Special Report

Online Teaching Strategies

Transform Your Students' Online Learning Environment with Resources, Apps, and Games

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A Reflection on the Sudden Transition: Ideas to Make Your Synchronous Online Classes More Fun

Siva priya Santhanam, PhD

The transition to online teaching has been partially, if not completely, challenging for faculty teaching in colleges and universities. I am writing this article while reflecting on my own experiences, when our university made the decision to move to online teaching. Online teaching is not new to me; I have spent a great deal of time and effort learning and understanding best practices in online education, and I think I do a decent—if not stellar—job at it. But the speedy transition to online format has shifted my focus from student engagement and fostering the joy of learning together to "content delivery." I have experienced a sense of rush and inadequacy, and I feel a need to hide my fears and challenges with this online transition from my students.

When this online transition was announced, I had only two requests of my students: I asked them to please be patient with me as I figured out this change, and please trust me in this process. I have noticed that students have been extremely flexible, understanding, forgiving, and even sweet and supportive during this process. Although they have more at stake (in terms of grades and graduation) and additional concerns with housing, family commitments, and jobs, they have been my biggest support system. However, my biggest challenge has been limited engagement in online synchronous classes. Even students who are typically talkative and engaged in face-to-face classes, do not engage as much in an online format. I use a hybrid approach—part of my class is asynchronous and part of it is synchronous online.

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For the asynchronous portion, I post lecture notes/discussion notes ahead of time on the course LMS (Learning Management System), and I record myself explaining concepts/terminologies based on the notes. I use free screencasting apps such as Yuja, Screencast-o-matic, or Loom for this purpose.

Students can see me and my computer's screen in these recordings. I also hyperlink recordings in the notes that I post for students. Students can read the notes on their device and watch the recordings before they meet with me synchronously online.

I use synchronous time for reviews and discussions. I avoid lecturing during this time, and use several activities to clarify questions and confusions, provide feedback, and create discussion opportunities. I feel as if we, as educators, should build a relationship with our students online even if we have previously established a relationship in face-to-face classes. We want students to become more comfortable with this novel format, and trust us and the work we do.

Here are some ideas/activities that I have been using to shed light on my synchronous online classes, while fostering a fun environment. I basically put on my clinician hat as I began compiling these ideas. In some ways, I see similarities between online teaching and teletherapy. I do not know if these ideas are evidence-based, and I certainly do not know yet if these are appreciated by my students, but I do look forward to reading those student evaluations at the end of this semester more than ever before. If you are new to online teaching or a pro at it, I hope at least one of these ideas sparks interest for you.

Fun Activities for Online Classes

1. We play a **"This/That" game**. It is really silly, but both the students and I have fun with it, or at least I do. For example, I start the game with the first student who volunteers. "Do you like Semantics/Pragmatics? Why?" "Would you like to be the Broca's area/Wernicke's area? Why?" "Would you like to have a conversation with a toddler/a preschooler? How?" Then each student calls out a peer's name and asks them a similar question. We make sure that everyone gets a turn.

2. We play **"Two truths and a lie."** For example, I start with the first student. "Intentional communication emerges around 8-9 months. Joint attention emerges around 6 – 10 months of age. Inflectional morphemes are mastered by age 3." The student has to select which one of these statements is a lie. And then, I give the students a checklist that they can use to ask the next person another "Two truths and a lie" question.

3. Another game we play is called **"Circle of questions."** One student starts with a question. For example, "What is decontextualized language?" The next student then responds and asks a question to the person that she / he tags. The next question needs to

be in some way related to the first question. For example, it can be related to decontextualized language or language development in preschoolers. All students get a chance to ask and respond.

4. We play a **"Tell your grandma" / "Teach your grandpa"** game. I post questions ahead of time. If there are 10 students, I post 10 questions. Each student picks a question and spends about two minutes preparing an answer. I then pretend to be the grandma or grandpa, and I ask a question pretending to not know anything about it. For example, I say, "What exactly is phonological awareness?" And then I annoy them by saying, "Really? I can't understand that. Could you tell me what a phoneme is first? Why would a child need phonological awareness? What does it have to do with reading?" etc. So, I spend about five minutes with each student doing this.

