



# Primer on Facilitating Online Learning

*We prepared these primers on Project-based Learning, Learning Experience Design, and Facilitating Online Learning to further support instructors in integrating the course packs' contents to their classrooms and teaching practice. We believe these will help give teachers and instructors at different levels of experience a common starting point in using the Digital Tayo Course Packs.*

# Facilitating Online Learning

Technology offers many affordances to teaching and learning: Research and documentation are easier, asynchronous learning activities are possible, and the demanding back-end work of teaching is easier to execute. Even before the pandemic forced schools to shift to remote education, blended learning modalities were already being explored.

Now that remote and online learning is becoming the 'new normal' of education in the Philippines, teachers need to be more intentional when facilitating remote and online learning experiences.

Intentionality starts with **understanding the learning environment.**

## Understanding the Learning Environment

In the natural sciences, the environment consists of the air, water, and land in which people, animals, and plants live. The environment provides the conditions for development and growth.

In education, **the learning environment consists of learners, teachers, content, and resources.** These elements interact with each other to create a holistic ecosystem that supports learning.



- **Learners** are at the heart of the learning environment. Teachers should aim to actively engage them in the learning process.
- **Teachers** are the designers of the learning environment. They create, facilitate, and assess learning activities for the learners.
- **Content** sets the foundation for the learning environment. Content determines what is taught in the learning environment.
- **Resources** are the tools that can be used in learning. This includes physical resources such as buildings, facilities, and infrastructure.

Our understanding of the learning environment must be informed by what worked in the face-to-face classroom and the possibilities afforded by technology.



### Try this exercise:

Close your eyes and imagine what a learning environment is like for you. You may refer to your experiences teaching in a classroom or face-to-face setting or even in an online or virtual setting.

What can you see in your learning environment? Which element is evident? Can you see spaces such as classrooms, schools, or computers? How about the people - are the learners and teachers in your vision?

When we talk about the learning environment, it is common to focus on the physical environment. However, we also need to remember that the learning environment goes beyond the learning space; it also includes the people and processes.



**Space**



**People**



**Process**

- **Space:** the physical and virtual
- **People:** roles and relationships of learners, teachers, and parents
- **Processes:** routines, information, and learning goals

## Tips for Designing the Online Learning Environment

### Space

#### 1. Identify your needs and your students' needs.

- Conduct a survey to learn more about your students' needs. Even a simple check-in at the start of every session might be enough to guide how you facilitate the learning experience.

#### 2. Consider diverse physical and virtual environments.

- What do your learners' physical environments look like? How might the physical environment affect their learning? These are additional questions you can ask in your survey.
- Explore different learning delivery models for different environments.
- Remind students to mute themselves when they are not talking so that the class does not get distracted by background noise.

### 3. Select consistent and easy-to-use platforms.

- Choose a platform that is most suited to everyone's needs. Set a routine and avoid changing platforms once the routine has been established. Here are some questions you can ask yourself when choosing a platform:
  - What is the purpose of your lesson?
  - Does it need to be interactive?
  - How many students will attend your lesson?
  - Do you want students to dial in and engage synchronously, or have something available on demand?
  - Will there be more than one teacher?
  - What device will the students use to attend the synchronous session: laptop or mobile phone?
  - How long is the synchronous session?
  - Do the students need to see details on the screen, such as settings and functionality, or is the lesson more concept-based?

### 4. Explore value-adding features in your platform of choice.

- Check for features embedded in online tools that can help shape the learning experience. Here are some examples:
  - Voice clips (ex. Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp);
  - Screen sharing (Facebook Messenger, Google Meet, Zoom);
  - Polls and surveys (Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, Viber);
  - Chat features on conferencing platforms (Google Meet, Zoom).

### 5. Test your tools ahead of time.

- Practice using your chosen platforms to avoid errors when you need to use them.
- If the platform allows you to build polls and quizzes, build these in advance whenever possible so that they are ready to go when needed.

