

Being Human 101

How Your Online Presence Boosts Student Learning

Deidre Price, Ph.D.

Northwest Florida State College

priced@nwfsc.edu

DeidrePrice.com



Meet the speaker



- Professor of English
- Online course developer
- Instructional design and online education consultant
- Author
- Editor
- Mama of a quarter dozen children

Meet online education

The unique possibilities of online education:

- Greater access
- Greater agency
- Greater continuity
- Greater adaptability



...*if* we go beyond 'playing the tape.'

Meet your new student

- Technocentric
- [Over]confident multitasking doers
- Born contributors and content-creators
- Digital natives (Mark Prensky)

In short, they are busy, they are smart and equipped with technological survival skills, and those invested in their education are likely to follow your lead. You invest, they invest.





What is *instructor presence*?

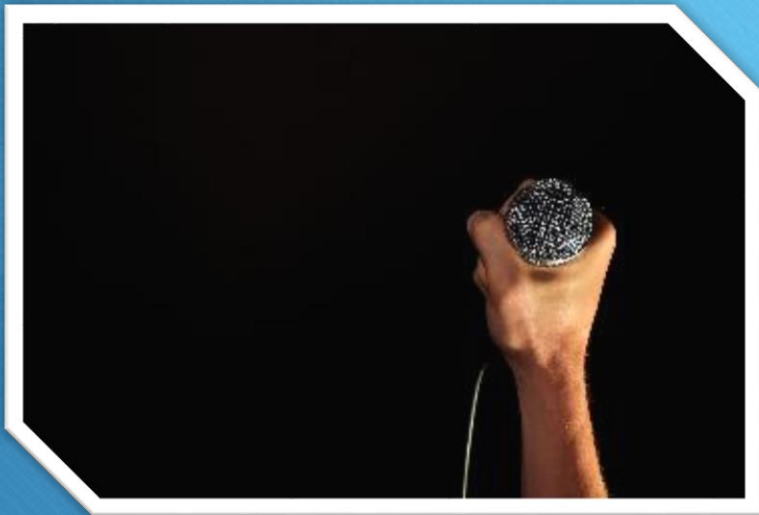
- It's showing up.
- It's sitting down.
- It's listening.
- It's answering.
- It's expecting the conversation to continue.



What does *instructor presence* look like online?

- It's *still* showing up, sitting down, listening, answering, and expecting the conversation to continue.
- The difference online is that you must make all this **transparent** to students by being in more places—visibly and audibly.

Being present online means



- Presence
- Participation
- Passing the mic



Who are you to your online students?

Perception of an instructor can...

- Set the tone of the class
- Model student communication
- Deepen or lessen engagement
- Lead to time and energy investment

You *are* the environment of your classroom
and the example your students will follow.



My ideal instructor presence

Professional but warm.

- I want the bar set high for e-communications and all work in the course.
- I also want them comfortable enough to reach out when they need help.
- Just as my invisibility is easily afforded by the online classroom, so is theirs. I want them noticed, and I have to create a comfortable space in order for them to feel comfortable being *noticed*.

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My goal



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How do I craft instructor presence?

Personality can be developed online through

- Audio (ideally the instructor's own voice)
- Images (ideally, original and, minimally, high-quality)
- Reciprocal teaching (passing the mic and expecting response)



Tips on How to Be Human

How can I seem “real”?

- Add personal visual and aural elements
- Embed content and video with your own commentary, as you would in a F2F class
- Know that personality is not unprofessional
- Accept that emoticons are part of our lexicon
- Be flexible and allow room for positive change



When should I add instructor presence?

At every step.

Instructor presence should be used before, during, and at the close of the course.



When should I add instructor presence?

- ☐ Before the semester starts
- ☐ When the class starts
- ☐ At various checkpoints during the term
- ☐ The follow-up after each major task
- ☐ The intervention for a struggling student
- ☐ Outside the classroom for conversation
- ☐ Final words at the course's end



Before the semester starts

- Contact students directly by email with a signature including a picture of yourself.
- Ask students to post profile pictures.
- Set up your course with two types of welcomes:
 - News linked to a welcome video
 - A more extensive written version with a complete introduction to the course and to you



When the class starts

- Be ready before your students arrive.
Include a fresh welcome message announcing the start of the class and prompting response.
- Invite students into the classroom.
- Link students to course content to provide alternate routes.
- Use images and sounds to enhance the classroom environment and make it feel real.
- Set up a lounge or commons area in Discussions for students to have informal conversations.