5. Another game is called **"Emoji Slides."** This is a great game to play before exams. I have a set of pre-made slides. Each slide displays a concept or a word or a question. I share my screen and present one slide at a time. Students have to respond by reacting to the word/concept/question on the slide with an emoji – ☺ Happy , ☹ Sad, or 😐 Neutral. If I see a ☺ happy emoji from all students, I move on to presenting the next slide. If a few students respond with a sad or neutral emoji, I stop and explain the concept or give examples, and then ask them to react with an emoji again. If the emoji is now happy, we move ahead. Students can also create their own slides, share their screen, tag a person, and ask them to react.

6. Another game we play is **"Who am I?"** For example, I say, "I am a part of the cochlea that separates the scala media and the scala tympani. Who am I?"

7. We do **online role plays**. For example, one student volunteers, and we practice asking questions as part of a case history while I pretend to be the caregiver and the student takes the role of a speech-language pathologist. We then reverse roles. We also role play to practice counseling. I provide a list of case-based scenarios that all students can look at. I read each scenario aloud, and students take turns to counsel me while I play the role of the client.

8. For review of concepts, we use **collaborative worksheets**. We use this activity every time we meet online as students like the structure and repetition of this activity. I post a worksheet with several questions (multiple choice, fill in the blanks, true/false, explain a term, give an example, compare two concepts, etc.). Students can then open this worksheet on their Microsoft Teams browser and start typing answers to these questions. Students can see each other's responses, and I can see both their names and their responses. They get immediate synchronous feedback. I respond next to their responses with a happy emoji if their answer is correct. If their answers seem vague or incorrect, I edit it online while everyone else can see my edits. You can do this activity with Google Docs if you are not using Microsoft Teams.

9. Finally, we use **short 15-minute quizzes** during the synchronous class time. I create quizzes using Microsoft Forms because it is compatible with Teams. These quizzes are not part of the course grade; they are merely used for practice. Students can complete the quiz on their individual devices during class time, and I can review their responses, where they can get immediate feedback. You can create these on your course LMS, use Google Forms, or simply read a question out loud and have students respond in the chat screen or shout out the answers.

BookSnaps for Enhancing Student Learning

Jennie Carr, PhD

Snapchat is probably the most popular social media app among those under 30. What distinguishes it from other such apps is that it allows users to add cartoon-like images and text to their photos and videos. While this playful interaction between users may seem like the antithesis of serious learning, Tara Martin (2017) found a way to channel student interest in sharing annotated images toward an educational purpose by creating what she calls a BookSnap. Instead of snapping selfies, a student makes a BookSnap by taking a photo of a passage from a book, article, or other source and adding images and text to interpret and reflect on what they read (Figure 1). These can be emotions, thoughts, or feelings provoked by their reading.

What advantages does a BookSnap have over a traditional paper report? For one, learning retention. According to Schwartz (2015), "When ideas and related concepts can be encapsulated in an image, the brain remembers the information associated with that image." Think, for instance, of how famous images encapsulate the meaning of historical events. The image of a sailor kissing his girlfriend on a dock captures the joy the United States felt at the end of World War II. Similarly, those who have seen the documentary March of the Penguins (dir. Luc Jacquet, 2005) likely remember the image of the frozen egg, which captures the hardships faced by penguins trying to survive and reproduce in their inhospitable environment—the movie's underlying theme. Expressing a passage as an image will thus help students retain its meaning.

Moreover, BookSnaps help students think critically about their reading by developing personal connections to the text and interpreting it in creative ways. After all, Snapchat images and videos are interpretations of student's experiences. Instead of simply taking a photo of a concert, the overlays add the user's feelings and thoughts about the event. The choice of overlay engages the user in a creative expression of their experience. We want students to internalize what they read in our courses, and providing them with a

means of expressing their interpretations will encourage that process. While students tend to think of papers as merely a means of regurgitating what they read and "giving the instructor what they want," asking students to create BookSnaps recasts the entire exercise as an opportunity for personal expression.

Using BookSnaps academically

For independent reading assignments, students are likely to engage in their reading by creating BookSnap summaries for each page or section they read. Students can embed the individual BookSnaps in a Google Slide presentation submitted to their teacher or submit the image within a discussion board post on a learning management system. BookSnaps are most commonly used for textbook or article comprehension, but they are equally useful for other purposes. In English courses, students may use a BookSnap to identify plot components, figurative language, or main ideas. In math courses, students can take a picture of their calculations, annotate their explanations, or ask questions. In history courses, students can take a picture of a timeline and identify turning points or key events. Science educators may use BookSnaps to have their students summarize vocabulary or provide evidence supporting their hypotheses, while art students may take a picture of a painting or sculpture and provide their interpretation or identify the genre. The possibilities are divers.

