Last updated: 2/26/14

**INTRODUCING NEW OTL TOOLS – Starting point**

**Brief description:**Online learning often requires students (and instructors!) to learn new tools and technologies in order to fully participate in the online space; this is to be expected not only for students who are new to the online environment, rather every online student will have to continuously learn how to use newly introduced tools/technologies since technology changes so rapidly. The success of an online activity depends on making sure that every student understands how to use the tools/technologies involved – and in fully online courses this needs to happen without the benefit of being able to introduce these tools a priori in a face-to-face situation. So online teachers will need to make careful decisions about how to providing information to students about new tools/technologies they are expected to use.

**Desired benefits:**

* Making sure that all students can access the learning activities as intended.
* Eliminating students’ anxiety about technology (which is often a deterrent to engaging in online courses/activities).
* *Add additional potential benefits*

**Potential limitations/concerns:**

* Challenge of providing explanations without the opportunity to ask clarifying questions to the instructor – especially for students who have some anxiety about technology
* *Add additional potential limitations*

**Possible options** *(with examples from this course)***:**

1. **In-person demo with “hands-on”** *(ex: as Dave did in our first class to get the Facebook Secret Group started)*
2. **Instructor’s video (in conjunction with screen shots)** *(ex: Dave’s introductory video as part of EDE484 Preliminary Assignment)*
3. **Direct to available tutorials** *(ex: links to BB and UTube tutorials available in the General Information Section)*
4. **Detailed written directions w/ key screen shots** *(ex: directions provided in EDE484 Guidelines to use BB course site)*
5. **Detailed written directions (just text)** *(ex: directions provided in “boxes” in EDE484 Preliminary Assignment-Detailed directions for independent work)*

*Add other possible options*

**Key implementation questions/components:**

1. ***What are pros and cons for each option, and tips to make the most of it?***

* *Add insights for each of the options*

1. ***What are some best practices/tips that cut across options?*** *Make sure to address at least the following issues:*
   * *How can you provide opportunities to students to ask clarifying questions?*
   * *How can you deal with students’ different preferences/learning styles?*

*Add specific insights*

**Additional notes/observations:**

* *Add*

**INTRODUCING NEW OTL TOOLS – Completed Synthesis Document**

**Brief description:**Online learning often requires students (and instructors!) to learn new tools and technologies in order to fully participate in the online space; this is to be expected not only for students who are new to the online environment, rather every online student will have to continuously learn how to use newly introduced tools/technologies since technology changes so rapidly. The success of an online activity depends on making sure that every student understands how to use the tools/technologies involved – and in fully online courses this needs to happen without the benefit of being able to introduce these tools a priori in a face-to-face situation. So online teachers will need to make careful decisions about how to providing information to students about new tools/technologies they are expected to use.

**Alternative tools/ ways to do it:**

1. **In-person demo with “hands-on”** *(ex: as Dave did in our first class to get the Facebook Secret Group started)*
2. **Instructor’s video (in conjunction with screen shots)** *(ex: Dave’s introductory video as part of EDE484 Preliminary Assignment)*
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**1.Benefits, limitations and implementation tips for each option:**

1. **In-person demo with “hands-on”**

***Potential benefits/strengths:***

1. Students can see modeled exactly what they need to do
2. Students can ask questions and get immediate responses
3. Students can try out immediately whether they understood or not

***Potential limitations:***

1. Students cannot go back to “review” the instructions when needed
2. Requires face-to-face
3. Requires each student to have access to a computer during the lesson
4. \*If students use different computers/browsers/etc. at home they may encounter some differences

***Implementation tips:***

1. Videotape the demonstration so students can review it later if needed *(to address L1)*
2. \*Ask students to bring own laptop to the demonstration *(L3 + L4)*
3. **Instructor’s video (with screen shots)**

***Potential benefits/strengths:***

1. Students can see modeled exactly what they need to do
2. Students can review the video whenever they need a refresher
3. Screen shots can do a lot to simplify the verbal directions and be clearer
4. \*Oral commentary of screen shots may be most effective/natural

