



## 10 Strategies for Engaging Learners with Online Collaboration

### Overview

This document outlines 10 strategies for engaging learners with online collaboration. This is not a how-to document; we simply describe some of the types of activities and strategies that may be useful in your course.

### What is Online Collaboration?

Online Collaboration refers to a cloud-based application that allows multiple users to communicate with one another and to create and edit shared documents and presentations on the web from different locations. This practice can be used in both face-to-face courses and, of course, in fully online classes.

IT Solutions offers several [online collaboration tools](#) to help you develop the following strategies in your own classes:

#### Enterprise Tools:

- [OneDrive](#)

Learn more about these fully supported tools here: [Online Meeting Tools](#)

## 10 Strategies for Engaging Learners with Online Collaboration

### Strategy #1: Collaborative Writing Projects

*The basics:* Students can use OneDrive to create group documents that they can edit in real-time. Since the document is stored “on the cloud”, the most up-to-date version of the document is always available to all group members. Group members can also control who can access, edit or view the document at any time.

*Variations on the approach:* Online collaboration with written assignments is also useful for peer review and editing. Students can share the document with the class or specific students who can view or edit, using the comment function. Instructors can also view the document and the peer edits in real time.

### Strategy #2: Create a Shared Knowledge Base

*The basics:* A wiki is a website that allows multiple users to add, modify, or delete content using rich-text editors or simplified markup language, allowing the users to co-construct papers, knowledge bases, or web sites around a topic. Students can use Google Sites, Wikispaces, or other collaboration sites to create a class wiki. The entire class, or a select group of students, can add their knowledge to the wiki on

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a given topic. Wikis can be used as assessments, exam review or class textbooks.

*Variations on the approach:* Groups can use wikis as online portfolios for semester-long projects. Students can archive their work, any reviews and edits, and final graded drafts on the wiki. Instructors can access the wiki at the end of the semester to see the progression of work from individual students or groups.

### **Strategy #3: Create Mindmaps**

*The basics:* Mindmaps are diagrams that visually connect information. There are a variety of online tools that students can use to create mindmaps, but these can also be done in One Drive, using Microsoft Word, Excel or PowerPoint. Give students a topic and ask them to create a mind map to brainstorm, create a process flow chart, or to connect ideas.

*Variations on the approach:* Ask students to create graphic organizers or infographics visually explaining a topic or concept. Graphic organizers can be useful group projects and online collaboration tools allow students to add their parts of the assignment in real time.

### **Strategy #4: Use Multimedia to Replace Traditional Assignments**

*The basics:* Students can use OneDrive to create and edit a PowerPoint presentation collaboratively. Ask each group member to narrate a portion of the presentation by adding audio.

*Variations on the approach:* Online collaboration tools allow students to store files on the cloud easily. Students can upload portions of a video and use online collaboration tools to edit and publish a final product.

### **Strategy #5: Hold a Scholarly Treasure Hunt**

*The basics:* Ask students to go out, find articles, images, and digital artifacts and post them into a shared folder in OneDrive. This would be a fun way to have students begin to understand how to do a scholarly search for literature review and to create a shared body of materials that they would then be expected to read and do something with as part of their course assignment. The students could then all use those resources to write a literature review on a topic and compete to see who writes the best one.

*Variations on the Strategy:* Have students create a semester-long reference list or bibliography using a shared document in OneDrive. This will give them an opportunity to conduct reference searches and use the reference formatting style of the discipline.

### **Strategy #6: Define Classroom Rules or Policies**

*The basics:* Use an online collaboration tool, such as One Drive, to create a shared classroom policies document. Students and instructor add to the document as the semester progresses. Students can also add clarification for assignments, study tips, or etiquette policies as the semester moves along.

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*Variations on the approach:* As a part of learner-centered instruction, use online collaboration tools to have students create their own assessments as a group. Students can create rubrics, tests or other assignments that the entire class takes upon final approval from the instructor.

### **Strategy #7: Answer Student Questions Only Once, or Community-source Q&A**

*The basics:* As an instructor, you may find yourself answering the same question multiple times. By using a shared document or class wiki, you can post the answer to any question you receive and share it with the entire class. At the beginning of your class, train your students to refer to the document or wiki first before contacting you with a question. You can also create a culture in the class of insisting that students post their questions to the wiki rather than sending them directly to you and providing extra credit for students who answer their peers' questions.

*Variations on the approach:* By sharing editing rights to a class document or wiki, students can answer questions for each other, creating a shared knowledge base and establishing students as peer experts on a given topic.

### **Strategy #8: Add Technology to Your Active Learning Strategies**

*The basics:* OneDrive and the suite of Microsoft tools can also be used to document student responses to in-class activities. The responses can be archived for later use in review or portfolio assignments.

*Variations on the approach:* Online collaboration tools such as Padlet or Popplet allow students to add content to an online "wall" in real time. This is a useful tool for Think-Pair-Share exercises or Peer Instruction.

### **Strategy #9: Increase Student Interaction in Large Classes**

*The basics:* Post a Muddiest Point exercise folder in OneDrive and ask students to add their response after each class. Post your responses to their questions in the shared document or folder for the entire class to see. You can also encourage students to respond to each other in a peer teaching activity.

*Variations on the approach:* Using a blogging site as a discussion forum can encourage students in larger classes to participate more readily than in class. Instructors can post a discussion prompt and moderate the flow of the discussion. Breaking up large classes into smaller groups can make the discussions more manageable.

### **Strategy #10: Encourage Your Students to "Go Green"**

*The basics:* Challenge your students to find new and creative ways to reduce paper usage in the classroom through online collaboration tools. Ask them to document the tools and processes they use and add them to a course wiki or shared document or folder.

*Variations on the approach:* Ask students to create a technology handbook for future classes. Chronicle their successes and challenges with collaborative technology and ask them to document instructions, tips and tricks such as using Airdrop on iPhones or iPads, using Dropbox to share items, or other useful

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products that students used for your class.

## References

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[TEACHING IN THE CLOUD: LEVERAGING ONLINE COLLABORATION TOOLS TO ENHANCE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT](#)

[Teaching with Online Collaboration Tools: U-M Faculty Examples](#)

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