

# Teaching Guides

ETI team members have reviewed the websites of a variety of higher education institutions, not for profit groups, and scientific foundations to curate a list of teaching tips on topics that are most fundamental to teaching in higher education in order to help USU instructors quickly find relevant information about teaching techniques and best practices. If you don't find what you need, or if you see something that you would like to discuss further, contact ETI ([eti@usuhs.edu](mailto:eti@usuhs.edu)) and we will work with you individually.

- Course Design
  - Teaching Tips: Bloom's Taxonomy and Developing Objective
    - Teaching Tips: Designing a Syllabus
- Teaching Methods
  - Teaching Tips: Direct Instruction
    - Teaching Tips: Flipping the Classroom
    - Teaching Tips: Active Learning
- Assessment
  - Teaching Tips: Assessment Strategies
    - Teaching Tips: Classroom Assessment Techniques

# Course Design

Course design is the process of planning learning environments and experiences for students; it is a creative step where you are envisioning what you want your course to accomplish. When envisioning your course through the design process you want to be sure you are thoughtful, systematic and specific in your choices. In order to foster creative design you can look for connections and relationships between topics within your course as well as between your course and the wider curriculum. Whether designing a new course or modifying an existing course, the course design journey begins by clearly defining what you expect your students to have learned by the end of your course, module, or section. Effective course design supports students' participation in deeper learning experiences that foster intellectual growth.

The course design teaching tips presented here focus on best practices for developing your objectives and creating a course syllabus, which are some of the earliest steps in your course design journey.

- [Developing Objectives and Using Bloom's Taxonomy](#)
- [Designing a Syllabus](#)

# Developing Objectives and Using Bloom's Taxonomy

Learning objectives define specifically what the learner must know or be able to do as a result of the learning activity.

Good learning objectives can help you as much as they help your learners: “Objectives help you decide what to include in the course, help the learners understand what they will get and what will be expected of them, and help you evaluate the learner and course.<sup>1</sup>”

A learning objective is a statement that:

- Specifies in measurable terms what a learner will be able to do as a result of your instruction,
- Describes the intended outcome of the course rather than a description or summary of the content, and
- Details the intended results rather than the means of achieving the results.

Mager (1984) states that each learning objective has three parts:

1. Performance: what a learner is expected to be able to do.
2. Conditions: the environment under which the performance occurs.
3. Criterion: how well the learner must perform for it to be considered acceptable.

Bloom’s Taxonomy is a commonly used framework for building learning objectives. The categories in the Taxonomy are on a continuum from lower level or basic level of knowledge to higher levels of competence and ability. The Taxonomy, as revised in 2001, comprises six major categories: Remember, Understand, Apply, Analyze, Evaluate and Create.

When creating learning objectives, use Bloom’s Taxonomy to help you identify the level of competence the learner should attain, and then choose an appropriate verb to use in the objective based on that level of competence. The Bloom’s Taxonomy image on this page presents a sample of verbs aligned with the different levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy.

It is important to note that although many people use the terms “learning objectives” and “learning outcomes” or “learning goals” interchangeably, there is a distinct difference between them. Learning objectives are tied to specific tasks, skills or knowledge involved in a learning activity. In contrast, learning outcomes or goals describe the overall purpose of participating in a learning activity. Learning outcomes are usually discussed within the context of program-wide assessment and goals are frequently considered in preliminary course planning.

Below you will find links to a number of resources that can help you create more clear and effective learning objectives.

[CONTACT ETI](#) to meet with an ETI colleague for more help with the construction of your learning objectives.

- [Carnegie Mellon Teaching Excellence & Educational Innovation: Articulate Your Learning Objectives](#)

- Describes importance of learning objectives and lays out a number of best practices.
- [UC Denver Center for Faculty Development](#)
  - Defines components of good learning objectives and provides examples and a worksheet of verbs to use.
- [UNC Charlotte Center for Teaching and Learning](#)
  - Defines course objectives and provides fill-in-the-blank example on how to write objectives.
- [Vanderbilt Center for Teaching](#)
  - Provides background information on Bloom's Taxonomy and description of all elements of the taxonomy as well as a rationale for its use.

**References:**

1Pinder, D., & Elkins, D. (2015). E-learning fundamentals (1st ed.) Association for Talent Development.

# Designing a Syllabus

An effective syllabus can tell learners nearly everything they need to know about how a course will be run and what will be expected of them. Generally the syllabus will include course policies, rules and regulations, required texts, faculty contact information and a schedule of assignments.

When creating a syllabus for a distributed learning (DL) course, you should include much of the same information that goes into a syllabus for a traditional face to face course. Specific details about such elements as assignments, timelines, and resources are even more critical in the syllabus for a DL course, however, as the learners will not have the convenience of asking questions directly like they do during an in-person event.

The syllabus can affect how students view the course and the instructor. Researchers at James Madison University surveyed student responses to detailed and brief versions of the same syllabus, and concluded that students associated the detailed syllabus with qualities of a master teacher.

Before creating or revising your syllabus, you should check with your department or school to find out if they have a standard syllabus template to use. If they do have a template, find out about areas in which you can and cannot deviate from the template.

Below you will find a number of links that provide additional information about best practices when creating syllabi, as well as examples of effective syllabi. Note that many of the examples provided below incorporate guidance or elements that are specific to their institution.

[CONTACT ETI](#) to meet with an ETI colleague for additional help with the construction of your syllabus.

## [Carnegie Mellon Teaching Excellence & Educational Innovation: Write a syllabus](#)

Provides recommendations and considerations for writing a syllabus for a new course or revising your existing syllabus, and also presents examples of existing syllabi. The site also provides Carnegie Mellon's checklist for syllabi as well as their syllabus template.

## [Cornell University Center for Teaching Innovation](#)

Provides resources to help you get started with writing a syllabus, as well as a link to Cornell's syllabus template.

## [Indiana University Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning](#)

Discusses the structure and function of a syllabus, and also provides examples of syllabi.

## [University of Texas at Austin Faculty Innovation Center](#)

Includes the University of Texas's recommendations and requirements for components of the syllabus, information about best practices, and a few references.

## [University of Washington Center for Teaching and Learning](#)

Identifies the purpose of a syllabus, lists common components, and provides resources about course planning.

## [Vanderbilt Center for Teaching](#)

This Guide to Syllabus Design highlights sixteen elements of a learner-centered syllabus, presents a list of other items that can appear in a good syllabus, and includes resources with additional information.

**Reference:**

Saville, Bryan K., Tracy E. Zinn, Allison R. Brown, and Kimberly A. Marchuk. (2010). "Syllabus Detail and Students' Perceptions of Teacher Effectiveness." *Teaching of Psychology*, 37:3, 186-189