

ONLINE LEARNING READINESS SELF-CHECK

TIPS AND STRATEGIES FOR ONLINE LEARNING



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The tips and strategies in this booklet are selected from the books listed below:

Burns, P. F. (2006). *Success in college: From C's in high school to A's in college*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education

Dembo, M. H. (2004). *Motivation and learning strategies for college success: A self-management approach*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates

Shepherd, J.F. (1998). *College study skills*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Siebert, A., & Cilpin, B. (1996). *The adult student's guide to survival & success*. Portland, OR: Practical Psychology Press

Talbot, C. (2010). *Studying at a distance: a guide for students*. Berkshire, England: McGraw-Hill Education.

OLRSC for Academic Success in Online Learning

Many teacher education programs are offering more online courses as an alternative to traditional instruction. While the flexibility of online learning provides convenience to teacher candidates, they face difficulties often due to technical issues, time management, sense of isolation, etc. Thus, it would be important to gauge students' online learning readiness level and provide appropriate strategies to be successful in online learning environments.

The online learning readiness framework is developed by the Center for Innovation in E-Learning (CIEL), and it contains four management areas including nine sub-dimensions as follows.

- Learning management is students' ability to set proper learning goals and monitor their own progress.
- Resource management includes students' skills to manage time, space, and technology.
- Interaction management regards students' interaction with peers and instructors.
- Motivation management is students' effort regulation and mastery self-talk.

To help students identify their strength and weakness in terms of online learning in the early stage of the Tech Teach Across Texas online program, CIEL created the Online Learning Readiness Self-Check (OLRSC) system. After completing the online learning readiness questionnaire, individual student's readiness level is presented in an interactive polar chart. By clicking on the chart, students can find online learning tips for their academic success. These online learning tips include strategies from empirical academic studies and also take previous Tech Teach Across Texas students' survey results into consideration. Each site coordinator will be able to see their teacher candidates' online learning readiness test results. The following presents the online learning strategies of each dimension.

1. Goal Setting

Carefully established goals will guide you to perform intentionally and succeed in online learning. Successful online learners often use the following strategies for goal setting.

1.1 Based on what you value most in the degree program, set yourself a primary goal, which is something you want to achieve in the future.

1.2 Goal setting is a planning process.

- Based on your primary goal, figure out the intermediate goal then the current goal. Achieving the current goal will lead you to achieve the primary goal.

1.3 A goal-setting process

- Define a SMART goal
 - S-Specific;
 - M-Measurable;
 - Action-oriented;
 - R-Realistic;
 - T-Timely
 - For example, I want to attain a 3.5 GPA this semester.
- Generate and evaluate alternative plans
 - Determine how you are going to attain your goal.
 - Ask yourself:
 - How would other people do?
 - Who can help me?
 - How have I achieved similar goals before?
- Make implementation plans
 - Identify intermediate and current goals that must be completed;
 - Identify the date by which to complete the current goals.
- Implement the plan
 - Check your task progress;
 - Make changes when necessary, adding or removing tasks, and allow more time for tasks, as needed.
- Evaluate your progress and plan
 - How well did the plan work?
 - How many tasks did I complete?
 - With which task(s) did I have the most trouble? Why?
 - What strategies worked well?
 - What problems came up?
 - What did I learn about myself?
 - What didn't I plan for?

2. Monitoring

Check your own progress to make sure you are on the right track and check your online course on a regular basis to stay up to date. Successful online learners often use the following strategies for monitoring.

2.1 Monitor comprehension

- Be aware of the quality and degree of your understanding.

2.2 Reflect on your studies

- Read your notes regularly, ask yourself:
 - What is the professor trying to communicate?
 - What are the major points or themes of this video/reading/module?
 - Think and use your notes to answer these questions.

2.3 Evaluate your performance

- Figure out what went wrong and make a plan to correct it.

2.4 Awareness of a need for help

- Ask your professor how you can improve.
- Determine whether group studying works best for you.

3. Time Management

Be wise in your time management. In order to succeed in online learning, you are expected to be responsible for your own time management.

3.1 Develop regular life and study patterns

- Decide how much time to spend studying.
- Set up a study schedule that fits your concentration span.
- Select the time that works best for you (e.g. morning, midnight).
- Plan around your social activities.
 - If relatives visit on a particular weekend, then you need to work ahead so as to not fall behind.

