

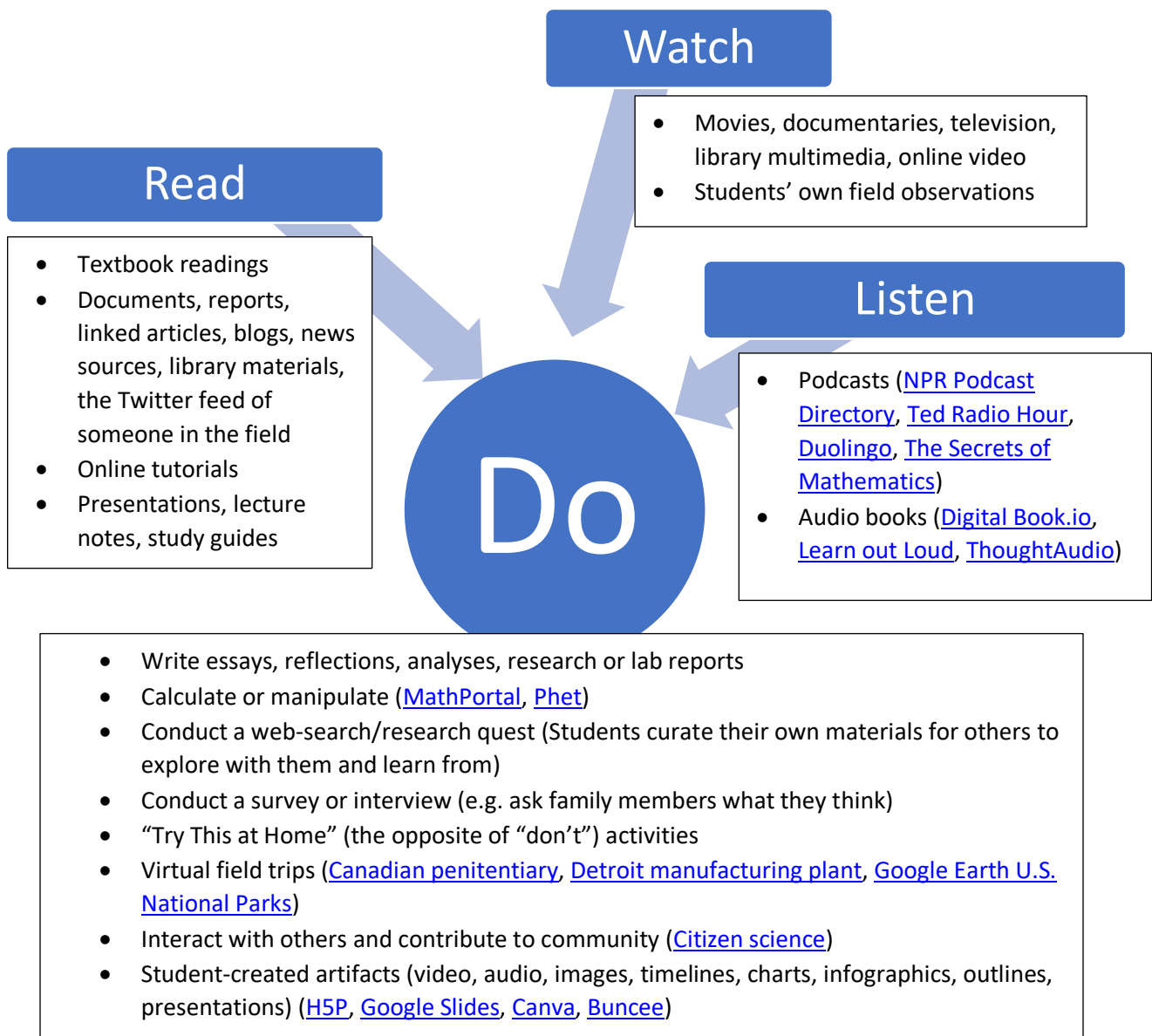
## You know what students need to learn. How do you lead them there online?

If we could say you used to drive a bus, then now you're leading a caravan where everyone is in their own car. An online learning experience consists of sensory objects created or curated by you or others (including students) that convey ideas, speak from multiple perspectives, and provide students opportunities to engage with and demonstrate their learning.

