
FUNDAMENTALS OF BLENDED TEACHING AND LEARNING

What Do We Know About the Fundamentals of Blended Teaching and Learning?

Blended learning environments are similar in many ways to traditional classroom environments because a portion of the course is still held in a face-to-face setting. Thus, the course design process for blended environments will include many of the components found in the design of traditional courses: articulating course goals and learning objectives (this is covered in more detail in Chapter 2), creating clear expectations for students learning through assessments (see Chapters 3 and 4), designing effective learning activities (see Chapter 5), mapping your intended outcomes to align with assessments and learning activities (see Chapter 6), and crafting an effective syllabus (see Chapter 12). If you have previously designed a learner-centered course that is based on student learning objectives that are aligned with assignments and learning activities, there will be many similarities between your previous experience and the course design principles in this book. Even as formats for communicating with students and sharing information and learning activities may shift to accommodate new technologies within an online environment, an overall focus on helping students learn will remain at the center of your blended course design.

However, while blended learning environments share some similarities with traditional classrooms in terms of design, there are also components of blended environments that set them apart. Often, blended courses need additional attention to alignment in the design stage to ensure that the face-to-face and online activities are mutually supporting one another. Shea (2007) notes that “promoting, facilitating, and integrating online and face-to-face interactions are essential to blended learning. Without integration of interactions in the different modalities blended environments will fail to achieve their potential” (p. 26). This attention to alignment means that instructors may find that it is more important to prepare an entire blended course before the term begins rather than creating course components in the midst of the term, as can happen with more traditional course designs. Moreover, because of additional time online within the course structure, instructors need to prepare students for learning more autonomously and independently (this will be covered in more detail in Chapter 13). Adding technologies into the course can also change how students communicate with both the instructor and their peers. If students are engaging in blended learning for the first time, there may be some initial confusion about the

format and course expectations. Considering these challenges from the outset can help to mitigate them before the course begins.

In the following sections, I elaborate on the importance of designing a course using backward design principles and explore how the blended environment brings about changing roles for teachers and students, including a shift from pedagogical to andragogical frameworks.

Backward Course Design for the Blended Classroom

Backward design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005) is an approach to compiling a course that starts with the intended outcomes for student learning (see Figure 1.1). Instructors begin by reflecting on what students should know and be able to do upon successful completion of the course.

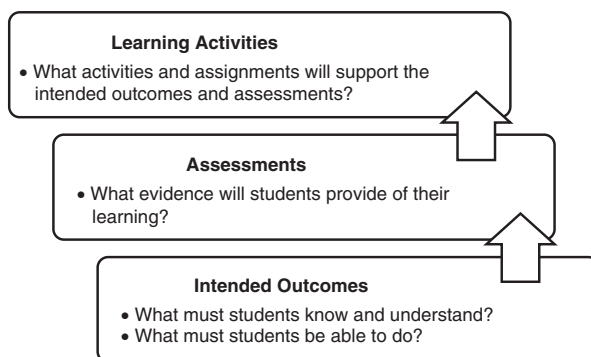
Then, based on these outcomes, instructors design assessments so that students can provide evidence of their learning. Learning activities and assignments are then created to help support each student's progress in the course and evaluate their level of learning (see Chapters 3 and 4 for more on assessing student learning in the blended environment).

Many instructors engage in some level of backward design instinctually, even if they have never heard of the philosophy before, because they are attempting to create a learning-centered course. An important component of backward design, however, is the setting aside of content until the intended outcomes are established. Not focusing on content coverage as a primary component of course design can be challenging for those who are new to backward design, but drafting intended outcomes first can help to ensure that your course planning keeps student learning at the center as you create and align different course elements. Each chapter of this workbook will help you to create a different piece of your course, aligning each component along the way.

Changing Roles of Teachers and Students: Pedagogy Versus Andragogy

Despite some fundamental similarities between traditional and blended environments, both instructors and students will notice significant changes in their roles in the classroom

Figure 1.1. The process of backward design.



BOX 1.1
Best Practice Tip

When transitioning a traditional course to a blended model, instructors should be attentive to the credit hours for the course so they can ensure that students are not being asked to do extra online work for the same amount of credits. Rather than just adding online components to already existing course requirements, remember that online components in blended learning environments are intended to *replace* face-to-face time.

and in the online environment. One key shift is from a pedagogical environment to one that is more andragogical. Although many instructors use the term *pedagogy* as a catchall for describing their teaching strategies, *andragogy*, or teaching methods for adult learners (Knowles, 1980), might be a more appropriate description, particularly in the blended classroom. Even if you have never heard of andragogy before, if you have practiced student-centered teaching then you are probably using some of the methods and strategies of andragogy to engage and motivate your students. Based on Knowles' (1980) principles of andragogy, Caulfield (2011) articulated the differences between pedagogical and andragogical methods of teaching and learning for the blended classroom (see Table 1.1).