3.2 Procrastination Elimination Strategies

- **Prompts/Reminders.** Use physical reminder notes (e.g. post-it notes) placed in specific locations to remind you to finish a particular task. (Or set up a reminder on a smartphone)
- **The bits-and-pieces approach.** Set a goal to work on a task for a short period of time (e.g. rather than ignore a paper assignment, commit to completing one or two pages per day).
- **The 5-minute plan.** Agree to work on a task for 5 minutes. At the end of 5 minutes, decide whether you will work on it for another 5 minutes. Often momentum builds as you near the end of the first 5 minutes, so you want to maintain your focus on the task.
- **The 80% success rule.** Don't expect to go from "total non-completion" to "total completion" of all tasks. Instead, take a realistic approach by setting a goal to complete at least 80% of the task. Give yourself some reinforcement when you reach this goal and plan the completion of the final 20% of the task.

3.3 Procedures to develop and implement a time management plan

- Once you receive all your syllabi, make a master calendar denoting all due dates and exam days.
 - Make each class a different color.
 - Compare your classes and look for the course(s) with heavy reading loads and numerous assignments. These courses require extra attention.
 - Look for the earliest assignments.
 - Look for megaprojects, which require extra time.
- Establish a time for planning at the beginning of each week when you will not be interrupted.
 - This time also should be used to review your prior week's use of time and performance.
 - Enter all fixed activities in your weekly schedule.
 - Review your written goals to determine what tasks need to be started or completed to bring you closer to attaining your goals.
 - Check your semester calendar to determine whether there are any assignments due in the next few weeks.

- Identify all the personal and academic tasks you have to complete for the week on the weekly prioritized task list.
- Prioritize daily tasks.
 - Prioritize daily task lists by giving a value (H, M, or L) to each item on the list.
 - Place an "H" next to items that must be done.
 - Place a "M" next to any task that is important and should be done. That is, after all the "H" tasks are completed, and you have time, you would work on the "M" items.
 - Finally, write a "L" next to any task that is less important and could be done. That is, after the "H" and "M" tasks have been completed, you'll do the "L" tasks.
 - Give a numerical value to each item on the list.
 - In other words, determine which "H" task is most important and label it "H-1".
 - Then decide which "H" items is next most important and label it "H-2", and so on.
 - Do the same for "M" and "L" tasks.
 - Complete your weekly schedule by transferring the items on your priority tasks sheet to your weekly schedule forms. Put the "H" items first, followed by the "M" items, and finally as many of the "L" items you think you can accomplish.
- Each evening, check your weekly schedule for the next day and make modifications as needed (e.g. changes in appointments, unexpected assignments, or unusual demands on time).

4. Space Management

Do you study in a place in which you feel comfortable and focus on your study? Finding appropriate space for online learning is critical for your success. Successful online learners often use the following strategies for learning space management.

4.1 Find a place where you can concentrate on your studies

- Study in the same place (in your room, a library, a coffee shop etc.).
- Create a study area and have necessary materials available.
- Use a comfortable chair.
- Arrange good lighting.
- Control noise levels.
 - Use steady background sounds, “white noise”, to neutralize distracting noises.
- Explain to your family, friends and relatives that you do not want to be interrupted while you are studying.

5. Technology management

Online learning is mediated by diverse technologies. Successful online learners are able to use these technologies skillfully and use the following strategies for their technology management.

5.1 Learn to use search tools to find the tutorials for the various technologies

- Check this [YouTube playlist](#) for video-based materials to learn the tips and tricks of online search.
- Check this [website](#) for text-based materials to learn the tips and tricks of online search.

5.2 Each software or online application usually provides a help page for its users. You can always find useful information on these pages

- [Blackboard Learn for Students](#)
- [Microsoft Suite Tutorials](#)
- [Blackboard Ultra Tutorial](#)
- [Zoom Video Conferencing Tutorial](#)

5.3 When you encounter technology problems, you can contact [TTU IT Help](#) though email, phone and online chat

- You can also learn some basic troubleshooting techniques on this [website](#).

6. Interaction with Instructors

Online students often reported that interaction with the instructor is critical for their successful learning experiences. They use the following strategies for interaction with the instructor.

