

# PEG'S TOP TEN TIPS FOR CREATING AN ONLINE COURSE (OR A HYBRID)

**1. Naming your files:** It's likely you will be creating a lot of files for your students. And you'll want to edit them over time. If you use a consistent pattern that will allow you to locate the file you want quickly and easily, no sweat. If not, you'll be pulling your hair out. Consider this tried and true method: Suppose you have several files in a learning module you've created for the first chapter. You might call the first file in the learning module for chapter one LM\_Ch1\_a. The second file in your learning module for chapter one might be called LM\_Ch1\_b. When you get to the learning module for chapter two, your first file would be named LM\_Ch2\_a, while the second file would be LM\_Ch2\_b. If you have a discussion for Chapter 1, you might name it D\_Ch1, while the discussion for Chapter 2 would be D\_Ch2, etc. For assignments, you could use A\_Ch1 and A\_Ch2. You can thank me later for all the time you've saved with this simple strategy!!!

**2. Conditional release** = WebCT allows you to release documents/quizzes/discussions for specified times/date, only to certain individuals or groups, or only if a specific condition has been met (e.g. students earned a 70% or greater on quiz 3, or completed a quiz on the syllabus). Some instructors hide all the course content except the syllabus. Students have to pass an online quiz on the syllabus before the rest of the course is visible. This is one way to be sure that your students know what to expect in your course.

**3. First Week** - An online class is different from a face-to-face class, especially in the beginning. Students must get familiar with the technology you want them to use. Many students are quite anxious about this issue. Research suggests they will be much more confident about their ability to be successful in your class if they have used every tool you need them to use in the first week of class. So bite the bullet. Don't expect to cover your content that first week. Instead, use the first week introduce students to the course and tools they will use. Give students the task of submitting one of each type of activity they will be assigned in the course (send email, take quiz, submit assignment, discussion post, etc.)

**4. Sense of Community** - Attrition rates for online classes tend to be higher than face-to-face classes. Research suggests that a powerful tool for increasing retention is creating a sense of community. But how to do it online? One tool for fostering a sense of community is to have students introduce themselves the first week of class. You can do this in a discussion board. Students can post their photos there or in the Roster if you include that tool in your WebCT course. If you want to get really creative, students and faculty post introductions they've created using Animoto on the Discussions board. Animoto is free software that is used to create a short video. You upload up to eleven of your own photos to [Animoto](http://animoto.com), select the style of music you want, and then Animoto syncs the photos to the music. Animoto software does all the work, inserting transitions, etc. This provides a fun alternative to the text introduction your students are asked to create in so many online courses. / <http://animoto.com>

**5. Groups** - Did you think you'd have to give up groups in an online class? Nope! WebCT allows you to easily put students into groups. You can assign student to groups or let them self-select. Each group can have a different discussion board, chat room, email, or assignment. And you'll love the fact that *the group work is archived on the discussion board. You can tell which students were actually doing the work...*

**6. Grading Forms** - Students do better when they know what you expect on an assignment. Make your grading criteria explicit by creating a rubric. If you select the mc\_gradebook as the template when you request that an MCC WebCT development course be created for you, there are several rubrics provided for you. You can edit them and/or delete any forms that are not useful to you. Alternatively, see sample rubrics on the CTL website at [http://ctl.mc.maricopa.edu/wiki/index.php/Category:Help\\_Resources](http://ctl.mc.maricopa.edu/wiki/index.php/Category:Help_Resources) (click on Rubrics

from the selection that appears).

**7. WebLinks** - The web is incredibly rich with resources you and your students will love. But the drawback is that sometimes the links disappear. If your hyperlinks are spread through a myriad of files you've created, each semester will be a nightmare as you check for broken links. Instead, gather all your hyperlinks by using the WebLinks tool in WebCT. Then you'll just have to go to this one location when you want to check your course URL's for broken links.

**8. Creating Lessons** - MCC has a lot of tools for creating webpages. Which software is right for you? Consider your level of comfort with the computer, how much time you are willing to spend on creating your lessons, and whether it is important to you to have some bells and whistles (such as artwork, interactive lessons).

- **Microsoft Word:** If you want to stick with Microsoft Word because you are familiar with it, it will work. With your document open inside Word, choose File>Save As>Save as Web Page. This will create a document that has the htm or html extension (instead of "doc"). This permits viewers to see the document with a browser (e.g. Internet Explorer, Safari, Mozilla Firefox). The viewer does not have to have Word software loaded on their computer. *Note:* Microsoft does provide a free Word reader for download, so student could read a 'doc' created in Word. Access this free reader at <http://www.microsoft.com>
- **Frontpage or NVu:** If you are on a PC computer, FrontPage (available in Microsoft Office Professional) is designed to create webpages. It's a relatively user-friendly program that gives you some nice options for formatting your web pages. You may already have it installed on your work/home computer. If you are on a Macintosh computer, consider downloading NVu. It's free and available at [http://www.download.com/Nvu/3000-2048\\_4-10412423.html](http://www.download.com/Nvu/3000-2048_4-10412423.html)
- **SoftChalk:** The district has a license for SoftChalk software, so all MCC faculty are able to download this great software to their home and/or office computer (PC or Macintosh). SoftChalk is extremely user-friendly and results in webpages that are very attractive. You select artwork that appears as the header on each page; navigation to get from page to page is automatically installed, and activities such as crossword puzzles, fill-in-the-letter (hangman) etc. are easy to incorporate. Directions for using SoftChalk can be found at [http://ctl.mc.maricopa.edu/wiki/index.php/Category:Help\\_Resources](http://ctl.mc.maricopa.edu/wiki/index.php/Category:Help_Resources). Select Creating Webpages Using SoftChalk from the list that appears. Download SoftChalk from [http://ctl.mc.maricopa.edu/\\_resources/downloads.html](http://ctl.mc.maricopa.edu/_resources/downloads.html) Great tutorials and demos can also be found at <http://www.softchalk.com/>
- **PDF Files:** If want document to show up in same exact format on all computers and viewer cannot edit the document, upload a pdf document. Cutepdfwriter is a free program to create a pdf file from any application. Download your copy from <http://www.cutepdf.com>

**9. Powerpoint Slides with Audio:** If you want to include Powerpoint slides with sound in your online course, they will be very large in size and take a longtime for students to download unless...you use a program such as Breeze Presenter to compress them into small Flash files. MCC has a license for Breeze Presenter so you can download it to your computer. Breeze will appear on your toolbar within Powerpoint, making it quite simple to use. You'll need a microphone attached to your computer on which to record your voice, but your audio file will be synced to the appropriate slide. If students wish to go jump backward or forward in the slide presentation, the correct recording will be heard with the slide. The information on how to download Breeze can be found at [http://ctl.mc.maricopa.edu/\\_resources/downloads.html](http://ctl.mc.maricopa.edu/_resources/downloads.html)

**10. Assignments tool** - Many faculty love the WebCT Assignments tool! You're a bit less likely to get viruses from student submissions when you use this tool; each student can see that their assignment was

submitted it (isn't lost in cyberspace); can see when the assignment is graded, what grade was earned, and any feedback you provide. If desired, you can let students submit drafts before the deadline and then edit them based on your feedback

Find even more great ideas at [http://ctl.mc.maricopa.edu/wiki/index.php/So\\_You\\_Want\\_to\\_Teach\\_an\\_Online\\_Course](http://ctl.mc.maricopa.edu/wiki/index.php/So_You_Want_to_Teach_an_Online_Course)