

# Preparing for the Start of your Course

**Don't leave students feeling lost and confused; show them around!**

There's nothing like that first day in a face-to-face class. . . you finally get to meet your students, and they get to meet their instructor. You spend time talking about the course, introducing yourselves to one another, going through the syllabus, discussing assignments and expectations, and answering any questions or concerns they might have. The first day of class is important for establishing a learning community and helping students get started off on the right foot. . . but how can you replicate this all-important experience online?

Like nearly everything in an online course, you must *plan* this experience. Prior to the start of your course, create a simple video using a webcam where you introduce yourself to your students; students love to see their instructor and get a feel for your personality and teaching style. Also, use a simple, free program like Screencastomatic to create a short course overview video. Take students on a virtual course tour and show them where tools (such as the discussion board) are, where to submit assignments, etc. Also take a moment to talk about the course itself, such as the learning outcomes and what you expect of them as a student. Create a folder labeled "Start Here", so students know where to begin. Include your introduction video, course tour, and direct them to their first activity: the student introductions. This student "meet 'n greet" is necessary for students to begin cultivating a social presence. Give clear guidelines for what students should post, and have them include a picture. Finally, plan to increase your teaching presence during the first few weeks of the course. Post a welcome announcement, check in via email (especially with students who have been "absent", and remind them of important due dates for assignments.

## Introduce Yourself



### Create an Instructor Introduction Video

- ▶ Welcome students to class. Smile!
- ▶ Discuss your educational background, experience, why you love teaching this course
- ▶ Give students an idea of your teaching style

## Give a Course Overview

### Create a Screencast to give students a tour of the course:

- ▶ Show the location of important course tools
- ▶ Talk about your expectations
- ▶ Give course-specific information



## Create a "Start Here" folder

### Give students a step-by-step guide for how to begin the course:

Watch Introduction Video and Course Overview



Read the Syllabus and Course Policies



Lead them to the first activity



## Spend More Time Being "Present"

### For the first week or two, make yourself especially present and available:

Welcome Students in an Announcement



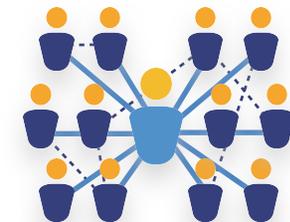
Check in with Students to see if they're having problems



Remind them of Due Dates



## Meet 'n Greet



- ▶ Make the first activity a Student Introduction discussion board
- ▶ Give guidance for what to include
- ▶ Have them post a picture