Creating a BookSnap

Snapchat is most commonly used to create a BookSnap. But educators and students are also using Google Slides, Google Drawings, Seesaw, Pic Collage, Book Creator, or Buncee to create their BookSnaps. The first step of creating a BookSnap is to take a picture of the book, page, article, painting, or other artifact the student wants to annotate. Students then use text, font, or color features to type the annotation. Most annotations include the content's title, its creator's name, and hashtags (#s). The third step is to decorate the original image by adding meaningful images, stickers, or Bitmojis to enhance the annotation. The final step is to download and save the final product. The steps vary slightly depending on the platform used.

For more information on how to use BookSnaps in education, take a look at Tara Martin's website. Please also feel free to find and share ideas about uses of BookSnap via the hashtag #BookSnaps on Twitter. Experiment with BookSnaps in your teaching.

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Escape Rooms for Increased Student Engagement

John Orlando

Escape rooms have become a cultural phenomenon over the past few years. Groups of people pay to be put into "locked" rooms they can escape only by solving a series of clues. But now education is starting to use escape rooms in both face-to-face and online courses to provide a fun method for students to apply their learning to realistic situations.

Christopher McCullick created an escape room for his accounting class at William Jewell College (Din, 2020). He did so by transforming an empty faculty office in an "accounting escape room." One thing he learned from research is that an escape room must have a theme; his was "The Sneaky CEO." The premise was that students were auditors brought in to examine the financial statements of a CEO suspected of providing fraudulent information to shareholders. The students needed to solve various puzzles related to the statements and auditing processes to identify the fraud. Each puzzle unlocked a clue that led to another puzzle, often hidden in an ingenious location. For instance, one clue was hidden in a false-bottom drawer, another consisted of hidden text in a notebook visible only by black light, and yet another was an arrow posted outside the window of the room. In this way the simulation combined an understanding of accounting practices with the fun of unlocking clues to solve a mystery.

Students were first shown a video that gave the story line and then were put into the room in small groups of around four. They were then given 45 minutes to solve all of the puzzle while the organizers watched via a camera in the room. Watch this video overview to learn more about the project.

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McCullick hopes to expand the project by building a permanent escape room on campus. He wants to use this room to not only provide more escape room opportunities for his classes but also bring in local high school students to get them interested in accounting. A permanent space raises many other possible uses as well. For one, other instructors in other fields can come up with their own escape room games. Perhaps a department would want to host a competition related to its field

and give awards to students who solve it. An institution might also want to use an escape room activity during recruiting visits as a way to excite potential students about the school and demonstrate its innovative spirit.

Faculty not wanting to build an escape room from scratch can purchase a kit from Breakout EDU. The kits are about the size of briefcases and come with a variety of items for creating clues and solving puzzles, such as various types of locks, cards, and an invisible ink pen. Purchasing the kit also provides access to a website with around 1,200 preset games. Because nearly all of these games are for K–12, however, higher education instructors will want to use the template provided to design their own games. The kit's tools are essentially subject agnostic and so should work with nearly any game. The instructor need only develop a story and content that requires students to solve puzzles that use the tools in the kit.

But escape rooms can also be used in online learning, as evidenced by the web-based game that Enrique Cachafeiro used to teach about enzymes in his biology course at Duke University (Weisburgh, 2020). Cachafeiro built his virtual escape room using Amazon Sumerian, a browser-based virtual reality and augmented reality application. While designing a 3-D world may sound daunting, he found it remarkably easy to use the software, despite his having limited technical skills. The software provides samples of rooms and objects that serve as starting points. The user simply puts them together and modifies the information to their uses. The system is remarkably cheap as Amazon does not charge up front for the software. Instead, it charges according to the storage space and bandwidth used, which for Cachafeiro's class came out to only about two dollars.

Cachafeiro designed his room to look like a medieval castle, with a variety of doors, chests, locks, and keys. The locks and keys represented how enzymes act like keys that unlock molecules. Every molecule uses a unique enzyme, and the objective of the activity was to teach students how to identify the correct enzyme for each molecule. They did so by solving puzzles, which were often physical representations of a chemical reaction. For instance, one puzzle was a vat into which students could pour different combinations of indicator solutions. Indicator solutions turn chemicals different colors according to their composition. Students then needed to use their knowledge that enzymes are types of proteins to solve the puzzle and get a key that they inserted into another lock to open a new puzzle. Another activity required students to play with the temperature and pH of a solution to release another enzyme key. Cachafeiro even built some simulations that demonstrated chemical reactions, such as one that used a disk inserted into various shapes to represent how molecules are reused in multiple reactions.

