

6 THINGS TO HELP YOU STAY ON TRACK WITH YOUR TEACHING THIS SEMESTER

1. GET YOUR EMAIL UNDER CONTROL

You know that feeling you get when the little number next to your inbox folder gets to THAT number? We've all been there and it can feel overwhelming to get it back under control. So we've gathered some tips for helping you manage your inbox more effectively this semester.

DITCH EMAILS IN FAVOR OF DISCUSSION BOARDS.

Are you inundated with student emails, especially emails from multiple students that ask the same questions? Have you wondered why students are emailing you so often?

If you have experienced a higher than normal volume of student emails, you may need to revisit the entire communication setup for your course. Consider an online system to supplement or replace email, and direct students to it. For example, you can set up a discussion board through Canvas for your class and then direct students to ask any course-related questions there, rather than email. You'll still get notified, but the rest of the class will see the question too and might answer a common question for you or perhaps your answer will preempt another email. Want more tips for using discussion boards in Canvas? [See how Canvas can help you wrangle your email.](#)

DON'T BE AFRAID OF DELETE (OR ARCHIVE)

We all are guilty of holding on to every email "just in case" we may need to reference it again. But, how often do you really reference old emails? How long are you holding on to old emails? Now is the time to HIT THAT DELETE BUTTON.

- Ask yourself, when is the last time you looked at an email that was more than a year old? If the answer is never, give yourself permission to delete.
- If it is too much to actually delete the emails, create a time-based folder system and move the emails in there (our advice: start with a year-based system, then move to semester-based as you start to wrangle your inbox).
- Start this semester off right and archive or delete any emails from before 2019. Then, mark your calendar for the next time you need to archive your emails and commit to it. Do this every semester and your inbox will feel fresh and timely.

Need to reference an email from an earlier semester? Let the search bar find it.

WANT TO ACHIEVE INBOX ZERO?

Is 2020 the year of inbox zero? Here's [a really great guide](#) for using categories to reframe how you think about email and achieve that shiny little 0 next to your inbox.

UNSUBSCRIBE. SERIOUSLY.

How often do you open your inbox to mountains of emails from listservs, blogs, and businesses? NOW is the time to start unsubscribing (or, if they allow, reducing the frequency).

Love a particular blog's newsletter but NEVER have the time to read their weekly digest? Unsubscribe and mark your calendar with a recurring monthly time to go check out their blog and read what interests you. You'll still get the content you want but on a timetable that works for you.

While we hope that you find our emails particularly enlightening and helpful, we also recognize that sometimes you just get too much email. If you want to stop receiving our emails—send us a note at faculty-commons@udel.edu. You can always [sign back up](#) later!

SET A SCHEDULE FOR CHECKING EMAIL

Ever heard of [time-blocking](#)? Even if you don't use this particular time-management strategy, setting email-checking limits can be a helpful way to manage your email (and your sanity).

Give yourself 10-20 minutes, say, morning, noon, and at the end of the work day to check your email. Use this time to gather your to-do items and respond to urgent messages, and then get back to the actual work.

Limiting yourself to specific, but regular intervals will help you feel like you aren't missing things, but you also aren't constantly being interrupted by that "new message" notification. Speaking of, make sure you aren't constantly being interrupted by notifications! Check out how to change [Gmail](#) and [Outlook](#) notifications.

2. GET YOUR STUDENTS TO READ THE SYLLABUS

Think of your syllabus as a content reading for your course. Write up a short quiz, or create an in-class activity to help students engage with the syllabus on the first day. If you use group work, this is a good opportunity to get students working in groups on the first day.

Make your syllabus easy-to-read. [If you've never used the syllabus template before, now is a good time to get started.](#) One feature of this template is that course policies and the course timetable are separate documents so that students can easily access due dates and requirements, as well as reference the policies separately when needed.

Create an opportunity for your students to *change* the syllabus. Leave a class session blank and have space in your policies for students to discuss and create ground rules. If you offer students some agency in the syllabus, they will be more invested in reading it.

