Ask Yourself the BIG Questions:

Deciding to integrate technology into your one or more of your courses is a big step. By doing some planning up-front, you will not only increase your chances of success – you will reduce the level of stress you experience (yes, it is stressful but the process does get easier as you continue to work with the technology). Ask yourself the following questions:

1) What are the computer access issues for my students?
   • How many of my students own their own computers and have access to the Internet?
   • How many rely on a campus computer lab for access? For current Fletcher Jones Center hours contact Deborah Willis (x4965).
   • How many experience significant difficulty in accessing a computer on campus or have trouble in connecting from home?

2) What percentage of my students already have UoR e-mail accounts (or some account off-campus email account)? How will I make sure all students will have accounts?
   • Shall I leave this up to them?
   • Shall I require that they get an account by a certain time and email me to confirm?
   • Shall I bring copies of the ACITS Electronic Mail Account Application form with me to class? For assistance with UoR email accounts contact Deborah Willis (x4965).

3) How will I ensure that my students know how to use the various features of the Internet that will be required in this course?
   • Would I be comfortable doing the training myself to insure consistency? If so, where will I do this?
   • Will I arrange training for them by making contacting Academic Computing/Instructional Technology Services or the Library? For assistance with Internet training contact Catherine Walker (x4963). For assistance with Library training contact Les Canterbury (x4728).
   • Does my department have a lab and can students get training there?

4) How will I ensure that students can create course-based web pages/presentations?
   • Would I be comfortable doing the training myself to insure consistency? If so, where will I do this? To reserve a Fletcher Jones Center computer lab contact Deborah Willis (x4965).
   • Will I arrange training for them by making contacting Academic Computing/Instructional Technology Services? For assistance contact Catherine Walker (x4963).
   • Will I post the materials they create to my own web space? How will I organize my web space to accommodate their pages? For assistance contact Catherine Walker (x4963).

Create a Brief Student Questionnaire to Assess Skill Level:

Having some up-front information about your students and their technology skills will assist you as you plan for activities such as hands-on workshops and required email interaction. One way to assess your students’ skill level is to prepare a brief questionnaire. This could be handed out the first class session. This information will be very valuable to you as you work with your students throughout the semester.
Typical questions would include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Name/Dorm/Phone Number</th>
<th>6. If so, what is your email address?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Do you own or have access to a computer at your current residence?</td>
<td>7. Do you know how to browse the World Wide Web?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Do you know how to use word processing software on a computer?</td>
<td>8. If so, can you use the Internet from your current residence?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Do you know how to use email?</td>
<td>9. Do you prefer to use a PC or a Mac?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Do you currently have an email account?</td>
<td>10. Any concerns or fears regarding having to use technology to complete some of our course assignments?</td>
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Structuring The Technology Into Your Class:

The most common complaint among first-time users of instructional technology is simply that “I posted materials and no one used it!” However, this is almost always because the technology was added to the class as an "optional" (which students hear as "superfluous") and relatively unstructured activity. In other words, the students didn't use it because they just didn't have a compelling reason to use it.

Imagine that you arranged to have an extra classroom room available to your students, in which you wanted them to have additional, meaningful conversations about your course material—something like a discussion section. But in this room there was never a discussion leader, no specific discussion topics and no one even bothering to see who showed up. How many of your students do you think would make a special trip to find and spend time in that potentially empty classroom? Probably not many.

So, the trick is to ask yourself a few questions before you launch the technological dimension of your class:

1) Does your use of technology add something to the class that would be impossible without it?
   
   • Could you accomplish the same thing with simpler methods?
   • Is the activity you are planning with technology relevant to the other dimensions of the class (or is it stand-alone and somewhat "gimmicky")?

2) What can you do to make learning and using technology more attractive to your students? What "carrot" or "stick" could you employ?
   
   • POSSIBLE CARROTS: Post lecture outlines that students can print out and then "flesh out" when they attend your lecture, exam-review questions, structured discussion activities that you tie into in-class discussion, class announcements and syllabus changes, etc.
   • POSSIBLE STICKS:

   If you choose to use a listserv or a web-based discussion list, count posting as part of class participation and require so many per week. Require discussion questions be turned into you electronically, ahead of class-time. Check the new messages and bring several of the best to class for spontaneous discussion. This shows that you value their effort (and that you are reading their postings). Another useful strategy is to require the each student to build upon or reflect on what they other students have written. The quicker a student responds, the lesser the amount of previous data he/she will have to take into consideration.

   If you choose to have your students create a web page as a course assignment, start with a small assignment first such as a list of terms pertinent to the course. Create a simple web page template that contains the format you want. Divide the alphabet up and ask each student to be responsible for providing 5-10 terms and their definitions. Using the template, each student will insert his/her content. Each page should also reference where the student found the terms/definitions (bibliography). These web pages can then be easily combined to create a very useful tool for the whole class. For a bigger project, be sure to have many
“check points” along the way (not just one due date). Student web pages should require the same amount of work as a written term paper and the same type of bibliography.

If you choose to have your students create a presentation as a course assignment (using Microsoft PowerPoint), set specific guidelines for content and purpose. Encourage the use of appropriate visual elements such as photographs, charts, and diagrams while always keeping in mind the overall message. Discourage the use of overdone animation such as page transitions and superfluous clip art.

- **BE CREATIVE:** your perspective on the course material for any class is unique. So, too, should be how you use technology to help your students explore that material. For example:

  If your course depends heavily upon homework sets, have an "on-line help desk" watch dogged by you (this can be done through electronic mail).

  Exploit the textual nature of the Internet by having students proof each other's paper ideas, outlines, abstracts or drafts before posting them to the whole class (e-mail and/or listserv).

  Provide links to the latest data available in your field, like up-to-the-minute court decisions, weather data, or press releases (Web-site).

  Make one of your office hours a "virtual office hour," during which you engage the ideas and questions sent to you by students who don't feel comfortable speaking out in class (this can be done through e-mail in the comfort of your own home).

Everyone teaches differently and everyone's use of these tools will differ. However, it is important to think about how to embed the technology into the class, instead of layering it on top, like icing on a cake. Sometimes it is helpful to brainstorm ideas regarding how to best integrate technology into your class. Catherine Walker is here to help you do just that!

(The model for this handout can be found at: http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~artt/guide.html)