As it is designed, only one person can use the escape room at a time. But Cachafeiro plans to expand the idea to build a storyline around the room and allow for groups to use it. Students would enter at a specific time and use a videoconferencing, audio conferencing, or chat app to communicate with one another while solving the puzzles in the room. He also notes that the software allows users to get an immersive VR experience by using a headset to move around the room as if they were in it. The augmented reality aspect of Sumerian also opens the possibility of students using headsets to project the room into their surroundings.

Virtual or real escape rooms present a new

way for students to apply course concepts to realistic situations. The enzyme activity also demonstrates how a virtual escape room can allow instructors of laboratory courses to add a laboratory-like element to an online class. Instructors wishing to build an escape room can use the framework developed by Coventry University to guide the process (Clarke et. al., 2017). Consider how an escape room can add a new dimension to your courses.

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Using Breakout Rooms with Less Stress and Better Results

Illysa Izenberg

"What are we supposed to be doing?" (said every student at least once in a breakout room).

Small groupwork enables students to "compare their current understandings with those of other team members. . .construct new understandings" (Brame, 2020), builds a learning community, facilitates reflection (Brame, 2020), and mirrors the workplace (Scott, 2011).

When instruction moved online this spring, many instructors found using videoconference breakouts much less effective and efficient than in F2F (Face to Face) classes because:

1. Students became confused;
2. the instructor could not monitor progress quickly for all groups at once;
3. and group report-backs were slowed.

Lost threads

Live videoconferencing requires a higher cognitive load than F2F learning—for both students and instructors (Bower, et al, 2015). I recently participated in a workshop in which the facilitator delivered a lecture, and, just before sending us into breakout rooms, asked us to determine how we could use the learning.

Our breakout group spent several minutes discussing conflicting memories of the assignment, task, and lecture content. By the time we agreed on what we had learned and began to discuss its use, time was up. As in many breakout groups, we wasted time asking each other, "What are we supposed to be doing?"

Loss of full class view

In a F2F class, instructors can read students' body language for signs of confusion, engagement, and distraction and can pause a group or the whole class if the challenge seems endemic. In this way, the instructor can scan all workgroups and deal with problems immediately and in parallel.

In videoconferencing, this happens in series: instructors can pop into a breakout, realize the group needs clarification, leave, and pop into another room only to realize this new group also needs clarification. While they can send a message to all the rooms at once, the pop-up on students' screens adds yet another cognitive load, may be ignored or misunderstood, and may be too late. Time is wasted and greater confusion can ensue as instructors try to regather everyone to the main room to explain.

Group reporting slower

Students who turn in their answers electronically may hesitate to share their screens for fear that they'll inadvertently show something personal or look incompetent. When they do share, precious time is lost as a member of each group clicks around, finds and shares their work, and deals with any technical problems that arise on their end. Then the process begins with the next group.

Instructors can use available free tools to overcome these challenges and reduce frustrations, such as Google Forms, Documents, and Sheets. In using these, I found that groups' speed, work quality, and the full group discussions afterward were comparable to that of F2F.

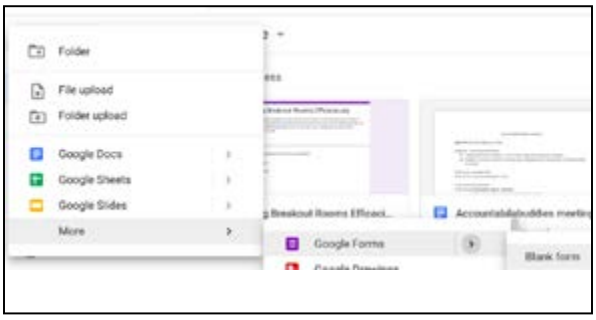
First, create a free Google account. Then choose which tool is best-suited for the learning. I found that Forms works well for questions and scenario discussions, Documents for charts, graphs, or very long answers, and Sheets for quantitative problem-sets. Documents and Sheets are better when I want students to continue to work outside of class or to have their own answers saved.

Using Google forms for breakout room groupwork

Before class:

1. In your drive, click on New–>More–>Google Forms

(Note: click on images to enlarge)



2. Create your form. In the Form Description, note the task's learning objective and explain precisely what students are expected to accomplish. Perhaps present a short summary of key concepts or a link to materials (such as a PPT).

