

Strategies for Dealing with Laptops in the Classroom

Laptops in the classroom can be a distraction; learn to leverage this tool in your teaching methods and empower students to use it for learning. Laptops and the access it provides to the Internet can help motivate students, give them experience thinking critically and challenge them to move outside their comfort zones. This approach requires the instructor to lead, guide and innovate in teaching.

- **Establish Clear Expectations** - about when it is appropriate to have the laptop open and what it should be used for. Communicate consequences when these expectations are not met.
- **Screen Up, Screen Down Time** – screen up during active learning periods in which you assign students tasks to complete – often in groups – using their laptops. Screen down time happens when attention should be paid to lecture, discussion or other activities. If you consistently enforce this policy you will find students automatically doing it in your classroom!
- **Active Learning** – provide a means to engage students by using their laptops for activities throughout the class period.
- **Laptop Etiquette** – explain and discuss acceptable ways of using the laptop i.e. make sure your sound is off before class begins.
- **Walk Around** – make your presence and your expectations felt by moving round the room.
- **Desk Arrangement** – consider arranging desks in configurations other than rows that allows instructors to eyeball computer screens during activities. Physical arrangement of a room can increase student interactions as well.
- **Share Laptops** – for some activities having 2 or 3 people share a laptop to accomplish a task can reduce individual distractions.
- **Be Direct** – believe it or not, some students do not realize that watching their laptop screen while someone else is talking is rude! Explain to them how and why what they are doing is inappropriate and consistently enforce it.

References

<http://www.doit.wisc.edu/network/wireless/classroom-advice-for-faculty.aspx>
http://www.designshare.com/Research/Nair/Laptop_Classrooms.htm
<http://www.fno.org/nov08/attention.html>