

# Creating Magic in Your (Online) Classroom



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# Welcome

& a little about me





“What does it mean, to be a teacher? In a time like this? When you cannot see your students’ faces, and yet, you have to offer them your heart?”

What does the most good?

What does the least harm?

What is the debt we owe each other?

What is mundane, and what has altered my soul?”

Sarah E. Smith, “[Response to Student Evaluations](#)”

Let's begin by brainstorming:



Grab a piece of paper, and make a quick list of some of the best teachers you've had throughout your life.

- Next, make a list of the main qualities these teachers possessed?

- How did these qualities seem to affect their classroom, their students, and/or student learning?

- Which of these qualities can easily be conveyed in the online classroom?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Which of these qualities might be more difficult to convey online?

## Brainstorm Ideas:



- Organized
- Passion
- Critical thinking



- Sacrifice
- Dedication
- Engage students in professional types of interactions
- Fear of being recorded being silly or unprofessional
- participating verbally online. Risking selves.
- Language barriers



Among many other things, but perhaps most importantly, the best teachers tend to ignite curiosity and passion within their students.




*The best online teachers also figure out how to ignite this spark.*

If you are relatively new to online teaching, you might be wondering:



Start with a Handful of This and a Sprinkle of That



A person wearing a dark red, textured coat is shown from the chest up. Their hands are raised in a gesture, with fingers slightly spread. The hands are illuminated from below, creating a strong glow. In the center of the image, a bright white circle contains the text. The background is dark, making the person and the glowing elements stand out.

*Be friendly &  
approachable.  
Be a “real-live”  
person.*

## Introduce yourself and make it personal



I have been teaching writing for over 22 years and have been teaching online classes for over 16. Getting to know my students and hearing their stories is one of my favorite things about teaching. In my free time, I like doing yoga, hiking, cooking, camping, mountain biking, reading (big surprise!), and watching movies--all with my husband and our twin teenagers.

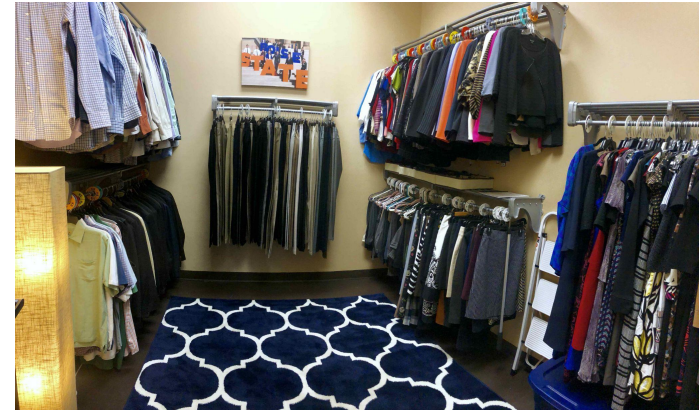
## Socialize with your students

In the face to face classroom, we often talk with our students before and after class. Online, we must be more intentional in order to create space for this type of casual bonding.

- Share photos, funny memes, GIFs, interesting links, resources, etc.



Ted Talk: Inside the Mind of a Master Procrastinator



Boise State's COBE Career Closet

## Use the dang emoji. 😊


By and large online students already assume your professionalism; *it's your humanity you must be purposeful to convey.*

- Some of my favorites to use with students are pretty basic, and yet they emphasize emotion and convey friendliness in a way text alone may not.
  - Nothing quite says “oops” like 🙄
  - Hmm. Let me look into this and get back to you. 🤔
  - Add emphasis to Happy weekend! Or Excellent work! 🎉
  - I'm sorry to hear about your dog/ grandma/ car/ job, etc.... 😞
  - And for a clear show of support, the good ol' 👍👍.

*When combined, meaningful introductions, regular socializing, and the use of emoji, LOLs, memes, hashtags, etc. can help to create an atmosphere of fun and creativity. In other words, they help create buy-in within your students.*





A person wearing a dark red, textured robe is shown from the chest up. Their hands are raised in a gesture, with fingers slightly curled. The hands are illuminated from below, creating a strong contrast with the dark background. In the center of the image, a glowing white circle contains the text "Care about your students. Make them feel seen." in a black, sans-serif font. The overall mood is contemplative and focused on the message of care and connection.

*Care about  
your students.  
Make them  
feel seen.*

Learn your students' names. Admittedly, this can be harder online. Names and emails without faces blur together. But with effort, it can be done.



## Create space for your students

- Make assignments relevant to students
  - Encourage curiosity. Allow students the freedom to choose their own topics, research angle, and/ or assignment option, when appropriate.
  - Remind them why the work they're doing matters
- Encourage self care for your students



*Students can feel familiarity or the lack of it. Fostering it will raise you from a faceless computer to a teacher who cares.*



A person wearing a dark red, textured suit jacket is shown from the chest up. Their hands, with dark red manicured nails, are positioned on either side of a glowing white sphere. The sphere is the source of light, illuminating the person's hands and the fabric of their suit. The background is dark, making the glowing sphere and the person's hands stand out.

