A BAKER’S DOZEN: Steps for creating an online course

1. Finalize the Syllabus – The syllabus is the key document for any course, but especially for an online course
2. Organize the course – The Unit-Module-Topic approach is best – do not organize content by time, such as weeks. (Textbook – Most textbooks are very nicely organized and can provide structure to a course that uses the textbook – not chapters, but ideas.)
3. Building Blocks – Modules are building blocks for a course. Typically, a module is a division or content that requires about 8 hours of work by a student (reading, watching, listening, writing, studying, or discussing, for example). Modules are usually organized into Units and are subdivided into Topics.
4. Welcomes – the course should have a welcome from the instructor, and each module should have an introductory welcome (written, audio, video)
5. Schedule – a detailed semester/term schedule should be prepared and sent to students
6. Content – Add content to each module. Content can be textbook readings, single concept videos, .pdf files, or other information that explains the Module’s content.
7. Discussions – develop some way for students to interact about key topics presented in a module. Course Management Systems have easy-to-use discussion areas, but if no system is available email can be used.
8. Monday Morning Memos – Each Monday send an email or other correspondence to students that summarizes the previous week and introduces the upcoming week.
9. Partners – assign students to partners, but not teams. A partner supports, and team may not.
10. Artifacts – Artifacts of student learning are papers, comments made to questions posed, quizzes, audio explanations, or video demonstrations, for example. Each module should have some artifact expected from students.
11. Synchronous (or not) – “Live” classes are ok, especially at first, but scheduling is a critical problem. If synchronous sessions are used (Zoom session, conference calls, for example), record them and make them available.
12. Location, Location, Location – Online class content and organizational structure is typically placed in a course management system, such as Canvas or Blackboard. If no course management system is available, organize using email or the telephone, or social media sites such as YouTube.
13. *Be available – be regularly available either online, over the phone, or via Zoom office hours.*