the guest speaker and the students in advance to make the most of it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher cannot always control the content and level of complexity of the presentation

INTRODUCTION offered:

<i>Option:</i>	<i>Advantages</i>	<i>Limitations</i>
<i>None</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplest and least time consuming • Leaves more room for students’ choice and creativity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some students may be left not knowing what they should try to get out of the “readings”
<i>General</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can provide students with a general sense of what they should get out of a set of “readings” • Does not require much class time/ time to read 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some students may need more direction related to specific “readings”
<i>Specific to each “reading”</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can help students appreciate what each “reading” is intended to contribute to their learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will require more class time/ time to read • Will require more teacher’s time to create

Useful online tools:

- **Learning Management Systems (LMS):** Having access to a Learning Management Systems (such as Schoology, Google Classrooms, Canvas, Blackboard) is a great advantage when conveying content online, as it enables the teacher to store and retrieve as needed a rich set of digital materials for a given course, and then make it accessible to students in smaller “chucks”, as needed for specific lessons or assignments.
- **“Sharing” apps:** Even if your institution has not invested in a Learning Management System, there are stand-alone apps (such as *Padlet* and *Flipgrid*) that allow teachers to post digital content using a variety of media, in a way that can be easily accessed by every student. Several of these apps allow to post not only written text, but also videos, digital photos, and even voice recordings. It may be cumbersome, however, for both students and teachers to keep track of the digital content shared overtime.
- **Platforms allowing for synchronous sessions:** Platforms like *Zoom* or *Google Meet* allow to convey content through live presentations from teacher, students and even outside experts willing to join in as guest speakers. These presentations can be easily recorded and made available for future reference.
- **“Slide presentation” software:** Software such as *PowerPoint* or *Google Slides* enable instructors – as well as students – to create valuable visuals to support either live or pre-recorded presentations, thus providing for a powerful way to convey content that is customized to a specific audience.
- **Video-recording tools:** Today’s there are many easy-to-use video-recording tools that enable teachers and students to record presentations that can then be posted and made available through a Learning Management System or other “sharing” apps. One of the easiest ways to record presentations is to use the recording capabilities built into synchronous session platforms like *Zoom*. There also easy-to-use video-editing tools, like *Camtasia*, that be used to enhance recorded presentations, so as to make them more effective.

Options worth considering

(S=synchronous session or F2F; A=asynchronous online or regular homework):

Option:	Considerations	A	S	Useful online tools
A. Text-based “published” readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easiest for students to annotate and revisit • Can choose genre and level of difficulty most appropriate for the audience • May turn off some students • Specific reading strategies may need to be offered for struggling readers • Less accessible for younger students 	X	*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LMS repository function
B. Published videos/animations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many students prefer this modality • Can be more engaging • Ideal to show phenomena and processes that cannot be replicated in the classroom • Cannot be annotated or easily revisited 	X	*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LMS repository function
C. Websites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows immediate and “organized” access to a combination of multimedia • Easily allows for choice and differentiation • Difficult to control students’ access if it is a public domain website • May be confusing for young learners 	X	*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LMS repository function •
D. Teacher’s live presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most efficient, as it can be designed to specifically match specific goals and audience • Can be deployed at the “right moment” within an activity • Should be kept short, so as not to take up too much synch time • Helps create “teaching presence” and personal connection with the teacher 		X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synch session
E. Teacher’s pre-recorded PowerPoint presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be designed to specifically match specific goals and audience • Visuals in the slides can help highlight key points and hold students’ attention • Can be revisited – with slides providing a visual to identify specific parts of the presentation • A choice can be given to watch the video-recording and/or “read” the annotated Powerpoint version • Can save precious synch time 	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LMS repository function • PowerPoint or equivalent
F. Students’ written reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enables students to learn from each other • Helps create a learning community • Students can easily annotate and revisit their classmates’ reports • Some students may not like to have to read long written texts • Can save precious synch time 	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LMS discussion board (DB) function • Padlet

G. <i>Students' pre-recorded presentations</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enables students to learn from each other • Helps create a learning community • Students may be more interested in watching a short video than reading a report • Can save precious synch time 	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LMS discussion board (DB) function • Flipgrid • Video-recording device
H. <i>Virtual guest speakers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easier to get the guest speaker's commitment when travel is not involved! • Brings in specialized expertise, with a personal dimension and opportunity to ask questions • Brings in external credibility • Teacher should prepare the guest speaker and the students in advance to make the most of it 		X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synch session

Key tips:

1. Choose content of appropriate level of difficulty and quantity for your audience – and keep it short!
2. Use a variety of media to engage students' attention and appeal to diverse learning styles
3. Give choices whenever possible
4. To save time, leverage published content so as to limit the documents you have to create
5. Think of ways to “introduce” students to the online content you want them to engage with
6. Ensure quality of video or scanned text, and easy online access to all materials
7. What you ask students to **do** with the online content will greatly affect their learning!