Andragogy becomes a central component of the blended environment because of the shift to online tools and technologies where students are being asked to do more learning on their own. Students in blended courses often must hone their time management skills, learn how to be more self-directed with the range of resources available to them online, and be more proactive about asking questions when they are confused with course materials. If online and face-to-face activities for the course are truly aligned, then prepared students will have a solid comprehension of the online content and will be able to actively participate in the in-class activities and discussions, and vice versa. Missing either component can disrupt the student learning experience and cause students to fall behind. Unfortunately, because of the fast pace of many blended courses, students who fall behind often find it difficult to catch up. (See Box 1.1 for a best practice tip related to student workload.)

As mentioned previously, instructors transitioning courses to a blended modality must be prepared to do much of the design work up front. It can also be challenging for some instructors to be more “hands-off” in the blended classroom because of the increase in autonomous student learning. Instructors may find themselves replacing more direct instruction, in which the teacher is primarily responsible for students' learning, with a guided inquiry model through which students take on additional responsibility for their learning. In the blended environment, instructors should also plan for additional time during the semester to communicate with students through the online tools in the course as well as via email. As Carroll-Barefield, Smith, Prince, and Campbell (2005) note, “often, online instructors are inundated with emails from students asking questions about assignments and tests when the answers to their questions are offered very prominently within the online course materials.”

TABLE 1.1.
Principles of Pedagogy and Andragogy

<i>Pedagogical Principles</i>	<i>Andragogical Principles</i>
Learners learn what the teacher tells them they need to know	Learners need to know why information is important to learn; educators need to make this evident
Learning is the primary responsibility of the teacher	Learning is the primary responsibility of the learner
Transferring information is the most frequently used method of teaching, and learner experience is minimized	Drawing on the individual's personal experience and relating that experience to information from the discipline is the most frequently used method of teaching
Readiness to learn course content is determined by the teacher and uniformly applies to the entire class	Applying scaffolding techniques, such as group interaction, simulation, and case analysis, is frequently used to enhance each individual's readiness to learn
Content to be learned is determined by the logic of the discipline	Information is best learned when applied to real-life situations that are relevant to the learner
External motivators (grades, monetary rewards) are considered primary motivators of learning	Intrinsic motivators (self-esteem, need to achieve) are more important than extrinsic motivators

Caulfield, 2011, p. 9; © 2011, Stylus Publishing. Reproduced with permission.

A well-designed online environment can certainly impact this phenomenon, but less face-to-face time with students can result in an increase in online communication for instructors throughout the term, especially when students are new to the blended environment.

One area where instructors can intentionally articulate the balance between andragogy and pedagogy in their blended course is in how (and how much) they choose to incorporate the use of technology. As Christensen (2003) notes, “finding the right blend of online and face-to-face instruction is a balancing act for both instructors and students” (p. 242); this blend can take several iterations of a course to perfect. Creating or linking to tutorials for how to use foundational technologies for the course is one method to ensure student success. It is also recommended to not include too many technological tools in one course (particularly if those tools are new to the instructor) and instead focus on integrating one to three tools that are central to the course learning objectives. For example, an instructor may choose to augment in-class discussions by incorporating the online discussion board feature of an LMS, use video lectures to help communicate course content, and have students interact in small groups outside of class through the LMS chat feature.

As one scholar notes, the increase in student autonomy in the blended and online classroom means that “students also need to learn to study effectively online”

(Appana, 2008, p. 18). In addition to a student orientation to the blended learning structure and the main technologies to be utilized in the course, I also recommend that the instructor discuss how students can best succeed in the course through time management, self-directed learning, and taking advantage of in-class time to ask questions and clarify out-of-class work. Students should be informed of the differences of the blended method as soon as possible upon registering for a blended course. Several institutions have marked blended courses during the registration process and included a definition of *blended learning* in the course description so that students are well aware of what they are signing up for. Having the LMS site set up for students to access early is also a helpful way to introduce students to the course structure before they meet with an instructor face-to-face. Chapter 13 offers additional strategies to encourage student success in the blended classroom.

In the step-by-step guide that follows, you will have an opportunity to learn from blended instructors who have gone before you and explore your own plans for using pedagogical and andragogical principles and activities in the blended course you are designing. As you complete the activities in this chapter, use Table 1.2 to make notes on the similarities and differences you notice between traditional and blended courses.

TABLE 1.2.
Similarities and Differences Between Traditional and Blended Courses

<i>Similarities</i>	<i>Differences</i>

A Step-by-Step Guide to Fundamentals of Blended Teaching and Learning

As you embark on your blended course design work, take some time to reflect on the similarities and differences between your experiences designing and teaching traditional courses and the design steps for creating your new blended learning environments (use Table 1.2 as a template). This reflection will help you to decide what components are important to keep as well as what kinds of changes you may want to make as you transition your course to a blended modality.

Interviewing an Experienced Blended Course Instructor

Before you start designing your blended course, I recommend finding someone who has previously taught in the blended format (preferably on your campus, but another campus is also fine), so that you can learn from their experience. Here are some potential questions to get you started:

1. What changes have you noticed in the role of the teacher in the blended environment?

2. What changes have you noticed in the role of the student in a blended environment?

3. What has most surprised you about your experience teaching a blended course?

4. What kind of support was most helpful when you designed and implemented your blended course? What specific campus resources, units, offices, or people helped you?

