


# Getting ESL online with course management systems

Sharon Alayne Widmayer

Holly Gray

TESOL 2007 – SEATTLE - WASHINGTON



# What is a Course Management System?

Software packages for:

- creating on-line course content (templates)
- learning interactions and assessment (synchronous: chat; asynchronous: bulletin boards, student work space, quizzes)
- course management (on-line grade book, student tracking)



# Best Practices

- Know your goals.
- Know your learners.
- PLAN, PLAN, PLAN!!!!
- Make sure the technology does not get in the way of the learning.
- Create an active learning environment.



# Best Practices, cont.

- Consider the “3-click rule.”
- Focus attention.
- Connect knowledge.
- Provide timely feedback.
- Support and scaffold.



# Holly's Examples

- Delivering courses to overseas learners:
  - Be aware of differences in time zone, holidays, platform, and program language (can cause problems with uploaded files)
  - Plan ahead for monitored assessments
  - Provide materials in a variety of formats
  - Build in flexibility
  - Try to use plenty of multimedia, but be aware of bandwidth issues
  - Try to make a personal connection with the students (post photos or recordings, have an informal forum for friendly posts, etc.)



# Sharon's Examples

- Making Blackboard accessible for low level students:
  - Clear directions with screen captures
  - Changing the entry page
- Classroom use – selective release



# What doesn't work

- Overly complex ideas – simplify!
  - Start with one or two features.
  - Don't do things beyond your technical abilities.
- Chatting with large classes – try groups.
- On-line writing with beginners – Sharon's Teacher Research.
- Setting up a distance course and letting it go – you must be actively involved!



# Some Common CMS

- Blackboard -  
<http://www.blackboard.com/us/index.Bb>
- WebCT (now owned by Bb) –  
<http://www.blackboard.com/us/index.Bb>
- Moodle (it's free!)  
<http://moodle.org/>
- E- College  
<http://www.ecollege.com/indexflash.learn>
- EduTools (a tool to compare CMS)  
<http://www.edutools.info/>



# References and Links

## Links to information on Best Practices

- [Ten Principles of Effective Teaching and Practical Examples for the Classroom and Blackboard](#)
- [Best Practices: E-learning Pedagogy](#)
- [On-line Course Management Systems and Language Teachers](#)
- [Course Management Systems and Pronunciation Teaching](#)

## Books and articles:

- Blackboard for Dummies (IDG Books World Wide)
- Distance Learning for Dummies (IDG Books World Wide)
- Distance Education: The complete guide to design, delivery, and improvement (Teachers College, Columbia)
- Distance Education: pedagogy and best practices in the new millennium, by Miller and King. International Journal of Leadership in Education, 2003.

## How-to Guides

- [George Washington University's Blackboard Guides.](#)
- [WebDav in WebCT](#)
- [Hybrid Course Development](#)
- [Designing Instruction – A Guide for Faculty](#)