

Organize Course Content From a Student's Point of View

Online students can become confused, frustrated, or disengaged if they find it challenging to simply navigate your course. When students use a lot of their cognitive resources just figuring out how to access course materials, they have few left for the content itself. Try to make your course organization as clear and intuitive as possible, ensuring students have more time and cognitive resources to engage with course content and activities (Darby, 2019).

To do this, you might want to activate the “student preview” function of the LMS and navigate your course as if you are a student, in order to identify unclear navigation paths and to check links. You may also consider asking a colleague or teaching assistant to conduct this check to uncover any areas of confusion. Pay close attention to how many clicks it takes to get to a file or resource and if the path is clear. Remember that online students are often on their own when they get stuck. Provide quick pointers whenever you can, and make sure support services numbers (such as Tech Help Desk) are easy to find.

Checklist

- Are the following spaces clearly identified?
 - *Announcements*: Brief instructor messages to students, such as reminders, links to additional resources, and class schedule changes.
 - *Question-and-answer space*: A discussion forum where students can ask for clarification or assistance.
 - *Syllabus*: Include a link for students to view the course syllabus.
- Is the home page brief and inviting?
- Does the home page include the course name as well as your name and contact info?
- Is it clear where you want students to begin?
- Does the module home page include an overview that lists all of the module readings and activities with due dates?
- Is everything listed in the order in which you want students to interact with the content?
- Is the organization for each module similar?
- Have you included contact information for tech help? (Consider also putting this information in your first email to students and suggesting they add it to their contacts, so they have it available outside the course LMS.)

Reference

Darby, F. (2019, April 17). How to be a better online teacher: Advice guide. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. <https://www.chronicle.com/interactives/advice-online-teaching>