Online Facilitation Tips
These tips align with TILT’s Teaching Effectiveness Framework.

Inclusive Pedagogy
- Make accommodations for students with documented disabilities.
- Ensure major content is accessible for all learners.
- Consider:
  - Sharing about yourself and your intentions for inclusivity. Acknowledge that we all have work to do in this area.
  - Whether your online curriculum represents contributions from diverse backgrounds in the field.
  - If you designed activities and discussions so that all voices can be “heard.”
    - Be aware of student dynamics within online group work, particularly in relation to how much space students with dominant identities take up in these interactions and how this further marginalizes minoritized students.
  - How online teaching impacts different students, especially students from marginalized backgrounds in terms of technology access, schedules, etc...
  - How you will model productive conversation, even when students disagree.
  - Asynchronous learning strategies to provide more equitable learning opportunities for students with limited technology access. Many asynchronous teaching strategies can continue to be incorporated into instruction, even once we return to a fully face-to-face learning environment.
- Go to inclusive teaching tips online by the VPDO for a deeper dive into inclusive pedagogy.

Instructional Strategies
- Organize your course by modules (by week or by topic) consistently throughout the course. Hint: model what we’ve done in our GTA Training course or use the CSU Canvas Template.
- Include objectives/outcomes for each module.
- How do I facilitate discussions?
  - Don’t feel you need to respond to all discussion post. Respond if:
    - Someone asks a question specifically for you as facilitator.
    - Someone asks a question that doesn’t get a response from another student.
    - You have a resource to share.
    - You need to steer the conversation back on track/correct misinformation/remind students of your ground rules for online discussions.
- Research shows that engaging students with each other in the learning process increases their attention and focus, motivates them to practice higher-level critical-thinking skills and promotes meaningful learning experiences. But keep in mind:
  - Many students take online classes because they have health concerns, full-time jobs or family obligations that prevent them from being available at certain times.
While much student-to-student engagement can take place asynchronously, a few—like chats or Web conferences—are synchronous and more difficult to manage across the different time zones of your students.

This isn’t to say you should never incorporate synchronous learning online, but be considerate of your students. Use this type of learning sparingly, communicate any requirements well in advance and be prepared to offer alternatives to students who do not have flexible schedules.

- **Student-to-student engagement:**
  - group assignments (use Groups in Canvas)
  - discussions - whole group or small group
  - peer reviews
  - debates
  - roleplaying exercises
  - student-led discussions or exam-reviews

- **Student-to-content engagement:**
  - quizzes
  - discussions - whole group or small group
  - games
  - writing assignments
  - reflections
  - classroom assessment techniques that can be adapted as activities (CATs)
  - lab simulations
  - presentations
  - eportfolios
  - research
  - student-generated study guides or quiz and exam questions
  - videos of guest speakers or virtual field trips

- **Student-to-instructor engagement:**
  - discussions
  - journals
  - questions
  - blogs
  - feedback

**Classroom Climate**

- Fostering an online community of learners starts the first day of class by encouraging students to share.
  - Provide a personal introduction about yourself within your course! Consider a video or audio recording so that students have a voice and face to put with your name.
  - Ask students to collaborate on class norms that you will all agree to follow.
  - Create an emotionally and intellectually safe classroom environment. Establish guidelines for being respectful in discussions and other interactions, and be clear about the consequences for failure to show respect for classmates and you, the instructor.
Ask students to introduce themselves to each other in an introductory discussion forum. Welcome each student to the class by name in the forum, and continue to use their names throughout the course.

Tell students often that they belong in your course.

**During the First Four Weeks:**
- Consider incorporating a syllabus quiz or course scavenger hunt in the first module to ensure that students grasped the most important points regarding course policies, assignments and objectives.
- Set high expectations from the beginning. An instructor who holds high expectations will encourage high expectations from students.
- Incorporate frequent checks for understanding so students know where they stand throughout the course.

**Create student-to-student rapport:**
- Build community with student-student discussion.
- Provide opportunities for students to work with others - and for students to see the value of diverse perspectives.
- Give students an explicit guide to constructive online interactions, such as [Netiquette: Ground Rules for Online Discussions](#).

**Create student-to-instructor rapport:**
- Be vulnerable. Tell students when you don’t know something, and find out.
- Vary the mode in which you respond to students: written response, video response, or oral response are all available in Canvas.
- Create an atmosphere that honors effort and commitment - use low-stakes assessments, revision, and language that promotes a growth mindset.
- Provide timely responses to emails, questions, postings and assignments. Let students know when they can expect feedback from you so that they can plan ahead. Will you respond to emails in 24 hours? Will you return graded assignments within 48 hours?
- Follow up with students who are not participating so they know you care about them.

### Student Motivation
- Establish an audio and video presence in your course to help your students feel comfortable with you.
- Explain to your students, at the outset of your course and at regular intervals throughout, that you are using active-learning strategies because they have been shown by research to improve student understanding and skill building.
- Remember that communication in an online course is key - utilize announcements, discussions, grading tools, emails and phone calls to motivate your students.
- Send students an announcement a few days before the course begins letting them know the course is open and to feel free to explore. You might also include a reminder regarding their first due date in the course.
  - Throughout the course, send announcements once or twice per week—perhaps once on Monday to kick off a new module and again on Thursday with reminders for work due going into the weekend. You can also share articles, themes or thoughts from the discussions, other resources, address questions, etc.
• Use a variety of content types (videos, journals, audio, guest speakers, Web sites, texts, etc.) to appeal to different learning preferences.
• Offer choices on assignments—for example, could students do a presentation, brochure or paper and still achieve the same objectives?
• Promote growth mindset and students’ resilience by shifting attention to problem-solving and working through failures.
• Be enthusiastic, friendly and motivated! Create an atmosphere that is open and positive, and help students find personal meaning and value in the material you present.
• Clearly link concepts/lessons to industry or a broader purpose, future classes/activities, or other transferable skills that are used in the field.

Feedback and Assessment
• Assessment:
  o Set up discussions, assignments, and quizzes so that students use the spacing effect by studying for 45 minutes over multiple days instead of cramming material the night before an exam.
  o Encourage students to prepare for exams by testing themselves instead of simply reviewing material.
  o Tests that require students to generate responses in their own words through fill-in-the-blank or essay questions are better for student learning when compared with tests that require answer recognition (multiple choice, T/F, etc.).
  o Use consistent deadlines (that allow for flexibility if situations arise) for activities and assignments. This provides structure and opportunities for students to organize school workload with other responsibilities.
  o Design quizzes with the assumption that students will use their notes. Use quiz-setting options to promote academic integrity by setting a time limit, shuffling answers and using question sets.
• Assignments and Rubrics:
  o At the start of the course, share your grading policy, assignment descriptions and rubrics so students know what will be expected.
  o Where possible, provide prompts that allow for more than one way of expressing mastery.
  o Incorporate real-life, authentic assessment opportunities
  o Use a rubric in Canvas to provide feedback on essay assignments.
• Feedback:
  o Provide feedback in a timely manner so students can relearn inaccurate information.
  o Incorporate regular formative assessments strategies to gauge student understanding, modify future lessons and make in-the-moment instructional adjustments.
  o Break large assignments, such as projects or papers, into smaller chunks (known as scaffolding) that students can submit for low-stakes points and feedback to make sure they are on the right track.
  o Use the Canvas Speedgrader to provide clear and substantive feedback in assignments and discussions.