Conversations on Technology
Is technology fair to all students?

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Question #8:
"I'm afraid that using technology won't be fair to all of my students. Have all of your students been able to deal effectively with your use of learning technology?"

Any method of pedagogy favors some and works against others. Students are not identical. Technology will be in the classroom and elsewhere very soon. Fighting it is a failing rear-guard action, much as the battle by those who opposed using paper and pencil since it would result in atrophied memory. Even if you are correct, you can't win the battle. Witness those who fought calculators. You will be giving your students essential skills they will need.

Students do not have problems with LT. It is mostly the faculty who have problems.

Not all my students have been able to deal effectively with my use of technology, just as not all of my students have been able to deal effectively with my lectures over the years. Lectures are not fair to all my students and neither are group work assignments. Many students, however, benefit from the use of technology and they will have to learn to use the ideas and skills of our discipline in a technology-rich environment that they will live in throughout their lives.

Four years ago I asked my freshman students how many had used e-mail and accessed the web. About 40% had. Today nearly everyone has. In fact it is mostly the non-traditional (older) students who have not. Let's face it. The world is not going to quit using computers. If students have to learn to use technology in your class you may be doing them a big favor. Most of my technology phobic students have thanked me profusely for helping them overcome their fears and getting them started. However you have to do this correctly. Give students room numbers where they can get an e-mail address. Tell them where computer labs are and tell them that they are manned with people to help them. For a couple students that were really scared I actually
went to the lab with them the first time. If you have a real phobic group do a group trip to the computer lab. I have never had a complaint about my use of technology in any class that I have ever taught.

**My students have access to all of my multimedia material on the server.**

**As with most learning, some students are faster than others at using technology.** You have to be ready to give the slow learners extra help, but that is always true.

**Nothing is completely fair.** Even text books give some students an advantage over others. That is the nature of living in our academic world. It would be more unfair to the students to not prepare them for the future they will find when they leave campus. They will be expected to be technologically literate. That is why everyone here on campus must take IT 101 or IT 102. It levels the playing field and we level the field more by letting students know what they need to know in the courses we teach and then give the resources to learn and some of the class time as well if necessary. It is part of preparing independent learns that permits us to do this.

**Depends on what you are doing.** If you use it in class to show animations then there is no problem, if you are asking students to manage the computer, internet, e-mail, then you should consider taking some time to teach the proper use. Or get some student to do the training for you.

**Students today are getting used to dealing with technology.** Those who have not been familiar have been able to learn quickly.