*Be accessible.  
Stay connected.*

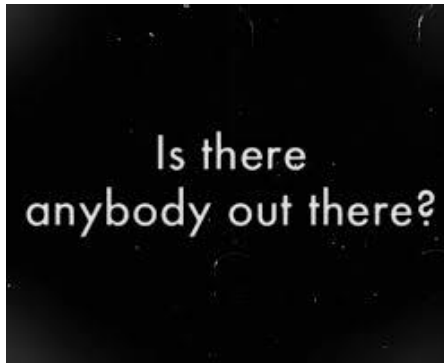
## Answer emails promptly, according to your set policies

- Online, email is the equivalent of a raised hand, so aim to respond ASAP.
- Set clear expectations for your students regarding your email response time and stick to it.

COMMUNICATE

Learn to effectively utilize your institution's online learning platform and try to head off and/ or warn students about potential communication pitfalls

- Possible roadblocks to consider:
  - Should students contact you through the coursesite, via email, or both?
  - How are students notified of course announcements?
  - Where do students need to go to find your feedback on their assignments?



## Update the gradebook frequently

- Even 20-25 minutes per course a couple of times a week will tell students you are present and engaged.
- Give meaningful, individualized feedback when possible.





## Post course announcements regularly

- Modify recurring announcements for *this* specific course and *this* specific group of students.
- Socialize with students here too.



*Your active engagement in the course will set the stage for theirs.*



A person wearing a dark red blazer is shown from the chest up, with their hands raised in a gesture. The hands are illuminated from below, and a glowing white circle is positioned in the center of the frame. The text "Build community. Create opportunity for connection." is written inside the circle. The background is dark, and the overall mood is professional and inspiring.

Build community.  
Create  
opportunity for  
connection.


# Create regular opportunities for students to interact with one another

- Ask students to introduce themselves to one another.
- Incorporate group work and/ or peer feedback when possible.



*The best classrooms are places where students feel like they belong. The same is true online.*



A person wearing a dark red, textured coat is shown from the chest down. Their hands, with dark red manicured nails, are positioned on either side of a glowing white circular orb. The orb is the primary light source, casting a warm glow on the person's hands and the fabric of their coat. The background is dark, making the glowing orb and the person's hands stand out.

*Be passionate.  
Let your light  
shine.*

## Be “you-ier” when communicating with your students through text

- Let your voice shine through.
  - Or, as I told my students last semester: “You don't have to try to sound like an objective robot. 🤖 Feel free to be a person! Ask questions, share your perspectives, ideas, and experiences, crack jokes, etc--let the ‘real’ you shine through in your work.”
- Share your work with your students, when appropriate



## Show your smile and use video when appropriate

- Welcome videos, Zoom office hours, and pre-recorded lectures can all help establish rapport with your students





## Create space for yourself

- Save energy and time in places where it simultaneously builds quality.
- Self care



*Your authenticity will encourage students to bring theirs into the classroom as well which will thus invite deeper, longer lasting, and more meaningful learning.*

**we need  
MORE  
authenticity**

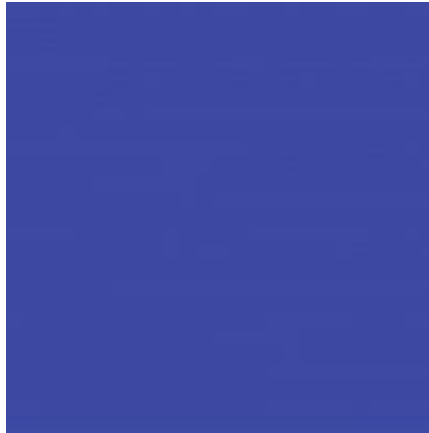


A person wearing a dark red, textured robe is shown from the chest down. Their hands, with dark red nail polish, are positioned around a glowing white sphere. The sphere contains the text "Keep it fresh. Don't hesitate to begin again." The lighting is dramatic, with the sphere being the primary light source, casting a glow on the person's hands and the robe. The background is dark, making the glowing sphere stand out.

*Keep it fresh.  
Don't hesitate to  
begin again.*

## Continually reflect and revise, revise, revise.

- Just because you can copy information from one course site to another, doesn't mean you should.
- If something works well in your face-to-face classroom, consider how to tweak it for the online sphere.



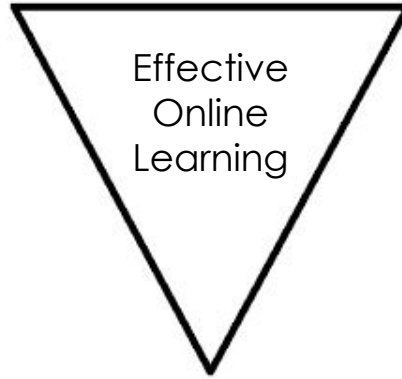
Return to your earlier brainstorming.

- Pick one of the qualities you think would be more difficult to convey online

- How might you go about beginning to integrate this quality into your online classroom?

The secret to effective online teaching: meaningful connections start with & depend on you.

Student- materials



Student- student

**Instructor- student**

*It is up to us to invite the magic in, so choose with care the ingredients you add to your cauldron for they will either nourish connection or zap its possibility from the get-go.*

