

Learning Online

Key to success as an online student:

Online requires different learning than in face-to-face learning. It requires self-direction, taking responsibility for your own learning. You need to be organized, motivated and confident. You must engage in seeking out answers and communicating with classmates and instructors. Your learning experience must involve much more text-based communication than in face-to-face learning experiences where the learning is more voice-based communication and note taking.

1. Before the course begins: Get organized for the learning experiences

- **Syllabus.** Download and read the syllabus
- **Calendar.** Create a tentative calendar for the term using information from the syllabus; identify as many due dates as possible. Include potential weekly study times and times to be engaged in the threaded discussions.
- **Prepare for interactions.** Access as many resources for the course as possible so you are ready to begin when the course begins. Access and become comfortable using Skype, Google Hangouts, Google Chats, Adobe Connect and other social media applications that might be useful for interacting with students and instructors. Become familiar with the online platform (Blackboard and Piazza) and features that support online educational experiences, such as obtaining access to graded assignments, connecting with students and instructors, obtaining announcements, posting questions, etc.
- **Learn about tools.** Explore different potential tools to use in the course. Search for video explanations for how to use the tools. Determine how to use interlibrary loans to gather additional resources you might need.

2. First week of the class or as soon as the course is activated

- **Introductory information.** Access the introductory information posted in the course. Use this information to confirm the dates in your calendar. Often schedules are posted that are helpful.
- **Get to know your classmates.** Introduce yourself to the class using the instructor's directions. The typical information to share includes your geographical location and time zone, your plans in the program, your current work, and other information that helps others become familiar with you. Personalize with a photo if possible.
- **Study groups.** Identify a study group and identify leaders to assure the groups is on task throughout the course
- **Weekly study times.** Finalize planned weekly study times. Commit to this schedule.

3. Weekly throughout the course

- **Plan your weekly schedule.** Log into the course as soon as available, download weekly expectations and make a schedule for your work. Determine the assignments for the week and plan how you might meet the requirements.
- **Download materials and resources.** Download as much as you can so that you might work offline on the work.
- **Daily attention.** Log in to the course daily. Read and attend to all posted announcements.
- **Videos.** Review any videos more than once, taking notes and making sure you understand the ideas. Connect the videos with the readings. Read instructor comments framing the videos. These comments may be more current than the videos. The additional explanations are particularly helpful in making sense of the information in the video lectures.
- **Communicate.** The nice part of online learning is that you have access to the videos and video lectures repeatedly. The difficult part is that raising your hand to ask a question is not possible. You need to learn to ask those questions in a different way – by posting your questions. The challenge is to whom you should post those questions. Try your various avenues of communicating with members of the class – your study partners as well as other members in the class through the discussion boards. You will learn more by trying to answer these questions than waiting for the instructor to answer the question. Through the process of answering your own questions your understanding is at a deeper level.
- **Actively participate in class discussions.** Actively participate in the class discussions, asking higher order questions and extending the discussions of the ideas. Clearly identify a purpose for the message. Let your readers know you have a question. Or, indicate that you are extending the ideas to make the ideas clearer. Read all the discussions and respond appropriately. Resist the 'I agree' messages. Bring ideas together to help others see the bigger pictures and ideas. This process of putting your ideas into writing actually helps clarify your thinking.
- **Connect with small group members.** Use small groups to share ideas, solutions and understandings.
- **Study groups.** Work with your study group: ask questions, share ideas, and understandings. (Yes, this group is in addition to other groups created in the course. Gather as many varied ideas about the topics as you can.)
- **Submit assignments on time.** Follow the assignment instructions carefully.
- **Review your grades and ask questions.** Make sure that you understand the assignment results.
- **Reflect.** Reflect on your work for the week. What did you learn and how did that learning come about? What problems were you able to solve? What problems continue to be problems? Discuss these ideas with other students and if necessary the instructor.