3. Click on the first question box and list breakout room numbers, group names, or ask for students' names—whatever will be fastest, easiest, and most likely to develop community (Udermann, 2019). I recommend using multiple-choice for named rooms (a) and short answer for student names (b).

(a)

(b)

4.Click the "+" symbol and add a question, scenario, or problem; "long answer" may be most useful here.

5. Create a reminder to select one to two people to explain the group's answers by using the "Confirmation Message:"

6. Click Send–>the link symbol–>shorten URL in case students need to type it into their browser window—some videoconference tools disallow in-chat links.

I sometimes use an online URL-shortener to create a short, personalized link, and I copy the URL somewhere accessible so that I can paste it without searching during class. I prefer not to provide it in advance: when I shared it in our LMS announcements, students started the tasks on their own.

7. Right before class, open the Form and click on the preview "eye."

During class:

1. Before moving students into their breakout rooms, use the videoconference's "share" tool to walk students through the Form preview. Although the instructions are written on the form, showing while speaking can alleviate some cognitive load challenges. Also, many students learn better when they both hear and see explanations and can clarify any misunderstandings (Weimer, 2019).
2. Post the Form's URL, reminding students that only one person needs to open it and share their screen in each breakout room.
3. When students have completed their tasks and returned to the main room, the instructor opens the form, clicks on "responses" and shares their screen. No student will need to share screens.
4. Depending on what will best support learning, results can be shown all together, by group, or by question:

How to use other shared Google tools with many student groups at once:

Because multiple groups cannot use the same shared Google document, sheet, etc., they will need to save and share it with only their own group. Click here to see the instructions I send my students: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SIxMGxzJe7DIcfyOoRN-15F4GSqKcQSVOoHHGezFw-Rc/copy

With improved instructions, pre-generated worksheets, and links to the materials, videoconferencing breakout rooms can be as effective as F2F groupwork. This simple technique uses free tools and needs little preparation.

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How to Convert PDF Files to Digital Worksheets in Google Slides

Clarence Bellen

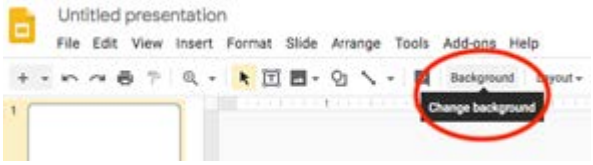
Wondering how to convert your paper worksheets into a digital worksheet? Now that most schools are transitioning to online learning, teachers are doing all they can to make the most of a lesson in digital form. Here is a step-by-step process on how to convert PDF files into a digital worksheet.

1. Take a screenshot of the worksheet you want to use. For Windows users, use your Snipping tool. For Mac Users, use Shift+command+4. Don't forget to crop the worksheet and remove unnecessary background.

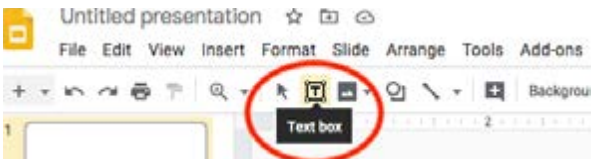
2. Create a blank presentation in a Google

Slide. You can customize the page setup into a size of copy paper (8.5" x 11").

3. Change the background and use the picture of the worksheet that you snipped from the original document. In this manner, the student can't make any changes to your original file.



4. Once you have made the worksheet as a background, you can start inserting a Text box into the spaces you want your students to put their answers. *Note: You may want to put words such as, "Write your answer here," so students know where to start typing.*



5. Share the slide to your Google Classroom, and make sure to choose, "Make a Copy for Each Student."

You can also watch Ms. Bellen's video instruction of this topic:

Other video tutorials by Ms. Bellen:

- How to Create a Drag and Drop Activity in Google Slide
- How to Shorten URLs Using One Click URL Shortener
- Breakout Rooms in Google Meet

Fostering Fun: Engaging Students with Asynchronous Online Learning

Lisa K. Forbes, PhD

Today, faculty are being asked to abruptly expand their teaching practices in ways many of us would never have imagined. For many, teaching online is something they've never done and for some, it's something they never desired to do. I have some experience with digital pedagogy but for me personally, asynchronous online teaching holds the highest level of difficulty because my style of teaching induces and relies on a sense of community, connection, and interaction within the classroom. I've been playing around with making my own online teaching more fun and playful to create an engaging student experience, because I believe engaged students are more eager and active in their learning and assume more responsibility for their learning. I have experimented with incorporating fun,

play, and games in both synchronous and asynchronous formats and have found it really matters to students. The narrative that follows demonstrates some ways I have attempted to make the asynchronous portion of my online class more fun.

