

Teaching Online: Advice from Experienced Teachers

One teacher made these points:

Teachers often believe assignments will be easier and less time-consuming than turns out to be the case.

It's also important to remember that for students not performing at the 50th percentile, assignments which are perfectly appropriate for the average student must be adjusted to be accessible to those who are not yet proficient readers – and especially if they are working without immediate feedback from educators and peers.

Another shared the following:

As an online teacher for several years, figuring out how long it should take for students to complete tasks has been something I have studied a lot since it is much harder to determine when you are not watching kids actually do the task. There are four main ways I have found to do this:

- 1. Do the task yourself and multiply by 3 the amount of time for students to complete the task themselves. This is an old rule I heard in teacher training a million years ago, but it is still cited as viable.*
- 2. Take how long an assignment takes kids to complete in a brick and mortar school and add on a quarter to half time extra. It just takes longer when kids have to read instructions rather than ask someone in the room.*
- 3. Ask students to report how long it takes them to complete tasks. Students appreciate being able to explain their effort, so make that part of*

the assignment or have them keep a log as a different assignment that you can use to readjust.

4. Online tasks are usually text heavy, so keeping average reading speed in mind is a helpful reminder about how long it should take to get through just the directions and filler:

According to Jan Hasbrouck and Gerald Tindal, an average student in the middle of the school year can read 23 words per minute at grade 1, which increases gradually up to 151 words per minute at grade 8. Their study was compiled in 2005, and covered reading speed during fall, winter and spring terms.

The full study shows that the reading speed for an average student in the winter school term is 23 words per minute (WPM) at grade 1, 72 WPM at grade 2, 92 WPM at grade 3, 112 WPM at grade 4, 127 WPM at grade 5, 140 WPM at grade 6, 136 WPM at grade 7, and 151 WPM at grade 8. Grade 7 is the only year to show evidence of stagnation rather than growth in reading ability.

Reading speed continues to increase at a slow pace in high school, but there are fewer studies about the exact rate of change, as educational goals and related research tend to shift from raw reading speed to grammar and comprehension at that point. Forbes reports that the average reading speed for an adult is approximately 300 WPM, while the average speed for a college student is approximately 450 WPM.

- *Best practice as an online teacher is to keep sentences and instructions very short and to the point. Cut out/ down readings and*

pare down assignments to the basics whenever possible. Generally less is more.

- *This leads to my last tip as an online teacher - provide tons of support.*
 - *I try to include both a reading and a video for content support that students can choose from.*
 - *Always give students "Need to know" questions that can direct them to the desired outcomes for any content.*
 - *Include sentence starters or paragraph outlines, notes outlines, exemplars, leveled readings, or any other support you can. Students who do not need these things just skip right over them. You can assign them or direct students to them who will not be successful without them.*
 - *ECE teachers and other support or content support teachers can help make these kinds of modifications and scaffolding adjustments to assignments. CUT DOWN READINGS TO ESSENTIAL PARTS, then have a link for the full reading. You can direct advanced kids to the full reading or assign it to them.*