

# Tips for Succeeding in This and Other Online Courses

## Computer Science I

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### 1 Treat It Like a Regular Course

This may be an online course, but it is every bit as rigorous and challenging as the traditional face-to-face version and you need to approach it as such. In fact, online courses are actually *more* challenging to take than a traditional course because you have to have the self-discipline to overcome the additional challenges that an online course provides. Without the expectation and structure of showing up to a physical classroom, you can get complacent, feel detached and your motivation may suffer as a result.

Hold yourself accountable and make the commitment that you *will* succeed in this course and that you *will* take the necessary steps to doing so.

### 2 Get and Stay Organized

- Set a plan and set a regular schedule on when and how you will engage with the material in this course. For example, though you may be able to watch the lectures and videos or do the readings asynchronously, you should establish a routine and watch/read at the same time every day.
- Schedule regular times to work on class assignments and build in slack time: add more time to your estimate on how much time you'll need to complete it. It is never wrong to get done early and the slack time will allow you to deal with things that may come up or to seek additional help if you get stuck.
- Work *everyday*: programming (and Computer Science in general) is something you only get good at with practice. It requires time and hands-on effort which is best achieved with daily practice. Like any skill, it can atrophy if not practiced. Don't get into the "cram" mentality and think that you can pack in 5 hours of material

in one sitting. This stuff takes time, spread that 5 hours over 5 days, one hour per day.

- Organize your work and keep a calendar with reminders. All assignments are posted in Canvas and you can export due dates to iCal or ICS formats.
- Organize your work by maintaining a TODO list or use an organization app.
- Schedule time for breaks, look into the [Pomodoro Technique](#)
- Be sure to include *all* aspects of your life including recreation, health, social engagements, etc. in your time management.
- Periodically reassess your daily and weekly schedules and make appropriate adjustments.

### 3 Create a Regular Study Space

If you're not sitting in a class or lab it may not *feel* like a class which can easily lead to distractions. This is especially true if you have a TV, phone, games, etc. close by presenting a temptation. To combat this, establish a good working area away from distractions. Don't take your work outside this area nor your recreation into this area. Keep your worlds separate.

### 4 Network, Connect, and Stay Engaged

It can be difficult to not see other students or your instructor face-to-face which can leave you with a sense of disconnectedness which can lead to feelings of isolation and a negative effect on motivation. Combat this by actively staying connected to the course, your instructor, Learning Assistants and peer students by:

- Regularly reading and participating in the online discussion forum (Piazza)
- Regularly attending virtual office hours via Zoom (even if it is just to "hang out" while you work).
- Reach out to classmates to find a study partner or collaborator and keep in touch with collaboration tools (Zoom, Repl.it, etc.)

### 5 Utilize Resources

- Familiarize yourself with all the resources available in the course and *use* them!
- Don't wait to ask for help when you need it.

- Use Piazza, our online discussion board: there is no such thing as a stupid question. Even so, you can avoid embarrassment by asking anonymously!

## 6 Stay Healthy

This advice goes beyond just this course or any course for that matter. If good habits apply to a course, then they can be applied to everything in your life.

- Get into a good routine: wake up at the same time every day (and weekend) and go to bed at the same time. Get enough sleep.
- Exercise; take a walk, bike, go to the gym, etc.
- Engage in a healthy diet, physical health is the number one factor to mental health
- Don't cut recreation (video games, netflix, etc.) but regulate it. Schedule time for it but stick to that time.
- Set a balance: sleep more than you study (or work); study more than you party and party as much as you can.

## 7 Expect to be Challenged

It's OK to struggle. College is supposed to be hard. Very few students sail through without struggling at some point.

Don't compare yourself to others, compare yourself to yourself and focus on your own improvement throughout the semester and beyond.