

ONLINE COMMUNICATION

To be effective, online communication needs to be facilitated with the same care as in any other mode. Here are some suggestions for facilitating online communication:

1. **Online communication is mainly written and is treated as such.**

All participants --- instructor and students --- need to agree to certain writing standards when using email, chat rooms, discussion groups or bulletin boards. They need to agree as to standards of grammar, spelling and vocabulary usage.

2. **Online communication is assessed as part of the course.**

Students need to have a clear understanding of the role of online communication in the course, instructor's expectations, and assessment standards to be applied.

3. **Online communication's frequency is stated.**

Expectations as to minimum and maximum online participation, and the frequency of such participation by each student are clearly understood.

4. **Online communication is modeled by the instructor.**

Students are shown how to engage in discussions, how to post questions, and how to formulate email messages that will generate the desired response.

5. **Online communication is moderated by the instructor.**

The instructor facilitates online communication either directly by initiating and maintaining discussions, or indirectly by helping students set standards for student-led discussions.

6. **Online communication is focused on the course's content.**

Ground rules are set at the outset of the course, and the instructor monitors online communication to ensure that it is focused on specific content related to the course, and that digressions are minimal.

7. **Online communication is conducted with civility.**

Ground rules are set early in the course to provide students with a clear understanding of netiquette as well as 'rules of engagement'.

8. **Online communications is reviewed.**

The instructor provides closure to discussions and other online communication, as well as evaluative feedback to individuals, study groups or the whole class.