HELLO
my name is

3. HACKS TO MEMORIZE YOUR STUDENTS' NAMES

[Memorizing names is hard; really hard.](#) But it is an important way to make your classroom feel more connected, and demonstrate to students that you value their individual and unique contributions to your class. Here are some of our favorite hacks:

If you use Canvas, try creating a discussion post where you ask students to record a quick video introduction. Have them say their names (however they'd like to be called) and maybe answer a few short questions about themselves. You can ask the other students in the class to watch the videos, and you'll be able to watch them multiple times during the first few weeks, making it much easier to memorize names.

In a larger classroom, have students write their names very large on tent cards or paper folded in half so that you can call on students by name. You may not memorize all of the names, but you can use students' names in class. Some faculty collect these cards at the end of each class; at the beginning of subsequent classes students have to come pick them up giving faculty yet another chance to practice putting a face with a name. Bonus- If you take attendance, this is an easy way to see who is and is not present on any given day.

In very large classes (>100 students) try to memorize *some* of the students' names and use them during class. This makes the room feel smaller and more connected, even if you can't memorize everyone's name.

4. BECOME A MASTER OF TIME MANAGEMENT... FOR TEACHING

One of our most requested topics, and one of the biggest challenges that we all face, is time management. While the Faculty Commons may not be able to help you figure out how to make time for a daily workout or meditation routine, we do have resources and tips for getting your teaching time management under control.

Before you adopt a new tool, schedule, or planner, spend a few minutes reflecting on the last time you had a semester like this one (e.g. multiple new preps, a large intro class...) and reflect on what was the most challenging. Was it keeping up with grading during the semester? Was it spending too much time prepping for class? Or maybe office hours weren't working for you? Once you've identified a priority or two to work on, it is much easier to tackle your schedule.

[Try the "beta" of our course-planning template.](#) By mapping out what is due, when, and how it all connects, you'll streamline your pre-class preparation time and make it much clearer which weeks require more than others.

Prepare a "teaching tool kit" of activities, discussion questions, or writing prompts that you know always get a classroom engaged and working. For weeks when you are under the gun with service or research, you can always rely on these resources to quickly and effectively get ready to teach. Need ideas? We love the Patricia K. Cross Academy's [video library of easy-to-implement teaching techniques](#).

5. KEEP YOUR COURSE MATERIALS FRESH, AFFORDABLE, AND ACCESSIBLE

LEVERAGE LIBRARY E-BOOKS, A RESOURCE YOUR STUDENTS ALREADY PAY FOR IN THEIR TUITION.

With more than 700,000 e-books available from the UD Library, Museums and Press, there's a good chance you'll find at least one to enhance your course materials. Even better, most of these e-books have unlimited users with no limits on printing, saving or downloading. [Collaborate with your subject liaison librarian](#) to come up with the best e-book option for your course. Together, you'll take into account how many students are in the class, if the e-book would be a primary or supplemental text, and whether the e-book would be used regularly during the course.

GO OPEN! EXPLORE HIGH-QUALITY, PEER-REVIEWED TEXTBOOKS THAT ARE LICENSED FOR YOU TO USE FOR FREE.

If you're concerned about the cost of higher education (and who isn't!?), consider a textbook option that doesn't rely upon subscriptions or present a cost burden to your students. Browse the [Open Textbook Library](#) to find peer-reviewed textbooks produced by universities and nonprofits, read reviews of the texts by faculty, and download your copy right away. An added bonus: open textbooks, such as those produced by [OpenStax](#), are instantly compatible with screen readers, making them accessible for all students on the first day of class.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE LIBRARY'S FULL SUBSCRIPTIONS TO DIGITAL PAPERS: THE NEW YORK TIMES, THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, AND NOW THE WASHINGTON POST!

Encourage your class to take a deeper dive into current events with free access to the full [New York Times](#), [Wall Street Journal](#), and –new this semester– the [Washington Post](#) websites through the Library. Rather than providing students with links to articles or asking them to pay to subscribe, ask your students to sign up for their individual accounts today!

6. ORIENTATION FOR ONLINE STUDENTS

If you are teaching an online course in the upcoming semester, provide your students with a link to the UD Online Student Orientation: <http://bit.ly/ud-online-orientation>. This short Canvas course will help your students understand the expectations and commitments for online learning and address topics such as technology requirements, online exams, and other tips for student success.

Whew, you made it!

Hopefully you found these tips and resources helpful to start your semester. Have a tip you'd like to share or a question you'd like us to answer?

Email us at faculty-commons@udel.edu.