



High-Impact College Teaching Tips

This is a compilation of resources aiming to create high quality courses based on evidence. Teaching college courses can be complex; faculty and instructors are faced with many decisions before the beginning of the semester including questions that might not have a clear answer.

The following are [high-impact practices \(HIP\)](#) for teaching college courses that **improve student engagement, persistence rate and retention**. There are many instructional strategies, but research shows [these practices have significant benefits for student learning](#) (Fink, 2008):

1. Helping students become better learners (i.e, teaching metacognition)
2. Learner-centered design (i.e., instructional design strategies and best practices)
3. Cooperative and Collaborative Learning (i.e, small groups, team work, etc)

Those three practices are explained in the next sections and can be incorporated into any class.

Helping students become better learners

Teaching Metacognition

Do you want to help your students to learn the content you are teaching? If the answer is yes, one of the best skills you can teach your students is how to learn. If you take the time to talk to students about their learning habits you might be surprised that not every student has an effective way to study, and if you add having many commitments and distractions no wonder why they can be ineffective.

Students are good at recognizing they should read the textbook/materials more and pay more attention to the instructor in class, but many students are not sure what other activities help them learn the material or how long they should study. Not all students had a parent, teacher or mentor that helped them become better learners. You can argue that this is not your job, but checking about this will make a big difference on your students. If you take the time to teach your students how to learn, they can become lifelong learners.

You can give your students [this video](#) (45 minutes) or you can dedicate one class period to teaching metacognitive skills, which is the understanding of their own cognitive processes. Metacognition is more than “[think about thinking](#)” (5-min video); it’s knowledge and awareness of how to learn, focusing on the habits that allow them to grasp concepts or processes. This resource gives you examples that [encourage Metacognition in your classroom](#). You can do simple things, such as: asking students to write on a paper at the end of lecture something you taught ([minute paper](#)), or asking them to write a journal about their study habits.

The more that students may be engaging in independent work and projects, group activities, and capstone projects, the more they will need to reflect on their own learning processes and progress. Many students are not aware of how they learn. In higher education courses, it is desirable for the professor to explain strategies to succeed in class and find ways to support all students. [Developing a classroom culture grounded in Metacognition](#).

Teaching Students to Manage Time and Stress

Students from all backgrounds should learn how to manage time and stress. Instructors should not assume that students know how to manage time or deal with stress. Teaching them how to do it might have an impact on their learning and you do not need to spend a lot of time on these topics. Consider sharing with your students the following resources:

[Time Management Tips for Busy College Students](#)

[Establishing a Routine](#)

[The Pomodoro Technique](#)

[Fostering Academic Well-being in the Classroom](#)

[College Students Guide to Stress Management](#)

[Well-Being for Life and Learning](#)

[Texas Well-being Guidebook for Life and Learning](#)

Creating an Inclusive Classroom

Having an inclusive classroom means [creating a positive learning environment where students feel supported and respected](#). Some of your students might have certain disabilities that do not allow them to access the resources to learn in your class. For example, students with visual impairments might need handouts with big fonts. Some students do not have a disability, but they have specific needs, such as your students that speak English as a Second Language (ESL). Being aware of students' disabilities and needs is the first step to create an inclusive classroom. Here are some resources that might be helpful:

[Creating Inclusive College Classrooms](#)

[Creating an Inclusive Classroom](#)

[Inclusive Teaching Strategies](#)

[Academic Belonging](#) - MIT Teaching & Learning Lab

[Trauma-Informed Teaching - Mays Imad](#)

Learner-Centered Course Design

There are different instructional models to design college courses. Traditional courses are designed with a teacher-centered approach where the instructor is the main source of knowledge, but this is not the only way to teach. You could design a course focusing more on the instructional needs of your students and allow them to have more control over their own learning. This approach empowers students and challenges them to learn in an environment that requires active participation and where the instructor becomes a facilitator that guides students through the learning activities.

When designing your courses, consider using a systematic approach such as the [ADDIE](#) model, which is often used to create learner-centered instruction. ADDIE has five phases that are not necessarily linear (see the figure below). These are the five phases:

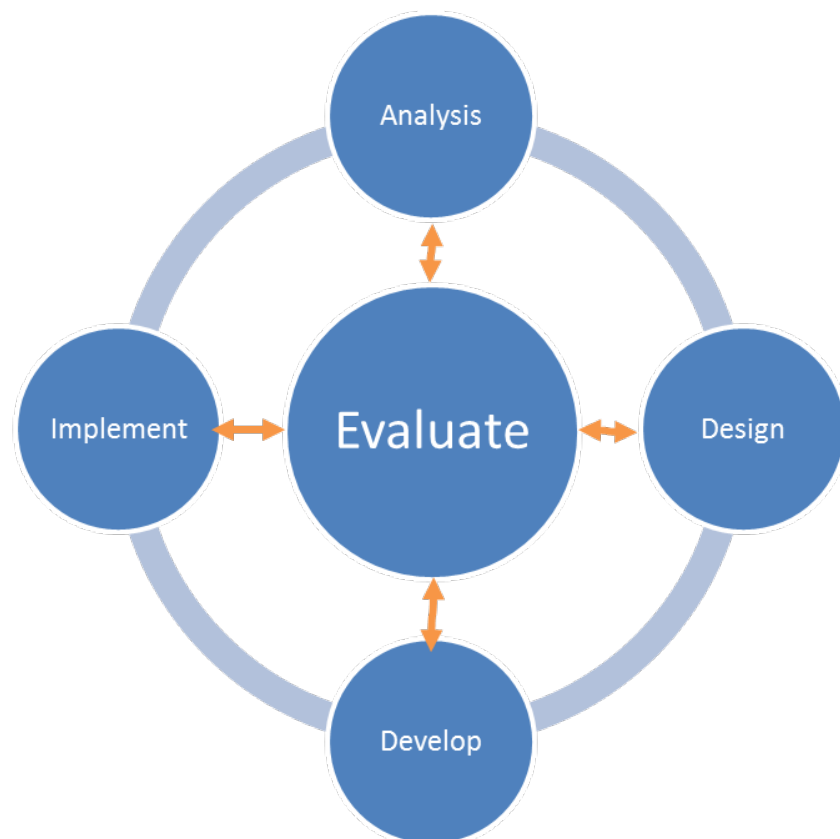


Image from <https://rapidbi.com/the-addie-instructional-design-model-hrblog/>

1. ANALYSIS: What is to be learned?

When planning a course, it's important to make an analysis of the [target audience](#). Who are my students? What is their prior knowledge? What are the learning gaps? What are the learning constraints? What tools do they need to learn? Do they have access to the internet and other

tools they need? Teaching is more effective when the instructor plans the course taking into consideration the characteristics of the learners. Equally important is establishing the course goals and choosing the modality.

At this point, the instructor should divide the course goals into [learning objectives](#) that describe what the students will be able to do or know after the class. Having at least one learning objective per week or unit will give you a sense of direction to plan your activities for the week. [Using Bloom's Taxonomy to Write Effective Learning Objectives](#)

Another consideration is about [Shaping a Positive Learning Environment](#) that allows students to feel comfortable: a) interacting with instructor and other students, b) asking questions when they don't understand the content, and c) making mistakes. This environment sets the foundation to [build a learning community](#) that supports students academically and socially. When students become part of a community of learners they share a sense of belonging. [Promote Effective Communication in your classroom](#) from the first day.

2. DESIGN: How is it to be learned?

In this step you can use the [course blueprint template](#) (make your own copy or download this as a Word document). Using this template you can plan the classes you are teaching every week either online or in-person choosing the topics and the learning objectives. What are the learning objectives for each lesson? What media or resources will be used to teach the topics?

Once you have the learning objectives, you can create materials. You will decide how you are going to evaluate student learning and the type of activities your students need to do to learn the topics you are teaching. Assessment or assignments should be aligned to learning objectives. How will your students practice what they learn? How will you assess the students' understanding of the content?

It is beneficial for the students to tell them ahead of time how you are going to grade assignments. Rubrics - how to clarify your expectations for each assignment?

If you have too much content, consider what is more important for your students: do you want them to know many topics superficially? Or less topics more in-depth? [When Content Isn't King](#)

If you would like to have a detailed plan of the activities your students are doing every class, you might want to add rows to the template. You can also delete the resources column if you are using Canvas and nothing else. In this step, you will also choose the media you will use to present the content.

3. DEVELOPMENT: How to build your course in Canvas?

Once you have your course blueprint completed with learning objectives, activities and assessments, you can start building your Canvas site and uploading your materials. Here are

the [Canvas Instructor Guides](#) in case you need them. Ideally, you should perform a pilot test asking someone to take a look at your Canvas site before the first day of classes to catch any mistakes and correct them before your students have access to Canvas.

Here are some questions relevant to the development phase: How should you organize the content? What technology tools do you need? What images do you need? Are there any videos you can share with students? Do you need to create videos? How are you planning to provide feedback to your students and when?

4. IMPLEMENTATION: How to try it?

This phase is about delivering instruction and what you can do to make it more effective. For example, you could ask questions to check for student understanding. One-Minute Paper. Take notes immediately after you teach about the time it took for the students to do the activities you planned. How do you present the content? How to make an effective use of time when teaching? How do you review each lesson? How to teach your students to use the tools they need to learn?

