Teaching with Technology: My Guiding Principles
by Heather Woods

When attempting to incorporate a new technology in class (or when I reuse one with which I'm already familiar) these are the guiding principles I use to examine my pedagogical practices.

1. **Technology should serve a particular pedagogical purpose or solve a particular pedagogical problem**. Resist the use of technology purely because it's new or shiny. Learning comes first; technology ought to facilitate that learning in a way other tools or platforms cannot. If it doesn't, don't use it.

2. **Mind the digital divide and calibrate accordingly**. Assume that this digital divide is not just about access to technologies; the digital divide also includes inequalities in skills, languages and experiences. As [Lisa Nakamura](#) suggests, some technologies were created in order to facilitate the experiences and actions of people in power; don't forget this structural history when using technology or assigning students to use it.

3. **When introducing a new technology, explain its relevance and utility and offer a step-by-step demo.** Students deserve to be active, learned stakeholders in the educational process--they need to know why they're using technology and how to best utilize it. Tell students what problem you're trying to solve and ask them later whether the technology succeeds in solving it (or if it just creates more problems.)

4. **Convenience matters.** When considering the integration of a new technology, ask whether or not it will make learning more or less difficult for students. Weigh potential educational benefits against convenience costs. Also: remember that students have active lives outside of your (virtual) classroom and ask whether tech can usefully merge those two worlds.

5. **Remember the public and connected nature of sharable media.** As [danah boyd](#) notes, new media is increasingly replicable and searchable. Never require students to use sharable media without giving them an option for anonymity. Relatedly: help students understand and manage their digital footprints and give them skills to negotiate this publicness now and in the future. Consider modelling public intellectualism for them.

6. **Teach digital literacy as digital citizenship.** Teach students civility when communicating and acting together online; use technology together as a tool to create a more just world.

7. **Use technologies to connect content with practice and/or hands-on skill building.** Some technologies can merge the skills/content divide while others do one or the other more efficiently. Experiment with different platforms and tools; test out the way they mediate the learning process and connect the educational task to the platform.
8. **Plan for tech failure and fail well.** Trying new technologies can be illuminating, even (especially!) when they flop. Include this learning curve in your lesson plans and when you inevitably fail in front of your students, consider it an opportunity to model productive failure. Remember, in addition to content, you're teaching students how experts work through problems--including technological problems.
9. **Don't feel pressured to make use of all possible technologies, especially not all at once**. Enough said.
10. **Don't forget the original (sharing) technologies:** Writing and speaking are the original shareable media and can transform a learning experience even absent "bells and whistles" technology.