This is Me! Welcome Videos

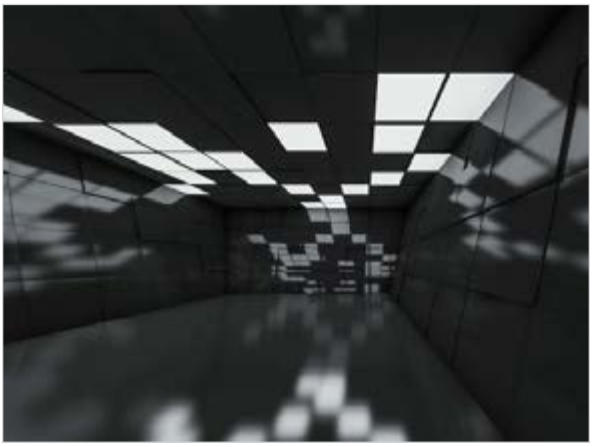
The typical online course introductions generally focus on a students' name, major, career goals, and maybe a fun fact. This approach is common for in-person classes, but I think for asynchronous learning, it feels a bit like a 10-second first date—highly ineffective at building rapport or a connection. Therefore, my first step to making an engaging online class was to beef up the introductions. For my class, I created a three-minute video of myself using iMovie. The video is not about who I am as a faculty member or a professional, it has more to do with who I am as a human. It has information about my family, my interests, my passions, my approach to life and teaching, and in the background, you can hear my favorite Mumford and Sons songs. After showing a few of my colleagues the video, they encouragingly said it was "vulnerable." This let me know the video was right on track to create a connection with my students and a sense of community. I had students watch my video and create their own video that represented who they were (this could even consist of just pictures and text). I then had them share their own introductions to the group.

Not Your Typical Module

If you are already creating modules that make up your course, just change the modules to something fun—something outside the typical pedagogical-language box. So, instead of "Module 1, Module 2, etc.," you might change the wording to fit some type of theme. Maybe you change them to reflect video game levels or maybe it's superhero themed, or for all the baseball fans, you could change the module names to "1st inning, 2nd inning, etc." It doesn't matter what theme you choose, but being creative and unique can add to the fun element and spark students' engagement. For my class, I used "missions," where the "missions" were like any other module but the wording was changed, so as students completed the work for each mission, they felt like a secret agent completing challenging tasks to complete their assigned mission. Once they completed a mission, the next one would open.

Virtual Escape Rooms to Exit the Module

If you already include an end-of-module quiz,



you can simply present the quiz in a different format—virtual escape room format! You can go to YouTube and view step-by-step instructions on designing these, as there are certain settings that prohibit students from passing to the next "lock" until they have used clues to disable a previous lock. You could set it up that if students escape the virtual escape room, it unlocks their next mission! Or, if they escape, they might be given a secret code word in

order to enter into the next synchronous class session. Hint: be sure to send the escape room link to a playful colleague prior to students trying it. There may be some operator-error glitches that need to be worked out before it runs smoothly for students.

Hidden "Easter Eggs"

An "Easter egg" is some type of hidden clue or hidden prompt that you place within your recorded lecture or other documents that students must view/read for their asynchronous work. Let students know ahead of time that these Easter eggs will be scattered throughout the course and they should keep an eye out. Maybe there's a reward or prize for finding them. So, for example, within one of your recorded lectures, you could provide some type of hint or action students need to complete. It can be as simple as a hint to a question to an upcoming quiz or it can be a message that provides an answer to one of the upcoming escape rooms. One of my colleagues puts Easter eggs in her syllabus. It instructs her students to email her the funniest meme they can find—if they make her laugh out loud, they get an extra credit point. These Easter eggs don't have to be anything extensive, or even all that frequent throughout the course, but just the fact that students know there are hidden messages and surprises makes learning more fun and engaging.

Games for Prizes

Including fun and play in your courses is easier than you think. You can take your existing lesson plans, discussions, or activities and simply add elements of game design to make them more fun. For example, I have students create "Five Golden Rules" for therapists that guide them in their decision-making about when and how to use therapeutic self-disclosure with clients. To make it a game, I tell students that with their Five Golden Rules for self-disclosure it should also be written as an acrostic (either the first letters of each word or random letters within each Golden Rule have to spell out a word). The groups share their Five Golden Rules, as well as their acrostic, and the group with the most creative or funniest acrostic wins a prize. This type of game did not take a ton of time to create and did not drastically alter the previously designed learning experience.