At various checkpoints

- Provide personalized feedback that is not just numeric.
 - Think about tone in these interactions and offer options for help. This can be a cut-and-pasted passage that you repeat in every set of student feedback for that assignment.
- Reroute students back to content sections in your feedback to keep them in the classroom longer and encourage revisiting course content.
- Consider using collective feedback as you might in a F2F class.



The follow-up after a task

- Use the News to keep students apprised of the expectations for feedback.
 - Be transparent.
 - Be authentic.
 - Admit when something needs attention.
- You cannot over-communicate in the online classroom. Be explicit and repetitive. Use the “all roads lead to Rome” approach.



The intervention for struggling students

- Resist the urge to create a self-paced, auto-pilot class when possible.
- If students are absent, struggling, or failing, send them a personal message.
- Use intelligent agents, if your LMS allows it, to speed up and simplify the process.



More intervention

- If students email a common question, insist on responding in News. This is how a F2F classroom would work.
- Encourage students to self-assess at various points in the term. These assessments can be auto-graded so that it lessens your workload.



Beyond the classroom

- Explain course content within the context of the broader world.
- Bring the course content to life and demonstrate why it matters to you outside the classroom.
- This mattering business is contagious.



Final words at the course's end

- Be sure to say goodbye to students and offer an overview of where they've been and where they're headed next.
- Make the progress they've made more meaningful by addressing it within the context of their larger academic experience.
- Ask for their feedback in response.



Where should I be more present?

In every tool.

Think of it as walking around the classroom or proctoring an exam—or even just greeting everyone at a dinner party.

Much of this can be automated to give the illusion of presence and extend the invitation for continuing the conversation.



Rethink your course structure

- Think about chunking content weekly or biweekly.
- More pace control keeps students on the same topic at the same time so that *real conversations* can happen.

Be creative and personal with announcements

- Think multimedia or gifs as supplements to written announcements in News or sent through email.
- Use images with posts.





Invite them to talk first

- Ask, “What do you know already?”
- Avoid a pretest.
- Have students create a wiki that compiles their ideas before you lecture and can change in real time, like their own ideas about the subject, as you teach.



Poll the audience

- At regular intervals, have students participate in polls or surveys to get their take on the material.
- These should focus on their opinions, not just the facts.



Take Discussions out of Discussions

- Have students collaborate on Google Docs to edit and work together in real time
- Use Padlet or a shared Pinterest board to offer a creative space to share ideas



Make your lecture feel less like one

- Create a lecture-style, talking head video but make your content anything but an ordinary walkthrough of the content.
- Think: The Week in Review—The highs, the lows, the answers to FAQ



Put a live Discussion in an online class

- If you teach in multiple formats, let your online students be a fly on the wall in your face-to-face sections.
- Have a small group volunteer to record their conversation for posting for an online class.



Connect classes to keep them talking

- Invite your online students to respond to the live lecture videos and share the online students' video replies with your face-to-face students.



Create lecture remix videos

- Splice together videos and commentary to make them your own.
- Just as you might use images, use multimedia within your lectures.
- Splice in student videos, too.



Add pop conversations

- Within lecture material, interrupt yourself often to prompt action.
- Instead of recording a lecture straight through, embed assignments, and ask students to create and participate as you go.




Add oral reflection checkpoints

- Supplement assignments with optional opportunities for engagement with peers and the professor.
- Have them ask questions within their Facetime-style videos so that you and others can respond.



Task students with building a reference guide

- This is a not an outline.
- This should compile what you give them with what they have read and **go beyond** what you provide.
- What have you **not** covered?
- Use this as an opportunity to **be responsive** within a task that they have created together.



Invite them to be a fly on the wall
during office hours

- Record the screen as you build course content, and explain the behind-the-scenes thoughts that go into what is included and why.
- If it is purposeful, it is meaningful.



Be transparent—and record it

- Some of the best lecture is individualized instruction, one-on-one conversation.
- Record nameless grading (from another section, ideally) and walk students through strengths and weaknesses.



Why should I be more present?

- Audience awareness is essential in academics.
- Even online students want the experience of a real, live instructor—and people online seem real and live when they're communicating, visible, and responsive.
- When you invest and engage, they invest and engage.



Why be human?

We encourage our students to invest time, energy, and passion in our classrooms when we model this investment.

When we risk perfection by indulging in impromptu interactions and allowing the course to be more 'real,' we invite students to take similar risks.

This is learning and living. It is human.

Questions?

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