But you're not just selecting scenery; you're building the road toward the destination of your learning objectives. Your delivery mode may have changed, but your instructional design doesn't:

- **Expose** students to ideas they can perceive, ponder, remember, reflect on.
- **Reinforce** learning with resources and activities that inspire, ignite, recapitulate, review.
- **Invite** students to take ownership of their learning by making connections, working through doubts, reflecting, considering implications, making decisions.

You can accomplish these same teaching and learning objectives in a robust and engaging online course with this simple "Read, watch, listen, and do" framework.



## 11 TIPS FROM A FELLOW ONLINE DISTANCE EDUCATOR

**Work smarter, not harder:** Write in Word first. You can see it all at once. Then, copy and paste it into the Moodle parts. Seriously. This is a huge time saver.

**There is nothing wrong with text:** If you don't make any video or audio recordings the first time you teach online, that's fine. Concentrate first on the content, not the delivery. Your "lecture" can be a reading; make multimedia if there's time. (Include transcripts—consult your disability services office about accessibility concerns.)

**Talk to students:** You wouldn't lay handouts on a table and never say anything to your in-person students about them in your on-ground classroom. Similarly, don't fill your course with things without weaving the things together. Tell students *what* they're reading, watching, listening to, and doing, and *why*, writing in the same conversational manner in which you would speak to them. Prompt them for what to look for, and let them know how they'll realize they found it.

**Divide and conquer a week at a time:** Think in modules that are practical weeks. Does your on-ground class meet twice per week? Then a module that covers one week will be the equivalent of two class meetings and their respective activities and assignments. See the [Rice Course Workload Estimator](#) for some research-based guidance on time equivalency.

**Establish patterns early:** Students will appreciate the stability and ritual. For example, all assignments are due on Sunday; all quizzes are due on Wednesdays; all forum contributions are due on Thursdays and Sundays. You might develop patterns with content as well as behavioral routine, e.g. every week has three pages, two "quizzes," one forum, and one "assignment" or one scaffolded element that is growing to a larger "assignment."

**Think outside the Moodle title box:** Just because the Moodle community calls it one thing doesn't mean we have to. You can do quite a bit with 1 resource (Page), 3 activities (Assignment, Quiz, Forum), and a little creativity. Consider their functions: e.g. a quiz can become a worksheet or enhanced lecture with embedded questions; a forum becomes more than call-and-response when it's a showcase gallery.

**Use the right keywords:** When searching for resources, be as specific as possible in your keywords with both topic and type. For example, "Yellowstone" gets you the national park, but "Yellowstone virtual tour" gets you the field trip. Similarly, "Anatomy" gets you definitions and Wikipedia, but "anatomy worksheet .doc site:.edu" gets you whole documents for download that you might be able to re-use. (Consult your librarians for questions concerning copyright.)

**Trust your students:** Assume your students are there to learn and are working through the materials you provided. Online teaching life is much easier this way, and you need not feel as if you should control or are responsible for how students choose to spend their time. Know that students are texting each other, emailing each other, and otherwise connecting about the course. They are often helping each other understand and learn in places you won't see.

**Communicate often:** Schedule course announcements in advance, participate in discussion forums, and build in a *minimum* of one assignment per week in which you are giving students some kind of personal feedback. They need to know you are there as much as you need to know it of them. Additionally, your communication is a model for how (and how often) you wish them to communicate with you.

**Provide more than a visual aid:** Bullet points won't do unless itemizing key points is your intent. Write out or record what you would say in the lecture for which that PowerPoint is a visual aid. Give online students the whole message, not just its highlights.

**Treasure the online relationship:** Rather than think about what is lost, think about what is gained: e.g. students have more time to think before they answer; all students must contribute. Online education is a meeting of the minds where ideas can be deliciously sustained and thoughtful written messages revisited and savored.

## About

Lee Ann Dickerson is an online doctoral student whose research interest is online distance education. Lee Ann is currently an Academic Systems Coordinator at Wiley Education Services and has two decades of instructional design experience in environments from higher education to homeschool, online to on the couch. Former faculty at Jefferson Community and Technical College in Louisville, KY, Lee Ann won a 2014 Blackboard Catalyst Award for her online English 101 course and a 2016 Online Learning Consortium Effective Practice Award for an online community service project in her hybrid technical writing course.



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