5. What else would you like to share about your blended teaching experience (i.e., things you wish you had known, suggestions, encouragement, etc.)?

Exploring Pedagogical and Andragogical Principles

Based on the discussion of andragogy and pedagogy earlier in the chapter, where do you see components of within both your traditional courses and the blended course you are designing? There is a range of models for how you can incorporate both methods into your teaching in the blended classroom. For example, depending on the level of experience your students have with online learning, you may want to include intentional pedagogically oriented activities in the beginning until they feel comfortable with the technology and environment (see Figure 1.2). The level of your students (first-year students, seniors, graduate students) will also impact these choices.

Using Caulfield's (2011) descriptions of pedagogy and andragogy, Table 1.3 allows you to explore how you see particular pedagogical and andragogical principles occurring within the blended course that you are designing. (While you may not be able to entirely fill in Table 1.3 at this early stage of your course design, I encourage you to reflect on which components of your course are pedagogical and andragogical as you complete the remaining activities in the workbook. You may want to earmark this page and come back to it later.)

Figure 1.2. A spectrum of pedagogical and andragogical activities.

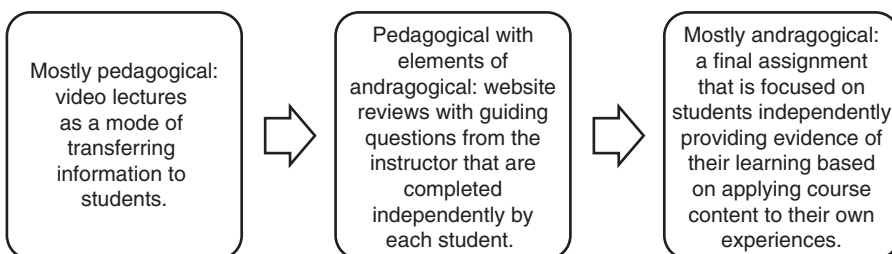


TABLE 1.3.

Applying Pedagogical and Andragogical Principles to Your Course

<i>Pedagogical Principles</i>	<i>My Class</i>	<i>Andragogical Principles</i>	<i>My Class</i>
Learners learn what the teacher tells them they need to know		Learners need to know why information is important to learn; educators need to make this evident	
Learning is the primary responsibility of the teacher		Learning is the primary responsibility of the learner	
Transferring information is the most frequently used method of teaching, and learner experience is minimized		Drawing on the individual's personal experience and relating that experience to information from the discipline is the most frequently used method of teaching	
Readiness to learn course content is determined by the teacher and uniformly applies to the entire class		Applying scaffolding techniques, such as group interaction, simulation, and case analysis, is frequently used to enhance each individual's readiness to learn	
Content to be learned is determined by the logic of the discipline		Information is best learned when applied to real-life situations that are relevant to the learner	
External motivators (grades, monetary rewards) are considered primary motivators of learning		Intrinsic motivators (self-esteem, need to achieve) are more important than extrinsic motivators	

As you begin the process of designing your course, it is important to keep in mind the fundamentals of blended teaching and learning discussed in this chapter. Employing the backward design process and reflecting on principles of pedagogy and andragogy will help you to build a sturdy foundation as you continue to layer in course design components through the activities included in the following chapters.

Key Ideas From Chapter 1

- Blended models of teaching and learning have important differences from traditional models.
- Backward design is a set of principles that can ensure that the creation of your blended course is student-centered.
- Knowing the differences between pedagogical and andragogical methods can help you to design appropriate learning activities that will best fit your students in a blended course environment.

Questions for Faculty

- What will be the biggest change for you in transitioning from a traditional to a blended course modality? What opportunities or challenges arise from this change?
- To what degree are the courses you teach pedagogical or andragogical? Do you think that your choices to be pedagogical or andragogical are discipline-specific?
- What level of experience do you have with backward course design? Will it be challenging to focus on design before content coverage? Why or why not?

Questions for Administrators

- How are students made aware that they are registered for a blended course?
- How are faculty assigned to teach blended courses on your campus?
- What resources do you have on campus (e.g., a teaching and learning center or an instructional technology group) that you can leverage to assist faculty with blended course design?
- What resources do you have on campus (e.g., a teaching and learning center or an instructional technology group) that you can leverage to assist faculty with learning the technologies they will need to use to successfully teach a blended course?

Documenting Your Course Design Progress

TABLE 1.4.
Documenting Your Course Design Progress

<i>Course Design Steps</i>	<i>In Your LMS Sandbox</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on what you have read in this chapter, use Table 1.2 to reflect on the similarities and differences between traditional courses you have taught and what you envision for your blended course. • Complete an interview with an experienced blended course instructor to see what advice they can offer as you begin the blended course design process. • Explore the pedagogical and andragogical principles in your own teaching using Table 1.3. • If you will be redesigning a previously taught course, gather all of your course materials in one place (physically or digitally) for easy reference. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish an LMS sandbox space to work in through your institution's academic computing or instructional design office.

NOTES