

At a Glance – The 5 Most Important Tips for Supporting Online Learning

Supporting online learners isn't hard at all if you pay attention to a few points. We have put together the five most important tips for you here. With them, nothing can go wrong and you can get started right away.



1. Be authentic

Your personality is an important aspect of online teaching, alongside your specialist knowledge. Your learners want to know who they're dealing with and what to think of you. So, try and be authentic and personable despite all the specialist knowledge that is required. You'll make it easier for your students to approach the subject, online learning and yourself as a teacher if you are authentic and not only present yourself in terms of your expertise, but also show a part of the person you are.



2. Set aside time to get to know each other

Since you won't be able to meet your learners in person, set aside some time for this during your course. This also makes it easier for your learners to get started and reduces the feeling of anonymity or 'watching TV'. For example, ask your learners to say three sentences about themselves at the beginning of a course or – if you're working with large groups of participants – ask for information in the chat. Depending on the situation, you can also ask the participants to introduce themselves briefly in the course forum before the course begins. The benefit to this is that you immediately mark the forum as an important learning venue.



3. Actively encourage your learners to participate

Not everyone finds it easy to get involved in an online learning community and everyone has different approaches for doing this. So, keep encouraging your course participants to get actively involved and have a dialogue. Depending on the situation, this may be in the form of a statement and a contribution to the discussion in the course or in the form of chat or forum posts. If in doubt, it's better to remember too much about these options than not enough.

4. Set tasks in a practical and collaborative way



Opportunities for exchange are accepted most of all when they add value in the eyes of the learners. For example, this can be done by setting group tasks that have to be done online, or by using discussion prompts with practical relevance that make it necessary to discuss a problem together, etc. Encourage exchange by creating practical problems that can only be solved together.

5. Set binding times for exchange and be responsive outside of them too



To minimise the drop-out rate, you should also communicate fixed times at which exchange is possible outside of the course, e.g. by setting up your own video conference call or being online in the forum or in a chat. You should also be approachable for your learners outside of these times. For example, it may be helpful to use a dedicated chat channel to answer questions that arise after seminars – this is more straightforward and faster than discussing a question by email.

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