
10 Tips for online course development

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10 TIPS to keep in mind while converting your paper course to the web

1. Choose the complexity of your course before you start. Your online course can be a simple self study tutorial or a virtual classroom with interaction between instructors and students. You could even convert your book into a PDF file which can be downloaded and printed.

Rework can be more time consuming than starting from scratch. Follow the development process as closely as possible. This will facilitate feedback and evaluation at various stages and therefore minimize rework. Test early and test often.

2. Think COMPACT - rewrite the course to make it as compact as possible. Conversion of the course involves total redesign. Web users are more impatient and will want you to get to the point quickly. This will also help in promoting your pages since most keywords will come towards the top of the page.
3. Chunk - Use plenty of subheadings. Chunk your content into smaller, easy-to-digest pieces. Do all you can to make scanning the page easier.
4. State clear objectives for the course and specify what the student will be able to do after completing the course. Give them clear guidelines with which they can evaluate their progress. Pre and post quiz scripts can also be used.
5. Provide a print version without the menu bars, ads etc. and making maximum use of the print space. Fonts like Times New Roman are easier to read on paper while other fonts like Verdana are easier to read on screen.

6. Allow students to interact and share their information with each other. Install a discussion forum/ message board. Students often learn more from each other than from the instructor who is more of a guide than a teacher.
7. Optimize graphics so they load as quickly as possible. Avoid using media like sound and video which take long to load unless essential to reach the instructional objectives.
8. Design a simple, clear and intuitive navigation system. Minimize the number of clicks to get to any page. Finalize a user-friendly template in HTML. Then add the content into the HTML files. This can save you a lot of time in rework.
9. Tell students in the beginning what to expect and what resources (time, internet connection etc.) they will need. An online course is not like a book where you can tell how much content is in it by its size. Provide a certificate of completion or include other motivational elements to keep them going till the end.
10. Alumni, student profile, calendars, instructors, quizzes and pre-tests can add value to your course and keep students coming back for more.

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