

The following tips help foster a strong social presence and build a sense of community in your online classroom. Starting with a robust social presence leads to a more profound teaching and cognitive presence (Garrison et al., 2010).

### **Take Advantage of Digital Tools:**

Adult learners are on the move and digitally fluid. It is essential to relate to your students in more than just one modality. Consider giving feedback on an assignment using an audio file. Use [Adobe Spark](#) or [Wistia](#) (There are many digital tools to choose from. Pick ones that work for you) to create a 3-minute micro lecture for new learning content. Create a welcome video introducing yourself so students can make connection to you as a person.

### **Set up a “Classroom Café”:**

Consider posting a forum thread for students to get to know one another. Each week post a guiding question that students can reflect on and discuss with their peers. Consider the following questions:

- Share one of your professional goals?
- What are your expectations for this course?
- How would you describe yourself as a learner?
- Name a challenge you experienced during your first week of class? How did you overcome it?
- Which lessons this week resonated with you? How can you apply what you learned in your everyday life?

### **Be an Active Participant in the Class Discussions:**

As an online instructor, you manage the classroom and monitor weekly class discussions. However, your participation in class conversations is valuable. Students want to be validated. Therefore, reply to student responses and ask them questions. Remember, instructors need to model the behaviors we want to students to showcase in the classroom.

*Hint: It is not necessary to dominate the class discussion, but rather demonstrate how to further the dialogue and inspire students to use critical thinking when composing their responses.*

### **Reach out to Students Missing in Action:**

Sharing personal experiences and stories in an open class forum can be intimidating for students. Additionally, some students are not confident in their academic writing abilities. For students showing little to no classroom participation, gently reach out and ask how you can support them. Remember, building a sense of community is also about being proactive, vigilant, and responsive.

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