

6 Tips for Building a Universally Designed Syllabus

Tip	Examples commonly found in a traditional syllabus	UCD strategies designed to fulfill the tip of building a UD syllabus
Present information in at least 2 formats	The <i>course schedule</i> is typically written in paragraph or table form.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Use a calendar to highlight due dates. ✦ Use symbols to highlight important topics, due dates. ✦ Use a chart with colors to clearly define the course schedule.
Give students as many resources as possible to interact with your course	The syllabus typically contains a list of required textbooks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Consider using multi-media in addition to textbooks. ✦ Offer students the choice between two different textbooks with different cultural perspectives. ✦ Encourage students to question textbooks through online searches. ✦ Allow students to access textbooks in paper, audio or electronic formats.
Provide background information – but be brief	Traditional syllabi include the instructor’s name and contact information but rarely more than that.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Include a picture of yourself for student reference. ✦ Include a bio of your work. ✦ Include a statement of how you came to teach this course and what you hope your students will get out of it. ✦ Include links to any project websites, books or journal articles that you may be involved with.
Build flexibility into your syllabus and your course	Many traditional syllabi have assignment requirements clearly present.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Offer students a choice of assignments (paper or presentation). ✦ Let students choose a research topic that has meaning to their career goals. ✦ Include hyperlinks to all assignment rubrics. ✦ Give students the option of submitting their assignments electronically.
Go digital	Most college syllabi are handed out in class in paper form.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ In addition to handing out the paper version of the syllabi, also send an electronic version. ✦ Allow for electronic assignment submissions. ✦ Use Learning Management Systems (like BlackBoard) to host discussions, web chats and other interactions. ✦ Post all of your course materials (PowerPoints and handouts) online.
Less is more	The majority of college syllabi are at least five pages long.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Use the electronic syllabus as a main page of your syllabus. Use hyperlinks to refer students to other documents on their own time (rubrics, handouts, etc.) ✦ Use bullets and concept maps to summarize points. Make it a point to go into these details in greater length in the classroom. ✦ Highlight key words and/or phrases that are important to the course. Explain their importance.