



# A Walk Through the Semester

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The Center for Innovation in Teaching & Learning (CITL) is a campus hub for faculty, staff, and students. Our mission is to explore and promote innovative teaching to support transformative learning experiences in all modalities. We've compiled the following tips to help you get started for a successful semester.

## Pre-Semester: Approaching the Starting Line

As you approach the beginning of a new term, there are opportunities and challenges you should consider. For starters, review CITL's [Creating a Syllabus Guidelines](#), and make sure you're aware of the [campus Syllabus Policies and Requirements](#). In addition to providing critical information about your communication expectations, course assignments, and grading policies, use the start of the new term to teach your students how to be successful.

[Canvas](#) is the preferred learning management system for all new courses. The Canvas platform is integrated with many other campus-supported tools and offers a secure environment for you to share content, create and collect assignments, keep track of grades, and run a variety of analytics. You may find that your college or department also supports [Moodle](#) as well. Speak to your departmental support staff for LMS guidance.

Take some time to visit the classroom where you will be teaching to familiarize yourself with room features and technologies. You can [request a consult](#) if you would like someone to meet you in the room for support.

For online synchronous sessions, [Zoom](#) is the campus-supported web-conferencing tool that allows instructors to create virtual classrooms and office hours, making connecting with your students easier and more reliable. If you're unsure which of these tools is right for your course, consider reaching out to [CITL's Instructional Support and Training team](#).

## Early Semester: Off to a Running Start

The syllabus can help students understand your communication expectations, but how you communicate with students during the beginning of the term will establish the tone and patterns of your engagement. Be sure to model the behaviors you expect your students to follow. If your course is online this Fall, you may want to review these [tips on maintaining student engagement in the online environment](#). For more tips on remote and blended instruction, you may also want to review the resources on the [Teaching Across Modalities pages](#).

Student evaluations of teaching are an important part of the feedback that instructors receive. This feedback can be especially helpful when it is collected early in the semester. We recommend you provide students with an opportunity to offer [Informal Early Feedback](#) (IEF) within the first few weeks of your course. The feedback can provide critical information on the quality of both the teaching and learning in your class. For more details, review commonly used classroom assessment techniques (CATs) on the [CITL website](#).

If you're excited about exploring more evidence-based teaching and learning strategies, be sure to check the [CITL calendar](#) for a variety of workshops, and consider completing one of several certificates available through our [Teaching Certificate program](#). Also consider joining our listserv where you can learn about upcoming events, programs, and important announcements.

## Mid-Semester: Pacing Yourself

At this point in the semester, you and your students have developed a routine. Why not shake things up a bit? There are many good resources for engagement strategies that get your students talking, analyzing, and working together on projects. This short article offers tips for getting students to participate in [hands-on activities](#) and includes a card set of 36 ideas that can be used to enhance lectures, organize content, frame discussions, and foster peer-to-peer instruction. Need help thinking through learning activities and alternative assessments for your course? Contact CITL to arrange a [short consultation](#) to help you put the *active* in active learning.

This is also a good time to reach out to a teaching and learning consultant in CITL who can help you think through current teaching strategies or start planning for next semester. Faculty tell us all the time how helpful it is to have another set of eyes on something and another person to talk to about teaching. No question is too big or too small. We can help with [accessibility](#), [copyright](#), [media production](#), [data analytics](#), and so much more. To request a consult, send a note to [CITL-info@illinois.edu](mailto:CITL-info@illinois.edu) or complete our [online intake form](#).

Mid-semester is also the time to decide where you want to teach next semester. Get to know your department scheduler and ask about teaching in an [active learning classroom](#) with wheels on chairs, group seating, multiple whiteboards, and enhanced technologies. Learn more at the upcoming [Reimagining the Classroom Symposium](#) for UIUC faculty and staff.

## End of Semester: Nearing the Finish Line

As you near the end of the term, you'll want to learn more about the [Instructor & Course Evaluation System](#) (ICES), which is used across campus as the official end-of-semester student ratings system for faculty and teaching assistants. ICES ratings are often utilized for course improvement, promotion and tenure review, teaching award decisions, and campus acknowledgement via our [List of Teachers Ranked as Excellent by Their Students](#).

You can find information about final grade submission deadlines on the [Office of the Registrar website](#). Campus policy states that final grades should be submitted within 72 the final examination in the course. Prior to entering final grades, please review the [explanation of grades](#) for additional information on the University of Illinois grading system.

## Looking Ahead: Exploring New Horizons

As you are finishing up your semester and have a little breathing room, you might want to consider exploring CITL's Innovation Spaces, eText@Illinois, and our many other services to improve and enhance your teaching and learning in the coming semesters.

The award-winning [eText@Illinois](#) is CITL's accessible, interactive, multimedia-enriched online content delivery platform. Created at and for the University of Illinois, eText enables easy delivery of your original content, online educational resources, and existing course materials, and it can save students 40-75% over traditional books.

Got an innovative idea you'd like to discuss? [CITL Innovation Spaces](#) are for you! We are located on the first floor, east side of the Armory building, and have something for every discipline. The [Innovation Studio](#) (rm 172) is an experiential space with VR headsets, gaming computers, 3D printers, video wall, laser cutter, metaverse examples, AI, and more. The [Virtual Reality Lab](#) (rm 173) is a small research and design lab, which also houses a green screen and streaming station. [Room 182](#) is an experimental teaching space where CITL experts work with instructors to try new and innovative ways of teaching.

For more information about any of CITL's services be sure to check the [CITL homepage](#). We look forward to connecting with you soon! Quick links:

[Accessibility](#)

[CITL calendar](#)

[CITL's Innovation Spaces](#)

[CITL online intake form](#)

[Classroom assessment techniques](#)

[Copyright](#)

[Creating a Syllabus](#)

[Data analytics](#)

[eText@Illinois](#)

[Explanation of grades](#)

[Canvas](#)

[Informal Early Feedback](#)

[Innovation Studio](#)

[Instructor & Course Evaluation System \(ICES\)](#)

[List of Teachers Ranked as Excellent by Their Students](#)

[Maintaining student engagement in the online environment](#)

[Media production](#)

[Moodle](#)

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[Syllabus Requirements](#)

[Teaching Certificate program](#)

[Teaching Across All Modalities](#)

[Virtual Reality Lab](#)

[Zoom](#)