

## Essential Elements of an Online Syllabus

Here, in summary form, is a checklist for creating your online syllabus. You do not need to include all of these items (some may be more appropriate for your class than others), nor do you have to include them all in one document called a “syllabus.” You can distribute this information among several documents if desired.

- Course title, authors’ and instructor’s names, registration number, and term information; syllabus web pages should bear creation or “last revised” dates if the term date isn’t included at the top.
- Course instructor’s contact information, plus contact information for technical support.
- Course description, perhaps the same as the description used for a course catalog listing, but probably more detailed; should list any prerequisites or special technical requirements for the course.
- Course objectives or expected outcomes; what students can expect to learn by completion of the course.
- Required texts or materials: any books or other materials, such as software, not made available in the course but required for the course. ISBN information is required.
- Explanation of grading criteria and components of total grade: a list of all quizzes, exams, graded assignments, and forms of class participation, with grade percentages or points; criteria for a passing grade; policies on late assignments.
- Participation standard: minimum number of postings per week in discussion and any standards for quality of participation.
- Explanation of course geography and procedures: how the online classroom is organized; how students should proceed each week for class activities; how to label assignments sent by email; where to post materials in the online course; any special instructions.
- Explanation of course geography and procedures: how the online classroom is organized; how students should proceed each week for class activities; how to label assignments sent by email; where to post materials in the online course; any special instructions.

Sometimes it’s difficult to anticipate every issue that may arise during the class and to include that in your syllabus. There’s obviously a balance between readable brevity and a syllabus so voluminous as to be intimidating. Whatever you don’t include in your initial documents may still be introduced by means of announcement areas, weekly e-mail sent to all students, or postings in an appropriate forum. You will also want to use these means to reinforce important elements of your syllabus as the course progresses.

