

A Baker's Dozen

Ideas for Creating an Online Course

Michael Simonson

Most likely, everyone reading this column in *Distance Learning* journal has been asked how to quickly develop an online course, or tasked to actually redesign a course for online delivery. For those who have taught and learned in the world of distance education this process is easy, straightforward, even if time-consuming. One issue for new online designers or instructors is that much of the process for converting a traditional course to an online one is not

intuitive, and in some respects is counter-intuitive. For example, the idea of chunking instruction into single concept building blocks is an example of an organization strategy for online courses that may not be understood by the traditional teacher most comfortable giving a 50-minute lectures.

Certainly, this column cannot provide the comprehensive and in-depth direction used by practiced instructional designers when online courses are planned and developed. However, there are a dozen "best" ideas, easily understood, that can be considered by new online designers and instructors.

Here they are—the Baker's dozen tips for creating an online course

1. Finalize the syllabus: The syllabus is the key document for any course, but especially for an online course—make sure the syllabus is complete.
2. Organize the course: The unit-module-topic approach is best—do not organize content by time, such as weeks.
3. Organize a course into two or three main units, and each unit into three or four modules. Topics are key ideas in a module. (Most textbooks are very nicely organized and can provide the beginnings of structure to a course that uses the textbook.)

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