Best Practice Guidelines for Effective Online Instruction

- Have the course ready to go the day before the semester begins.
- Send a welcome note to students on the first day of class.
- Design the Home page to include your name and contact information, as well as the title of the course, a course description, and a welcome message.
- Remember the KISS rule for the Content page. Organize information within obvious categories, such as "syllabus," "assignments," "handouts," etc.
- Information redundancy is key to effective online courses.
    - Repeat due dates.
    - Set up links to dropboxes on the Content page.
    - Make sure the dropboxes are linked to the gradebook.
    - Contact students when due dates loom.
- Communicate with students regularly, at least a few times each week, either via email or within the discussion forums.
- Participate in the discussion forums. Add your thoughts and ask thoughtful questions. Be present in the course.
- Award points for active participation in the course discussions.
- Create a supportive community within the course. Address your students by name and encourage them to respond to their classmates' forum notes.
- Encourage students to share information with one another.
- Make sure your expectations for the course are clear and concise.
- Ask students for feedback on course expectations.
- Combine core concept learning with personalized learning activities.
- Emphasize active learning and strive to keep students engaged with the material.
- Prepare a closing activity that brings the course to a satisfying conclusion.
- Learn the course management system thoroughly. Have contingency plans ready should something go wrong.
    - Let students know how to contact you should the system go down.
    - Collect students' email addresses so that you can contact them should the system go down.
    - Consider an alternate course management system, such as Edmodo, if something happens to the main system.
    - Encourage students to be proactive as well.

Preparing Instructors for Quality Online Instruction