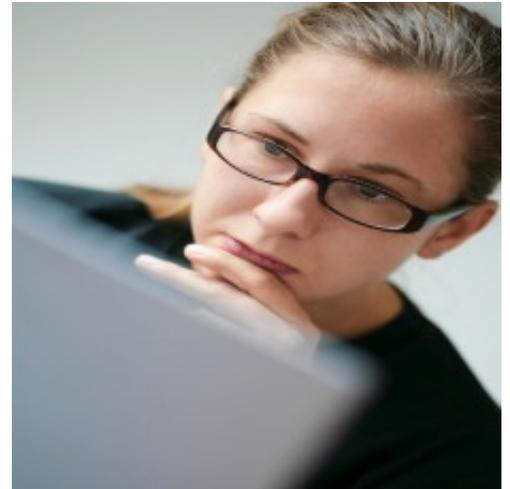


Be Efficient, Not Busy: Time Management Strategies for Online Teaching

By: [Deborah A. Raines, PhD](#) in [Online Education](#)

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Online teaching redefines the faculty member's schedule. The feeling of being a 24/7 professor can lead to frustration. Managing one's time as an online teacher can be a challenge. As the popularity of online education continues to grow, teaching faculty need to develop effective time management behaviors to be efficient and not just busy. Here are ten strategies I like to use:



1. **Roll call** – Take attendance on the first day. A simple discussion board with a response of “I’m here” alerts you to who has not found the classroom site as well as provides documentation of the students’ presence in the course which may be required for the registrar or financial aid records.
2. **Syllabus quiz** – Give a syllabus quiz during the first week. This quiz provides an opportunity for students to experience the online testing environment and provides an incentive for students to read the syllabus and other important information.
3. **Ask the class** – Create an “ask the class” discussion area in each module/unit. This is a place for students to ask general questions (similar to raising your hand in class and asking a question) and encourages students to respond to each other.
4. **To-do list** – Create a to-do list as the first item in each module. This item provides an introduction to and guidelines on how to approach the material in the module. Clear directions significantly reduce confusion and provide time management suggestions to the student.
5. **Establish rules and expectations** – Disseminate clear and consistent rules and expectations such as when to turn in assignments, the beginning and ending date of units, turn-around time for responses to questions or feedback on assignments. If everyone knows the rules and expectations from the beginning of the course, it reduces the time needed for continuing clarifying these important topics. A message sent to students the week before the beginning of the course is a great opportunity to introduce these rules and establish the rigorous standards of the course.
6. **Private office** – Create a dropbox or private journal function for students to communicate with you on confidential matters. Using a private office within your online course removes course specific communications from your general e-mail and provides on-going documentation of your conversation with the student.
7. **Roadmap to success** – Write a clear and concise document of student expectations, responsibilities and accountability for learning. This document addresses items such as the policy on late work, how to get technical help, netiquette, the flexibility and mobility of online learning, technical requirements, and finally how to access university resources such as the library and the writing center.
8. **Take advantage of tools and technology** – Use online tools within the course management system such as

student tracking, testing automation, self-grading or rubrics added to assignment dropboxes, to increase your efficiency. In addition, external tools such as a wiki, Google tools, a spreadsheet, or a database tracking system all can increase your efficiency. In general, handle each item only once—if you open an item, do something with it, don't just peek and plan to come back later.

9. **Establish a routine** – Set your schedule. Get in the habit of going to your online courses at consistent times and know what you are going to do while at the course site. For example early Monday morning I check for unanswered questions or items in my private office, but I don't enter the discussion at that time or grade assignments. Alternating time throughout the week (i.e. Monday in the morning, Tuesday in the afternoon and Thursday in the evening) increases the likelihood of being present when different groups of students are online and supports the asynchronous nature of most online learning courses.
10. **Don't re-invent** – Use existing resources. There are a number of quality learning activities available on the web. Sources such as MERLOT (<http://www.merlot.org>) and YouTube (<http://youtube.com>) are potential resources. Using these resources can reduce the time needed to develop similar materials.

Hopefully with these strategies, instructors can enjoy the convenience and creativity of online teaching without feeling overwhelmed.

Deborah A. Raines, PhD , RN, ANEF, is the director of Scholarship of Teaching at The Center for Teaching and Learning, Florida Atlantic University.