Alternatives to Recorded Lectures

I started making recorded lectures for content that I wanted students to learn in their asynchronous time. But, I started to get tired of listening to myself talk, so I knew my students were most likely getting tired of recorded lectures, too. Now, I provide alternative ways to convey information rather than solely recording lectures. I think asynchronous learning (all learning at that) needs to be dynamic and unpredictable, or you lose students' attention and focus. Instead of a lecture, I prompt students to research a certain idea to bring back to our synchronous class time. I have found that making students responsible for finding content that guides the discussion makes them highly invested. They come back eager to share what they've learned instead of me lecturing and providing them with the information. This way, they also tend to have little buy-in or interest in the learning. Additionally, I have also used YouTube as a resource for the topic of counseling. I found an approved, recorded counseling session on the internet and recorded myself introducing the video, played 10 minutes of it, and then discussed how I thought the counselor did regarding exploring the problem. This real

life and applied example was much more engaging than a dry lecture of me theoretically describing the process. Another idea I tried instead of a recorded lecture was through Adobe Spark. I made my own web page that progressed through a topic with graphics and thought-provoking questions. I provided students with the URL to my web page and they dug deeper into the topic in a more engaging way.

As a mental health counselor, I believe you can't demand a client's openness, respect, and vulnerability just because they are in counseling; you have to establish a strong enough therapeutic alliance to earn it. I believe the same goes for teaching. You can't demand engagement, vulnerability, and passion from students—we can hope for it, but you can't demand it. By making my classes more fun and playful, I've found it cultivates the very things we want from students to create a learning community that's engaged and passionate and fosters deeper learning.

**I recently started a faculty listserve called "Professors at Play." If you are interested in sharing your ideas about fun and play and/or getting inspiration from others on the listserve, please email me so I can add you! Lisa.forbes@ucdenver.edu

Games as Study Aids

John Orlando

Studies show that many students do a poor job of studying (Miller, 2017). Quite a few just scan the readings again or cram the night before a test in hopes that the information will last until the next day. But neither strategy is especially effective. The best strategy for preparing for a test is to use spaced retrieval practice which involves answering questions about the course content at intervals. This forces the student to draw the information out of their long-term memory. Not only does this reinforce the information—essentially hardening it to make it easier to produce in the future—but it also mimics the exam experience where the student needs it. Retrieval practice is analogous to a batter practicing by hitting balls in a batting cage, while rereading is a bit analogous to watching another batter practice.

Faculty can help students study effectively by giving them games that reinforce course information. There are a number of apps and websites with free game templates that can be used to build study aids.

- **Flippity** is a website that offers a multitude of free games. Each game comes with instructions and a template with sample data already included that can be swapped out with course information. While users play the games on the Flippity site, the actual data is housed on a Google Drive spreadsheet in the game maker's own Google account. To create a game, one clicks the "template" button, which creates a Google Drive spreadsheet that is copied to the creator's Drive account. The creator then swaps out the data in that spreadsheet for the subject information and clicks "publish to the web." This creates the

game on Flippity website and issues a link that takes players to the game. The game can also be revised at any point by changing the spreadsheet data. Some of my favorites are Flashcards, Quiz Show (a bit like Jeopardy!), and Manipulatives (a drag-and-drop game where players put the correct box on the correct term). There are many other games that are useful for studying as well. One of the most appealing features is that the player can switch the game type, such as from a flashcard to a matching game, and it will automatically create a different game from the same data. Thus, students can choose the game type that best works for them.

- **ClassTools** is another website offering a number of games, though college instructors will likely only be interested in two: Connect Fours and Fling the Teacher. Connect four presents the player with a wall of 16 items that the player needs to organize into four groups of four according to common features. For instance, a chemistry game might provide four common names of chemical compounds, four structural formulas of those compounds, four categories for those compounds, and the molar mass of each compound. Then the user needs to pick a compound name, connect it with its corresponding structural formula, category, and molar mass, and do the same for the others. Fling the Teacher is modeled after Angry Birds and provides 15 questions for the user to answer. If the player gets all 15 correct, they get to fling an avatar of a teacher with a slingshot, just like in Angry Birds. Yes, some instructors might worry that this game undermines respect for teachers, but I think that students will take it in the lighthearted nature that is intended and appreciate the humor of a teacher assigning this game.
- **Educandy** also offers a variety of game templates, including a few that the systems already mentioned do not offer, such as Anagrams. The creator picks a template, enters the game data, and is given a unique code that is distributed to players to play the game. Its advantage over the systems mentioned above is its cleaner interface, as well as no ads. But what I really like is that one can download an app version that allows students to study on their tablets or cell phones on the go.

