

How to Plan Your Course Time

In the current environment, it is important to create clear and flexible blueprints for you and your students. As you build your course to be face to face (F2F) or online it is important to consider the amount of time each activity takes and to determine what is the best way to achieve the learning outcomes for the course. Most classes have a lecture and discussion component for each session. Explicitly planning out your in-class (synchronous) and out-of-class (asynchronous) minutes will help you manage issues such as attention span of students, the variety of activities, and whether an activity/assignment is necessary or busywork.

Remember, time and rigor are not synonymous. We encourage you to include both synchronous (F2F or Zoom) and asynchronous (not in the company of the faculty member) in your planning. An important element to consider is that the average adult attention span is 10-20 minutes (Bradbury, 2016; Wilson & Korn, 2007). Faculty can improve their teaching by implementing a variety of strategies to sustain student engagement. Several studies have correlated student achievement with the ability to pay attention in class. When a student loses focus, they all tend to miss important information (Campbell, D'Amato, Raggio, & Stephens, 1991).

This worksheet will help you calculate the minutes allotted for your course and the number of realized minutes the chosen activities will actually take students to complete. This is a fascinating exercise that can provide a fresh perspective to your course design.

Best Practices

- You do not need to be in the Zoom classroom for the same number of minutes you would be in the F2F classroom on campus. Students can be engaged with each other and the material outside of a Zoom session.
- Limit direct instruction or lectures to 20 minutes.
- Assign students to watch videos, which you would normally watch together in class, outside of F2F class time, but count those minutes (90-minutes for a 90-minute video) as asynchronous class time.
- Limit use of the discussion board to 3 or 4 posts per 10-week quarter. One discussion post counts as 30 minutes of class time for each. Responding to other students' posts counts as 60 minutes of class time each.
- Use the Announcement feature in Canvas to greet students, provide course updates and create a sense of community. This can be a very creative, engaging and informative space in your class.
- If you normally give a midterm and final exam in the F2F class, consider not holding a Zoom class the days that students are taking the exams. This would count as asynchronous class time.
- Remember that if you assign discussion posts, online reading quizzes and other features to accommodate for not being F2F they need to be assessed. It is important to decide if those writing assignments are the best tool to meet the course objectives.

Resources:

Bradbury, N.A. (2016). Attention span during lectures: 8 seconds, 10 minutes, or more? *Advances in Physiological Education*, 40, pp. 509–513. <https://doi.org/10.1152/advan.00109.2016>

Campbell, J. W., D'Amato, R. C., Raggio, D. J., & Stcphcns, K. D. (1991). Construct validity of the computerized continuous performance test with measures of intelligence, achievement, and behavior. *Journal of School Psychology*, 29, 143–150.

Darby, F., & Lang, J. (2019). *Small teaching online*. Jossey-Bass.

Wilson, K. & Korn, J.H. (2007) Attention during lectures: Beyond ten minutes. *Teaching of Psychology*, 34(2), pp. 85-89, doi: 10.1080/00986280701291291

OTL Blog: Ways to Meet the Instructional Time in an Online Format OTL Website: Resources for teaching at a distance