### 6. Explore and maximize the safety features in your platform of choice.

- Some features focus on ensuring the safety and privacy of the users. Here are some features you can use for Facebook Pages and Facebook Groups. Look for similar features in your platform of choice.
  - Privacy checkup (ex. <https://www.facebook.com/privacy/checkup>)
  - Security checkup (ex. <https://www.facebook.com/help/799880743466869/>)
  - Content moderation (ex. <https://www.facebook.com/help/131671940241729/>)

## People

### 1. Set and honor norms and boundaries.

- Include regular movement and bio breaks during synchronous sessions.

- Determine the time for communication. Where and when can students reach you? When should they expect to hear from you? Are there agreed hours for class time, collaboration, or consultation?

## **2. Ensure accessibility and participation.**

- Design and facilitate inclusive online discussions and collaborations.
- Whenever possible, use subtitles to accompany videos. Maximize the use of visuals whenever appropriate.
- Take note of the accessibility issues that might accompany synchronous and asynchronous formats:
  - Synchronous or live webinars like Facebook Live Events
    - **Pros:** Real-time interaction and engagement with students. They can also interact with their fellow students.
    - **Cons:** Students cannot stop and start the lesson. They will also witness technical errors such as internet or audio failure.
  - Asynchronous or on-demand lessons such as pre-recorded audio, slides with voiceovers, and e-learning materials
    - **Pros:** On-demand lessons are scalable. You can edit the lesson before making it available. Students can also access the material anytime and learn at their own pace.
    - **Cons:** There is no real-time interaction for Q&A. It can feel less personal and does not have a strong community-building aspect. This type of instruction is not ideal for long lessons i.e. more than 40 minutes.

## **3. Create a comfortable and safe environment.**

- Be clear on what information can be shared and what must be kept private. Honor the data privacy of students and co-teachers.
- Teach, apply, reinforce, and ingrain good digital citizenship practices where possible.
- Practice and model effective and respectful online communication to your learners.
- How might students report inappropriate behavior? Communicate these policies ahead of time.

## **4. Personalize and relate with students.**

- Remember that you and your learners are humans, first and foremost!
- Communicate in a way that lets them “hear” you speaking to them through the text. Let your personality shine even during remote communication.
- Be relatable but professional. Teachers must still be models of good behavior to their students.

## Processes

### 1. Clarify learning goals.

- Focus on the essential competencies you want the learners to develop. Align each activity to the learning objectives.

### 2. Use well-phrased and dynamic prompts.

- Have clear discussion points and prompts to encourage participation and engagement.

### 3. Set parameters for interaction and collaboration.

- Set up spaces for interaction and questions.
- Explain the functionalities of video conferencing platforms used so students know how to ask questions, answer polls, use the whiteboard, etc.
- Estimate the time needed for tasks especially when it entails synchronous interaction and collaboration with co-learners.

### 4. Establish routines and rituals.

- Establish and keep routines and rituals to help organize interactions and give students a sense of predictability.
- Have weekly check-ins with your learners.
- Have an end-of-week routine or ritual to signify the transition from “school mode” to “home mode.”

## Real EdTech Stories

We collaborated with undergraduate and graduate students from the UP College of Education, Education Technology Area, to collect stories of EdTech in the Philippines. These resources include tips and stories to show the different ways technology can help in creating or inspiring learning experiences



- [Pamilya Distansya](#) by Melvin Calingo
- [Upskilling Challenge](#) by Kathlynn Rebonquin
- [Tech Hacks for Online Distance Learning](#) by Mahrionne Revilla
- [Real EdTech Stories in the Rural Areas of the Philippines - Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija](#) by Andrea Sabandal
- [Motivations of a Student](#) by Nikki Mendoza
- [The Kahimtang Series: Filipino Students amidst Online Distance Learning](#) by Kiano Reyes
- [Online Distance Learning: The Teachers Experience](#) by Leni Garcia

## Additional Resources

Here are some other resources where you can learn more about facilitating online learning and creating inclusive, accessible, and safe learning environments.

- [Learning Best Practices](#) | Facebook Digital Tayo
- [A Guide to Facebook's Family of Apps for Schools](#)
- [The TPACK Framework Explained \(With Classroom Examples\)](#)
- [4 Tips for Teachers Shifting to Teaching Online](#)
- [Habi's Recipes for Online Learning](#)