Games are an excellent way for students to study using retrieval practice. Faculty who do not want to be burdened with creating these games can offload the duty onto students by assigning game creation as an assessment. Students can be put into groups, assigned a class topic, and given the job of creating a game that fellow students can use as a study aid. Each student should be assigned to create a certain number of questions for each game and to evaluate the questions that others create to ensure that they make sense and are accurate. The instructor then evaluates the outcome for clarity and accuracy and makes it available to the rest of the class and future classes. This way, students not only learn the content themselves in creating the game but also get the pride of knowing that they are helping future students succeed.

Reference

Miller, M. D. (2017, June). Retrieval practice in online teaching. Online Classroom, 17(6), 1, 6.

Curation Made Easy with Wakelet

Madeline Craig, EdD

As educators, we are bombarded with new teaching and technology ideas from Twitter, blogs, news articles, podcasts, emails, videos, and other sources. But without a way of storing and organizing this information, it quickly gets lost. How often do we vaguely remember an interesting article or video that would help us with research or a classroom strategy but can't find it?

I struggled with finding a place to save it all until I discovered Wakelet. Wakelet is a free, wiki-like website that allows you to store and organize all the content you find on the web, including links, images, tweets, videos, and articles, along with your own ideas. You can save this content in a private bookmark space just for your own reference or add it to a collection that you share with others by making it public. You can even embed the collection

in a blog or website. Additionally, you can add one or more Wakelet users to a Wakelet group collection and collaboratively build a robust collection of resources. For a few months now, I have been using Wakelet to bookmark all the interesting content I see daily in my email, on Google, on Twitter and Facebook, and on my favorite education-related websites. This content is now in one place where I can easily find it when I need it.

I have also been creating collections to help organize my projects. For example, because I'm working on an article on how to use technology to effectively manage K–12 classrooms, I have created a collection that allows me to add all kinds of content related to this topic, including scholarly journal articles, tweets about specific technology, meme images that I find entertaining, and specific links to education and educational technology websites. Since I'm coauthoring the chapter, this is a group collection to which my coauthor can add content; we can write our notes and ideas using the text option or share our ideas through video recordings using Flipgrid or Screencastify. In addition, I've made collections to house my presentation and various related links to share at conferences. When I shared Wakelet at our December faculty meeting, a few faculty members jumped on board right away and made collections for conferences

they were presenting at the following month!

Using Wakelet

Adding content to a Wakelet is as easy as pasting URL links, uploading PDFs or JPG and PNG files, typing in text, or locating your files from Google or OneDrive. In addition, Wakelet is integrated with both Flipgrid and Screencastify, so once you connect your account(s) to Wakelet, you can use the Flipgrid camera or Screencastify app to create videos in your Wakelet collection. Wakelet also has an app for both iOS and Android devices so that you can bookmark content or create a collection while you are on your smartphone. In addition, if you add the Wakelet extension to your Chrome browser, you can easily click the "W" icon to add content as a bookmark or to a collection in Wakelet.

First, you'll need to create an account through Google, Office 365, Facebook, or your email address and a password. Like other social media accounts, you can, as an option, create a profile with your picture and information so others can easily find you and view your public collections. Then you can go ahead and start bookmarking content or creating your first collection. Once you've created a collection, you can choose to display the content by selecting one of four distinct settings: media view (linear up and down), compact view (as tiles and descriptions only), grid view (side by side in a grid), or mood board (visual and engaging board view). You can keep your collections private for your eyes only, collaborate on them with a few others, or make them public for all to see and copy for their own use.

Wakelet is also an effective tool in the classroom. In the education program at our school, teacher candidates have been creating literacy portfolios in a traditional way by combining their own philosophy, classroom literacy strategies, book reviews, website reviews, and personal reflection into one PDF file to submit to their professor.

Wakelet is both an excellent way to curate the vast amount of content that you are exposed to regularly and a dynamic classroom tool. Watch this tutorial on how to use Wakelet, and learn more from The Educator's Guide to Wakelet, a free e-book that includes links to a variety of educators' collections. Also, feel free to follow me on Wakelet to view my public collections @MadCraig or on Twitter @madcraig.

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