6.1 Create a learning partnership

- A student-professor partnership facilitates learning. Your professors cannot teach you if you do not want to learn.

6.2 Contact your professor early in the semester

- Use your professors' office hours as needed.
- Office hours are a time for you to ask questions about the lectures and books.

6.3 Pay attention to your professor, take the advice (learning strategies/feedback for the assignment) from them.

6.4 Understand the criteria your professors use to grade exams and papers.

- When you have a difficulty understanding what is happening in a course, write an email or make an appointment to talk with the instructor.
- Be patient. Your professor may reply to all the emails in a certain time in a day, therefore don't worry if you don't receive a reply immediately.
- Be prepared to ask for what you want. Be specific in wording questions.
- Be polite. If you still don't understand, ask for an example.

6.5 Give feedback to instructors

- When an instructor does something you appreciate, let them know right away. Don't wait until you are given a course evaluation at the end of the course.
- If you want to tell an instructor there is something that needs to be improved, give a specific example of what you don't like and what you would like.

7. Interaction with Classmates

Online students often interact with other students for learning. Successful online students use the following strategies when interacting with the classmates.

7.1 Participate in the online discussion regularly

- Try your best to add something to the class discussion.
- Ask yourself:
 - Am I bringing up relevant points?
 - Am I moving the discussion forward?
 - Am I adding to the conversation?

7.2 Form a study group if you work better in a group

- Notice who is in your class, if you can obtain this information
 - Identify two, three, or four interested students
 - Contact the students to arrange a meeting time (virtually or in person)
- At the first session:
 - Exchange contact information
 - Conduct an overview of the subject matter
 - Discuss each member's particular interest in a topic
 - Assign each member an equal number of text pages or notes to lead the discussion of each topic in the course
 - Discuss possible test questions
- Before you end the first session
 - Make sure every member has a clear set of goals for the next session
 - Be certain that each member understands his or her particular assignment
 - Discuss any problems that occurred during the first session
- At the second meeting, discuss the content and begin testing each other.
- Identify topics or sections of the content that the group had difficulty understanding
- Decide how the group members can obtain additional help, if needed.

8. Effort Regulation

Online learning is challenging to many students. Successful online students regulate their effort and use the following strategies to manage their effort.

8.1 The purpose of college is to learn. You cannot fully learn if you skip readings, videos, discussion activities etc.

8.2 Studying is more than simply preparing for exams. Forms of studying include:

- Reading books and other assigned materials.
- Watching tutorial videos.
- Attending webinars with other scholars.
- Organizing and copying notes.

8.3 Work hard.

- Hard work strongly influences learning and grades at the collegiate level.

8.4 Stay motivated, even if you earned a D on the first exam.

8.5 Avoid excuses for your performance.

- Figure out what went wrong and seek help when needed.

9. Mastery Self Talk

Your willingness to master the learning is critical for your success online. Below are strategies successful online students use to master their learning in an online course.

9.1 Procedure for improving self-talk

- Listen to your own self-talk
 - You can't alter inner speech unless you understand what you are telling yourself
 - "What am I telling myself?"
- Decide if your inner dialogue is helpful or harmful
 - Examine how your inner speech affects your emotions, motivation, and behavior. If your self-talk is helping, maintain it. If your self-talk is harmful, change it.
 - "Is it helping?"
- Identify the type of self-talk in which you are engaged.
 - Is it from the Worriers (imagines the worst situation), the Critic (judges or evaluates your behavior; points out your flaws and limitations), the Victim (feels helpless or hopeless), or the Perfectionist (tells you that your efforts aren't good enough)?
 - "What type of self-talk is maintaining my negative self-talk?"
- Replace your harmful self-talk with positive self-talk
 - Give yourself permission to try another strategy to deal with the event or situation. Identify your positive characteristics (e.g. desire, concentration, ability) that will help deal with the event. Try writing a counterargument to your negative self-talk
 - "What permission and self-affirmation will I give myself?"
- Develop a guide: decide what action coincides with your new supportive position.
 - If you decide that your self-talk is harmful, you want to change your behavior as well as your attitude or emotional response. Specify the new behavior
 - "What action will I take based on my new positive position?"