Best Practices

Remember, "Thou shalt not use technology for technology's sake. Use it to facilitate student learning." Make sure technology is an aid to learning and not a nuisance.

As with any other assignments, success depends on having:

- **Clear and transparent learning goals and expectation**: Students need to understand why they are doing the exercises, what they will get out of them.
- **Clear and detail instruction**: It should be clear to the students how to do the assignment.
- **Clear relevance**: Students need to see how their work impacts on their learning, discuss the work they do outside class meeting back into the classroom.
- **Clear assessment rubrics**: Students need to know what counts as good work. Providing models often helps.
- **Safe learning environment** that makes participating, sharing, and collaborating mean something: Students need to feel safe to experiment on ideas and experience the effect of positive outcome of their work.

When you choose a particular technology, especially new technology:

- **Consider student's familiarity with the tool & potential learning curve**: Do not assume students are tech-savvy just because they are millennials or Gen Zers. Factor in the time/effort students need to learn the tool when you consider appropriate workload. It is often a good idea to assign a very short and easy first exercise with the tool to help students get familiar with it.
- **Time to build/develop/set up the tool**: Technology should make your and your students' lives easier, not harder.
- **Number of students required for successful use of the tool**: Certain tools are better suited for larger classes. For example, using twitter to collect feedback is unlikely to work for a small class.
- **Measurement and tracking**: How can you track student work and effort?
- **Nurture participation**: Referring to student work in class, use online discussion to jump start in-class discussion.
- **Support**: Be ready to provide technical support for tools and resources not provided by the university.
- **Cross-platform compatibility**: Minimally, students should be able to participate whether they use Macs, Windows, tablets, and mobile devices.
- **Privacy issues**: Do not violate FERPA, this is federal law. Offer students the option of using a pseudonym and advise them to avoid personal details. See Third-Party Tools and Making Student Work Public - Some Considerations for more detail.
- **New questions/methods of inquiry**: Technology may offer you a different view of the same "data," allows you to ask different types of questions, or approach a problem with a different lens. For example, plotting geographical data over time may lead to new insights; the ability to gather and manipulate massive data may allow you to see different patterns and therefore ask new questions.

Other Best-Practices Resources

- **Tips for Using Common Technology Tools in Teaching**
  Tips collated by University of Michigan Center for Research on Teaching and Learning.
- **Research on Best Practices**
  White papers created by University of Michigan CRTL.
- **Tips and Ideas for Using Wikis in Teaching**
  Resources collated by IT Services Academic Technology Team.
- **Wikipedia Guide for university projects**
- **10 Best Practices for Using Wikis in Education**
• Teaching with Technology Tools and Strategies to Improve Student Learning (2011)
  A collection of 13 short articles on topics such as wikipedia, blogging, social bookmarking, polling, Prezi. You will need to sign up for an account to download the report. Consider signing up for their email newsletter.
• To blog, or not to blog…
  Discusses some reasons and tips on using blog as an educational tool.
• 10 Best Practices for using wikis in education
• Ten Tips for Hosting a Web Meeting
  Tips for getting ready for a remote session (e.g. remote office hour/lecture on a snow-in day, impromptu web meeting using Canvas’ Conferencing tool).