

7 Habits of Highly Effective Etudes Teachers

1 - Be Proactive (Work smart and avoid obvious pitfalls):

- Make sure all computers you use have their browser settings set according to the Gateway.
- Never use the browser's Back button.
- Be careful if working with two browser windows open at the same time. You could possibly overwrite your own work and end up losing content.
- Be sure and finish out your action before moving on by clicking the appropriate action button "save", "done", or "finish" or "cancel", etc.
- Be frugal in where you place dates or even days of the week, in case you change your mind. The fewer places to update the change the less confusion for you and students if you miss making a change.
- Don't use the Add Announcement feature of the Assignments tool (are you still using that tool?) when you're adding all your assignments before the class begins.
- Avoid losing your work by either composing in an editor such as WordPad and then copying and pasting, or periodically saving your work with the appropriate button in the Etudes tool you are using or by selecting all the text and copying to the clipboard.
- Avoid having students send you a PM to your fake student. Give the test student account a proper label such as first name is "Test" last name is "Student", and do not put your name in those boxes. Doing so will cause your name to show up twice in the discussion tool of the course and students may send a PM to the wrong account causing you to miss important communication.
- If you have quizzes in which you release the answers by a specific date, don't forget to change the dates to release the answers, when you are setting up a new semester! You must go into "publish" to change this date. It's always a good idea to look over this list carefully, save, then test-drive first before publishing.

2 - Begin With the End in Mind (Look at the big picture. Is it clear?):

- Use formatting features of tools to make your message stand out, don't overdo it though.
- Use the Worksite Information box to customize your course's homepage (ideas include images from the Web, video clips, inspiring words, concise instructions for using the course site, etc.)
- Design your own Web page to fit into the homepage box. The benefit here over just typing in information is that you can format the text, add urls, pictures and other more elaborate features. You can make one in your My Workspace Resources (make it public) using the Web page editor tool.
- Include supplemental handouts within a module section if it is relevant to that section. This may be better than placing it in Resources where students are taken out of the context in which it relates. Also, when you transfer your course to the next term all items attached to modules will transfer but ones linked via Resources will be broken.

3 - First Things First (Arrange items with care):

- If you are using the Chat tool in your course you may want to post a chat message yourself, before class starts with an explanation of what you will be using the Chat tool for in your class. Here is an example: "Hello! This is a real-time chat room... a space for you to chit-chat if you happen to be logged on at the same time. This is NOT the place to ask questions of the instructor. Please post them in the discussion area, under Course Questions. Thanks!"
- When setting up an exam or quiz that has multiple parts, take time to arrange those parts in a logical order. You wouldn't want an extra credit part to come before the main part.
- If you want students to be able to see their current grade as the course is progressing, then make sure only graded items that are due are showing in the gradebook.

4 - Think Win/Win (Make the course design and tools work for you):

- Take advantage of the public nature of discussions and enlist students to help answer basic course questions in a forum that you dedicate for class questions. You could encourage it by awarding extra credit points or just ask students to help. Often no reward is necessary.
- Let Etudes take some of your work-load by creating your objective assessments using Tasks, Tests and Surveys and not by attaching a document.
- Use the pool feature to allow the system to randomly draw a pre-determined number of questions for a quiz/exam. It will be different for each student.
- When calculating a course grade, the student's cumulative average percentage is never rounded up. For example if a student gets 79.99% overall, and the limit for a B is 80%, that student will receive a C . . . not being rounded up hurts. You can override this by setting your percents accordingly. 79.5% would be the cutoff for a B and so on.
- Use Private Messages instead of email. All your course communication records are in one location along with other course records. You could include an assignment where students must PM you and they must turn on PM email alert feature in their Profile.

5 - Think First to Understand, Then to Be Understood (See through your student's eyes and deliver):

- Using the built in editor as opposed to attaching a file overcomes a number of possible trouble areas for students: (1) Compatibility issues if the student does not have the proper program to open the file you have attached or they are on a different platform than the one the document was created on, say Mac vs. PC. (2) Security settings and/or popup blocking may prevent students from being able to open files. (3) Bandwidth issues- files take time to download. The editor creates Web pages which load very quickly by comparison. (4) Continuity issues- When the student must use a separate program to view the attached file they are taken out of the course site thus upsetting the continuity that is maintained when they are kept in the course site by viewing the Web page created with the editor and kept within the course.
- Give a practice quiz/exam where students have an opportunity to try out the testing features and also make sure their equipment is set up properly to work with the test features.

6 - Synergize (Are the settings in line with your goals?):

- If your test has mixed objective and subjective type questions, you probably don't want students seeing the score until you've had a chance to grade them. Therefore, make sure the test is set to "Manual Release" so that once you've graded the subjective questions you can then return the exam to the student.
- For a high-stakes exam make sure you set the "Review Options" for either "Never show review" or "Show after date" with a date after all exams are turned in. Also, under "Release Grades", set it to "Manual release" and do not check the "Send to gradebook" option. Students will get absolutely no feedback. THEN, after the due date has passed, you can go back and change the grading to send grades to the gradebook.
- Are you using the default times on everything? Is it appropriate? Time is important to online students. Be consistent and make your open and close times appropriate and correspond with your syllabus policies.
- Make sure your test questions, test answers, points and other things are exactly how you wish them to be before clicking on "Publish". Once a test is published you cannot change certain things such as question wording, question point values, etc..

7 - Sharpen the Saw (Learn and grow with the tools and times):

- Try and take time to read the Etudes announcements, and take advantage of the help documents and tool demonstrations.
- Utilize the Etudes Users Group.
- Other Resources: <http://www.portervillecollege.edu/tlc/resources.htm>