How to Build an Online Lesson with Adaptive Building Blocks

Consider, for a moment, the structure of your most recent lesson. You will most probably find that whether by design or by natural evolution, many of your lessons are built on modular activities, such as direct instruction, discussion or group work, to name a few. Alternating between these modules is a great way to keep students engaged and motivated, especially in an online platform.

Below is a list of online tools that can help you reach the same objectives you had for each module in your face-to-face classes.

A good guideline is to limit each passive chunk to 6-10 minutes at the most. Unless students are actively engaged - in research, group work or reflection, for example – their attention will probably not be sustained for more than 10 minutes.

Building Block	Objective	Online Examples & Tools
Direct Instruction	Transfer information (lecture or mini-lesson) or explain a complex topic.	You can record a mini-lecture in Zoom by starting a "meeting", in which you are the only participant and recording yourself sharing the screen, and speaking. You could also use voice-over narration in PowerPoint to record your explanations as you review your slideshow.
Modeling	Conduct a think-aloud as you navigate a task, apply a strategy, practice a skill, or use an online tool or resource.	You can use the Whiteboard feature in Zoom to record a video showing students how to do something such as solve an equation or visualize a process, for example. You could also use Zoom to demonstrate how to navigate something online, such as a simulation, by sharing your screen while accessing the simulation website. You could use the Annotate feature in Zoom to add annotations to your slideshow as you speak. This is handy when explaining a diagram or any visual representation of data, for example.
Discussion	Engage students in academic conversations about a text, video, podcast, topic, or issue.	Host a synchronous discussion using Zoom to allow students to engage in real-time debates. You can simply start the discussion in the main video meeting or post discussion questions in the chat or breakout rooms. Or you can use the forum activity in Moodle to engage students in asynchronous text-based discussions. Get creative - use a combination of both!

Research and Exploration	Encourage students to research a topic or issue and crowd- source the information they find.	Give students a topic to research online and ask them to crowdsource what they are learning in a shared space online, such as the class discussion board, a shared online document or a shared slide deck.
Collaborative Tasks	Group students online and allow them to work collaboratively on shared tasks.	Use a collaborative suite, like Microsoft Teams, to engage groups of students online. In fact, you can easily turn any Word document into a collaborative document when you use Office 365 (see how: Collaborative project.docx). Wikis are also great for collaborative projects (Moodle has an integrated wiki feature) Padlet and Trello are free, web-based platforms for collaborating and organizing information.
Practice and Review	Connect students with practice and review activities.	Use online resources (like Kahoot!, Quizlet, Khan Academy, or NoRedInk) to encourage review and to create retrieval activities. Use digital documents (Microsoft OneNote) to assign peer-review activities or writing assignments. Remember to set clear expectations - for example, by providing a detailed rubric.
Assessment	Assess student work and use that data to determine what students need moving forward.	Administer tests and quizzes using online assessment tools (Moodle has a number of versatile options). Assign a writing prompt, task, or project designed to assess the students' mastery of content and skills.
Reflection and Metacognitive Skill Building	Ask students to think about what they learned, how they learned it, what questions they have about the concepts or skills covered, and what support they need to continue improving.	Use Microsoft Forms**,** Socrative, or PollEverywhere to create an end-of-the-week reflection to encourage students to develop their metacognitive muscles. Teachers can also ask students to reflect in an online journal or learning log about their progress each week.

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