***Potential limitations:***

1. Students cannot ask questions and get immediate responses
2. Videos may be difficult to “rewind” and/or find selected information you are looking for
3. \*If students use different computers/browsers/etc. at home they may encounter some differences

***Implementation tips:***

1. Provide students a way to ask questions online (email; BB; etc.) *(L1)*
2. \*Keep these videos short *(L2)*
3. \*Alert students to possible differences due to hardware/software *(L3)*
4. \*Have different demos for different computers/browsers/etc. *(L3)*
5. **Direct to available tutorials**

***Potential benefits/strengths:***

1. Students can see modeled exactly what they need to do
2. Students can review the tutorial whenever they need a refresher
3. \*Created by professionals
4. \*No need for the instructor to create a new video

***Potential limitations:***

1. \*The tutorial may not do exactly what needed for the class, and contain extraneous information
2. Students cannot ask questions and get immediate responses
3. Difficult to “rewind” and/or find selected information you are looking for
4. \*If students use different computers/browsers/etc. at home they may encounter some differences

***Implementation tips:***

1. \*Review alternative tutorials available and select the one that best matches the needs of your students
2. \*Warn students about possible limitations of the tutorial
3. Provide students a way to ask questions online (email; BB; etc.) *(L1)*
4. \*Alert students to possible differences due to hardware/software *(L3)*
5. **Detailed written directions w/ key screen shots**

***Potential benefits/strengths:***

1. Easy to review; can easily skim through to find the specific information you may need
2. Screen shots can do a lot to simplify the verbal directions and be clearer
3. \*Easy to create and revise

***Potential limitations:***

1. May be difficult for some students to follow

***Implementation tips:***

1. \*Have someone else check your directions before posting (so you can make sure they are understandable and can make adjustments if needed)

1. **Detailed written directions (just text)**

***Potential benefits/strengths:***

1. Can be the shortest/most concise
2. Easy to review; can easily skim through to find the specific information you may need
3. \*Are the easiest to create and revise for the instructor

***Potential limitations:***

1. Purely verbal directions (especially when long) are often more difficult to understand/ can be confusing

***Implementation tips:***

1. \*Have someone else check your directions before posting (so you can make sure they are understandable and can make adjustments if needed) (L1)

**2. “Summary” considerations/tips:**

* ***\*Be aware of all tools used and provide access to directions for each.*** 
  + Better not to assume that students are familiar with any tool – as it could cause significant problems to even just the one or two who do not.
  + Try to provide access to directions for ALL tools, while making it an option so as not to “bog down” the learning activity for students who already know how to use the tool (ex: by providing a link to the directions, or putting them in a “box”)
* ***Make good use of key screen-shots:***
  + A picture may truly be worth a thousand words!
* ***\*Keep it simple.*** 
  + Try to be as brief and clear as possible.
  + Don’t try to cover all possible scenarios or “bells & whistles” (as it can be confusing) – rather, try to stick to the essentials needed to use the tool.
* ***Whenever possible, provide options using multiple modalities***
  + Some students may prefer written directions, while others need the live demonstration, etc.
  + Different modalities may be better for different purposes (ex: first time introduction vs. revisiting the directions to get a specific piece of information)
* ***\*Keep directions in an easy-to-reach place for on-going reference.*** 
  + Directions may be needed not just when a new tool is introduced, but also when it needs to be used once again later in the course
  + Keep all directions in a place students can go to independently whenever needed to refresh their memory.
* ***\*Have someone else go through your online directions*** before posting them, so you can make adjustments if needed
* ***Give students a way to ask questions and get timely responses****:*
  + Regardless of how good your directions may be, some students will likely have some questions when they try to use them
  + Give students the opportunity to ask questions when needed and set reasonable expectations in terms of response time
  + Set up regular times to check on questions and respond to them
  + Create “Frequently Asked Questions” when possible
* ***While in-person hands-on demo may be ideal, most OTL tools can be effectively introduced online by providing good directions***