

Tech-Flex: What is Hybrid Learning?

Hybrid learning combines on-campus and online teaching into one cohesive experience. Approximately half of the class sessions are on-campus, while the other half have students working online. Although that may sound like a cut-and-dry formula, a lot of planning is needed to ensure that hybrid works well, allowing its two formats to capitalize on each other's strengths.

Given the unique opportunities that hybrid can offer, planning must be approached carefully. Instructors need to be familiar with not just the strengths of online and on-campus teaching in their own rights, but also with how they can feed into each other over a longer term.

Before we take a deeper look at how to plan a hybrid course, let's make sure we're clear on terms. For example, many people might use the words "hybrid" and "blended" interchangeably, but in fact they mean different things. That difference is based primarily on the proportion of on-campus and online sessions and/or instructional material in a given course. **Whereas hybrid refers to teaching that is roughly balanced between its two formats** (think 50/50), blended refers to a mostly traditional on-campus course that also incorporates a few class sessions' worth of online instruction (think 25/75). Keep in mind that these are approximate definitions, because there is no exact science in quantifying how much instruction equals another kind of instruction (with the obvious exception of entire class sessions). That said, hybrid and blended are but two terms in what we might think of as a larger "online learning spectrum" (see chart below).

