

Flexibility &V Firmness



Kind AND Firm



"My name is Mrs. Clawson and I have a graduate degree in early childhood education . . . and a black belt in karate."

Positive Discipline Tools for Teachers
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Create your own ground rules

It can be difficult to be consistently kind and firm in the online classroom. Here are a few suggestions to help you get started:

Validate feelings

Show understanding

Use “I” messages

Provide a choice

Establish an online presence

- **a feeling of trust and being welcomed;**
- **a sense of belonging to a critical community;**
- a sense of control;
- a sense of accomplishment;
- a willingness to engage in discourse;
- a conversational tone;
- a questioning attitude

Garrison, D. R. and Anderson, T. (2003). E-learning in the 21st century: A framework for research and practice. London, UK: RoutledgeFarmer.

Encourage Conversations

- **Create spaces** for students to build rapport
 - Open, ungraded discussions or icebreakers
 - Course Cafe Forums or chats
 - Ask the Instructor Forums or chats
- **Make assignments relevant** to students' lives
 - Provide open-ended prompts
 - Draw real-world parallels to the course materials
 - Ask students to apply and synthesize the concepts from class to life
- **Facilitate opportunities for collaboration** and support
 - Offer students an opportunity to teach each other
 - Ask students to collaborate on projects or peer-review research papers

Create Informal Virtual Cafes

Benefits:

- **Fosters a sense of community** and support by providing online learners a way to share common interests, goals, and challenges
- **Helps ‘humanize’ the online course** experience by cultivating casual, social exchanges and interactions.

Activity Steps:

- The instructor sets up a Discussion or chat Forum that includes a “Virtual Café” topic.
- Students are invited (but not required) to start up “virtual conversations” on any number of topics of interest unrelated to the course content
- The instructor posts an initial comment that welcomes students to the Virtual Café and explains its benefits.

Follow the Strategies to Enhance Interactivity

- Promote Critical Thinking
- Create relevant and Engaging Lectures
- Share Biographical Posts
- Provide Positive Affirmations of Student Work
- Integrate Stories into Class Discussions
- **Provide students with Flexibility**

Muirhead, B. (2004). "Encouraging interaction in online classes." *International Journal of Instructional Technology and Distance Learning*, 1 (6), 45-50. 2004.

Need for Flexibility

Instructors must be careful **not** to provide excessive structure to their classes that eliminates the potential for students making critical decisions about their assignments.

The term flexibility refers to making the learning **more relevant to the student's needs or circumstances**. The instructional emphasis is to make the learning experiences more individualized.

Muirhead, B. (2004). "Encouraging interaction in online classes." *International Journal of Instructional Technology and Distance Learning*, 1 (6), 45-50. 2004.

How to Be Flexible?

- Time flexibility
- Content flexibility
- Entry and completion flexibility
- Instructional approach flexibility
- Learning-resource flexibility
- Technology-use flexibility
- Interactivity and communication flexibility
- Course-logistics flexibility
- Location flexibility

Collis, B. (1998). New didactics for university instruction: Why and how? *Computers and Education*, 31 (4), 373-393.

Be aware of hinderances based on psychological readiness and personal factors, including stress

- Lack of prerequisite technical or subject matter knowledge
- Inadequate instructional feedback on assignments from teachers
- Absence of clear goals
- Ineffective study habits
- **Stress and anxiety**

Shearer, R. L. (2003). Interaction in distance education. Special Report 2 (1). Madison, WI: Atwood Publishing.

The answer is....

**Focus on building a
community**

Additional Resources

- [5 creative icebreakers](#)
- [Effective Online Discussions](#)
- [Effective Online Teaching](#)