[How to Make Your Teaching More Engaging](#) - [Welcoming Syllabus](#)

[The minutes before class](#) - [The first 5 minutes of class](#) - [The last 5 minutes of class](#)

[Classroom Management and Organization](#) - [The Deadline Dilemma](#)

[Tips for Teaching Unprepared Students](#) - [Increasing Relevance](#)

5. EVALUATION: How to improve it?

This phase is about evaluating the quality of the learning experience. Evaluation should be ongoing throughout the five phases, but especially at the end of the course you could reflect on the things you can improve. The main question for you is: How do I know my course has been successful?

Read more about [Formative and Summative Assessment](#).

At the end of each lesson you could take notes on the classroom activities your students did and reflect on the following: How well did the students achieve the learning objectives? Did the students have enough practice opportunities to learn? did they have enough time to complete the activities? Were the activities too challenging? Too easy? What other activities can they do? How do you want your students to make their learning visible to you?

Consider [Peer Evaluation](#) asking students to evaluate their peers. [Teaching students to evaluate each other](#) takes time and effort, but this is something beneficial to you and your students. If your students are doing PBL team work, you could have several checkpoints in which students are evaluated by their classmates. See this [Peer Evaluation Form Example](#).

Instructional Strategies for your Courses

The following strategies and best practices can be incorporated into every course and can be used to create authentic assessments:

Active Learning

[Active Learning](#) is an instructional strategy that engages students, requiring them to take active participation in learning activities instead of listening passively to a lecture. It can be used in [online](#) or [traditional in-person courses](#). [Creative Assignment Ideas for Teaching at a Distance](#). Implementing active learning may involve using the “flipped classroom” technique to assign lecture content to be viewed by students before a class meeting. [Implementing Active Learning in your Classroom](#)

Problem-based learning

[PBL is an instructional strategy incorporating open-ended learning activities](#) that resemble real-life experiences requiring students to take ownership of their learning. PBL promotes critical thinking, problem solving and communication skills. [It can be incorporated into any course](#) either as small individual activities or entire group projects that can take the entire semester. [PBL Resources](#) [Using PBL to encourage interdisciplinary work](#)

Project-based learning

Project-based learning (PjBL) is a type of PBL that challenges students to actively learn by conducting a rigorous project in a real-world context. [What is Project-based learning?](#)
[PjBL 6-min video](#) [PjBL Vehicle for High-Impact Practices](#) (60 min)
[Tips for combining Project-Based and Service Learning](#) [PjBL Examples](#)

Case-based learning

[Case-Based Learning](#) (CBL) is an instructional approach in which students analyze real-life scenarios relevant to the professional world by applying knowledge or skills. [Teaching with cases](#) - [Inside the HBS Case Method](#) (13 min video) - [Case Study Examples](#). Example teaching with cases [Take a Seat in the Harvard MBA Case Classroom](#) (10 min video) [Teaching by the Case Method. Questioning, Listening and Responding](#)

Flipped Classroom

A flipped classroom provides students with the information they need ahead of class and uses class time to apply the knowledge students learned in higher-order thinking activities.

[Flipped Classroom Overview](#): Implementing a flipped classroom

[Flipped classroom pro and cons](#)

[Flipping a classroom](#)

Cooperative and Collaborative learning

[Cooperative Learning](#) refers to students working on small teams with a shared goal, but they are evaluated individually besides being assessed for teamwork. It promotes student interactions and provides opportunities for the students to learn interpersonal skills. It is based on individual and group accountability; every student in the group has a role to avoid social loafing.

[Collaborative Learning](#) involves students working together to reach a common goal; it teaches students interpersonal skills they need to work with people in the professional world.

When you ask students to work on teams, you could have very different results depending on team dynamics. How do you help your students perform better when doing group work and avoid struggles?

Here are some strategies:

- Provide [icebreakers and team building](#) activities
- Design team assignments [relevant for real-world problems](#)
- Include [small checkpoints or scaffolds](#)
- Provide a [rubric](#) and a [peer feedback](#) system
- Share with students: [Being an Effective Team member](#)

More resources about teamwork:

[Teamwork that works](#)

[Improving group dynamics](#)

[Fostering good team dynamics](#)

[Coping with hitchhikers and couch potatoes in teams](#) (you can share this with students)

[Peer evaluation form group work](#)

Other Resources

[Gallery of 3 to 4 Conversion Resources](#)

[Equity-focused Teaching](#) - Beyond Inclusive Teaching - [Reflecting on your Practice](#) (make a copy)

[Ungrading](#)