



# Distance Education Tip Sheet

---

Vocabulary used in distance education can, at times, be quite confusing. Organizations with different purposes and constraints (for example, a state education office and an independent publishing company) may be using the same term to refer to different ideas or may use different terms for the same idea. This tip sheet provides guidance for terms used in adult distance education programs in Virginia.

## Distance Education Terms

Virginia's Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education uses definitions based on the IDEAL Consortium's [Distance Education and Blended Learning handbook](#) to define distance and remote learning.

### Distance Education (DE)

According to the [National Reporting System \(NRS\) Technical Assistance Guide for Performance Accountability under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act](#), distance education is any “formal learning activity where students and instructors are separated by geography, time, or both for the majority of the instructional period” (p. 48).

The materials are delivered through a variety of media which can include print, audio recording, videotape, broadcasts, computer software, Web-based programs, or other online technology.

In Virginia, what is referred to as Distance Education is often limited to students' proxy hours. Proxy hours are defined as the time distance education students spend engaged in *approved* distance education activities, such as using distance education curricula.

### Distance Learning (DL)

Many programs use the term distance learning instead of distance education. However, in the IDEAL Consortium Handbook, distance learning describes what a learner is doing; it is the student's perspective of studying outside a classroom (Askov, Johnston, Petty, & Young, 2003) or, as suggested by the NRS guidelines, separated by time for the majority of the instructional period.

## **Remote Face-to-Face Instruction (RFI)**

Remote Face-to-Face Instruction gained popularity as programs rapidly shifted their in-person, in-class instruction to an online format during the COVID-19 pandemic. Programs fortunate enough to have students who have access to the Internet and devices can choose to continue providing face-to-face instruction by using videoconferencing tools such as Zoom, Google Hangouts, or Skype. Whole groups of students might choose to meet with a teacher at the same time and, if the conferencing tools allow for it, might even break out into small groups during the course of the online video class.

## **Classroom Technology Integration (CTI)**

Equally important in the academic experience, but not to be confused with blended learning, is classroom technology integration (CTI). CTI helps teachers work more efficiently, providing the means to make learning more engaging. For example, a teacher might make a vocabulary study set or quiz for the classroom using Quizlet or Kahoot. It may be useful to understand that CTI differs from blended learning, which moves the role of technology beyond that of just being a useful tool to support learning in the classroom. In blended learning, technology is an actual mode for instruction or collaborative learning. For example, if you take the results of Quizlets or Kahoots and leverage them to engage in discussion or explanation of reasoning, you are transitioning from CTI to blended learning.

## **Learning Models**

### **Blended Learning Model**

Blended models are characterized by “tight integration” of instruction delivered online and instruction that happens in a class.

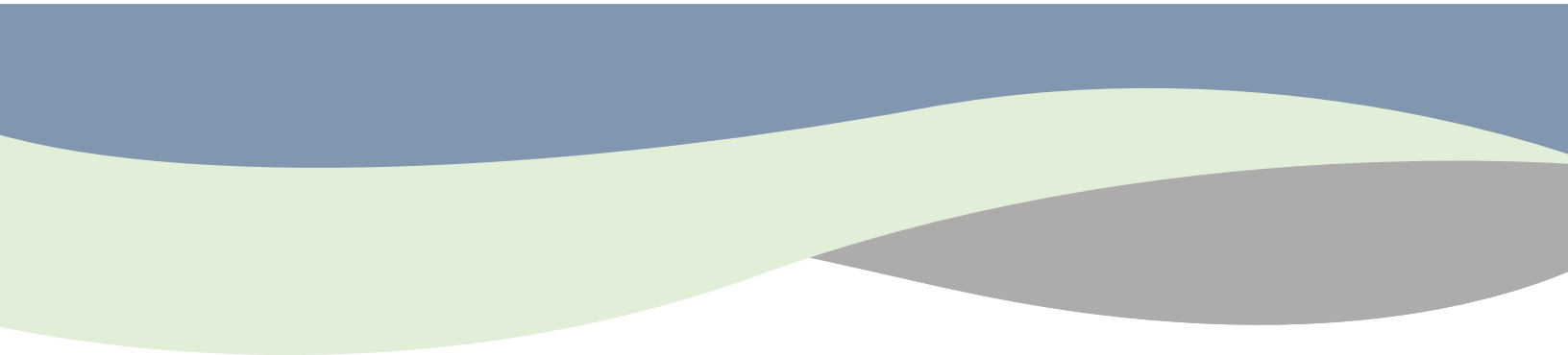
Instructors consider both in-class and online instruction as part of a collective whole. They make adjustments to their face-to-face teaching based on what they observe in students’ work online. Likewise, instructors alter online assignments based on what they observe in class.

