

Taking Online Courses - Tips for Success

Listed below are some “secrets of success” that should help you if you want to be successful when taking online courses.

- 1. Take full advantage of the communication avenues.**

Whatever you can do to avoid feeling isolated is very important. You will have several methods to communicate with your teacher and fellow classmates such as “Private Mail” and the “Discussion Area.” Use them!
- 2. Participate!**

Whether you are working alone, or in a group, contribute your ideas, perspectives, and comments on the subject you are studying, and read about those of your classmates. Your teacher is not the only source of information in your course. You can gain a lot of help from your fellow classmates and they can learn from you as well.
- 3. Ask for support from your family and friends.**

There will be times when you will have to sit at your computer for hours at a stretch, perhaps in the evening or on weekends when everyone else is ready to “play.” It will help if those around you understand and respect what you are trying to do. Have a talk with them and ask for their support and understanding.
- 4. Have a private space where you can study.**

Your own space where you can shut the door, leave papers everywhere, and work in peace is necessary. If you try to share study space in the dining room or bedroom, food or sleep will take priority over studying.
- 5. Log on to your course every single day.**

...or a minimum of 5-6 days a week. Once you get started, you will be eager to see who has posted new comments, given you feedback on your comments, or sent you private messages. If you let too many days go by without logging on to your course home page, you will get behind and find it very difficult to catch up.
- 6. Take advantage of your anonymity.**

One of the biggest advantages of the online format is that you can pursue your studies without the judgments typical in a traditional classroom. Since no one can see you, there are no stereotypes, and you don’t have to be affected by raised eyebrows, rolled eyeballs, other students stealing your thunder, or people making other non verbal reactions to your contributions. You don’t have to feel intimidated or upstaged by students who can speak faster than you because you can take all of the time you need to think your ideas through and compose a response before posting your comments to your classmates or teacher.
- 7. Speak up if you are having problems.**

Remember that your teacher cannot see you, so you must be absolutely clear with your comments and requests. If you are having technical difficulties, give your teacher as much detail as possible about what led up to the problem and what you were trying to do when the problem occurred. If you are having problems understanding something about the course, you MUST speak up; otherwise there is no way for anyone to know something is wrong. If you don’t understand something, chances are that other students are having the same problem.
- 8. Be realistic!**

Although you don’t have to “show up for class” like you would in a traditional on-campus course, you will have to do regular academic work. Remember in a regular semester you should be spending at least two study hours each week for every credit you are taking. So if there is insufficient time in your personal schedule to do the work of the course, you will be frustrated.
- 9. Set goals and deadlines for yourself, and stick to them.**

Watch the deadlines listed carefully! Don’t fall behind in your work! Identify study times when you are fresh and alert and stick to those times every week. If necessary, mark it on your calendar and play like it is a “real” class! Think of the study times as “reserved time.” If you are missing too many study times, revise your schedule.
- 10. Pay careful attention to instructions.**

Since your instructions are generally in written form, you need to be certain you understand what is being asked when you complete tasks. If you are ever in doubt, contact your teacher with your specific questions.
- 11. Check your progress in the course often.**

If your course uses WebCT for its online delivery system, you should take advantage of the [My Progress](#) and [My Grades](#) areas of your home page to see what you have completed and what your grades are. Checking these areas often will help you stay on track and help you be more successful in the course.