

How to do blended learning—incorporating online resources

Blended learning means bringing a wider range of resources into your face-to-face location. It provides learners with opportunities to look for information or do activities directly related to their goals. The internet and other new media makes information accessible to an audience with a wide range of reading skills—so much information on the internet is available in a variety of formats learners can choose how much they want to learn by reading and how much they want to learn by listening to presentations or watching videos and slideshows.

There is no one way to do blended learning.

Instructors might work face-to-face with learners or learners might work independently in a self-paced way.

Learners might work some of the time in a computer lab.

Instructors might suggest learners join online learning communities and discussions.

Instructors might suggest learners try web-based tutorials or activities.

Instructors might work one-on-one with learners.

Learners might work independently on individual goals.

Instructors might put different groups together to work on similar topics or projects.

Instructors might facilitate group or individual projects where learners do research on the internet and report on what they are learning in class discussions, online discussions, by writing essays or by creating multi-media presentations.

Assess as you go

When you are using a blended approach, you will want to assess several things in addition to learning progress.

- Assess whether learners are comfortable with and able to use the technology available to them.
- Find out if learners understand why you have been using different tools with them for different purposes.
- Ask learners if they have been getting enough support to use the tools.
- Find out if learners feel they have had an opportunity to share their own skills with others.

Online communities

Many learning sites offer opportunities for learners to interact with others, as well as more static areas where learners can develop and practice skills using learning activities. Interactive discussions in chat rooms or forums are similar in many ways to the

discussions that happen in face-to-face classrooms. It is just as important for instructors to be present in an online discussion as it is to be there when face-to-face discussions take place: their skills as animators and a facilitators are needed to support and enhance the discussions.

Digital storytelling

Digital stories are those that use a mixture of computer-based images, text, recorded audio narration, video clips and/or music to tell a personal tale, recount an historical event, or explore life in the learner's

community. Digital stories are usually between two and ten minutes long. A simple way to start creating digital stories is to make a slideshow in a program such as Powerpoint. When learners express ideas and experiences through digital storytelling, they:

Digital Storytelling in Adult Literacy
www.nwt.literacy.ca/digital_storytelling.htm

Listen to stories at storycorps.org.

Watch stories at

- storiesforchange.net
- www.storycenter.org
- www.bristolstories.org

- Improve their writing
- Express their creativity
- Innovate and problem-solve
- Activate their gifts
- Learn about new technologies
- Design work that can be shared

adapted from **The 7 Tips for Integrating Web 2.0 Tools** from Suite 101:

1. *Embrace new types of technology.*
2. *Let technology support content.* Let technology help communicate a passion for learning.
3. *Learners need personal connection.* Learners become vested in their own learning when they can create and communicate—the use of new media enriches opportunities for learner innovation and community development.
4. *Create a personal social network.* Developing a personal network of trusted instructors, content area experts, and online resources is critical to integration of technology.
5. *Start small and expand.* When integrating a new technology, start with small projects and then expand into larger projects as the level of comfort increases.
6. *Always have a backup.* Planning for technology failure is critical to success. Websites have problems and computers get finicky. This is teaching with technology so be prepared.
7. *Let learners help.* Often learners have firsthand knowledge of a new technological tool from personal experience or use in other classes. This strategy personalizes the learning experience for learners and the instructor gains new personal technological knowledge.

Read more at Suite101:

www.suite101.com/content/7-technology-tips-for-the-classroom-a120865