### **Hybrid Learning Model**

Hybrid models employ both an online curriculum product and in-class teaching. However, the assigned work that students complete online may not be directly aligned with what happens in the classroom.

### **Supplemental Model**

Supplemental models make use of online curricula outside regular class time, are not required, and may not even be checked by the instructor. This is extra work that is



somewhat aligned to the goals of a course, but it does not require much extra effort on the part of the instructor.

## Recording Attendance and Participation Hours

Federally funded (AEFLA) adult education programs keep an auditable record of all attendance using the Virginia Department of Education's Single Sign-on for Web Systems (SSWS) portal. The instructional modality (type of instruction) determines how attendance is reported into SSWS. Instructional modalities can fall into one of two classifications: synchronous or asynchronous settings.

- **Synchronous** settings describe those in which teachers and students participate at the same time, but not necessarily in the same place.
- **Asynchronous** settings describe those in which students complete learning activities outside of scheduled instructional time.

In SSWS, attendance hours for synchronous settings are reported under **contact hours** using the following modalities:

- **Direct instruction (face-to-face)**: hours of instruction that the student receives in person from the programs, such as classroom instruction, being tutored by an instructor before or after class, or taking an assessment designed to inform placement decisions, assess progress, or inform instruction. Hours are entered into SSWS in the corresponding field for each scheduled class date the student attended.
- **Instruction at a distance (virtual)**: hours of instruction that the student receives synchronously, but without the teacher and student being in the same physical space. Instruction at a distance includes virtual classroom instruction, remote tutoring by an instructor before or after class, or taking an assessment through a remote platform. Hours are entered into SSWS as contact hours in the corresponding field for each scheduled class date the student attended. Attendance records can include screenshots, chat logs, attendance forms or other tracking methods.

In SSWS, proxy hours, or, attendance hours earned asynchronously, are reported under Distance Education Hours. The following models of time tracking may be used to report distance education attendance:

- **Clock-Time Model:** describes recording usage of an approved distance education curricula that automatically tracks student usage and can generate reports showing that student's usage over a period of time.
  - Example - Student completes 10 on-task hours of work in an approved distance education curriculum during the month of January. These hours, tracked by time and date in the product's management system, will be added to the student's distance education attendance record on the day(s) the time was earned.
- **Learner Mastery Model:** describes recording usage in an approved distance education curriculum that allocates a fixed number of hours based on passing a test (typically 70% or higher).
  - Example - A student completes a lesson in an approved distance education curriculum. This lesson has a predetermined proxy hour value of 2 hours. These hours will be added to the student's distance education attendance record on the day(s) the time was earned.
- **Teacher Verification Model:** describes the professional judgment and prior experience of a teacher to determine the time required for students to complete an assignment in an approved distance education curriculum (if the assigned work does not have its own means to track time) or in activities that are part of an online course.
  - Example - An instructor assigns workbook pages in an approved distance education curriculum. This material includes blank space for students to compose a 300-word analysis of the text. This activity takes students about one hour to complete satisfactorily, based upon prior experience. This hour will be added to the student's distance education attendance record on the date the lesson is submitted.