

Success Skills for Online Learning





Preparing for Your First Online Course

So you are embarking on a different way of learning — an online course. Congratulations!

Online learning is a great (and convenient) way to advance your education and career. In fact, online courses are much like face-to-face courses, in that they must meet the highest standards of quality design and instruction. But, that also means they come with the same fears of “Can I handle the course work?” etc.

There’s no need to worry though; just follow these five simple steps to ease your transition into online education:

Step 1: Make sure you have everything you need to get started.

Ensure your computer fits the course requirements and that you have the necessary equipment (printer, speakers, microphone, etc.) and software (Adobe Acrobat to read .PDF files, Microsoft Word for writing papers, etc.).

Step 2: Set aside some physical space for class.

Having a designated “school” space will help you stay organized and focused. If you plan on completing coursework at both work and home, have a backpack/bag in which you can transport your course materials.

Step 3: Know the school landscape.

Just as if you were walking around a new campus, you will need to “walk” around your virtual campus to learn where things are. Log into your classroom, and click on different links to get a real feel for your course.

Step 4: Find the important contact information.

Most schools provide links, numbers, and emails for all the services you will need. Be sure to know where this information is located, as you may need it at a later date.

Step 5: Familiarize yourself with the digital classroom.

It is to your advantage to learn how to navigate the course before you begin class. Nothing is more frustrating than having to learn where to find something when facing a deadline.

The first online learning experience can be a little intimidating, but once you get the hang of it, you will do fine. Remember to ask questions, and enjoy the experience. Most of all, remember - you got this!



How to Manage Your Time

Time management is a common problem for many online students. It can be hard to push yourself to study and get homework done when there aren't other students around you doing the same. And, with your job and family also competing for your time, motivation can be difficult to come by.

Here are five easy time-management and study tips that are especially useful for online students:

1. Set aside specific hours for schoolwork.

One surefire way to thwart procrastination is to set aside specific hours for schoolwork. Once you get into the habit of studying at a specific time, it will be easier to avoid distracting activities and recreation. Also, making a daily to-do list can help you keep track of your progress and give you a sense accomplishment.

2. Use various study strategies.

Engaging all of your senses while studying will help you remember more of what you learn. Since online classes will likely only engage your visual and auditory senses, it is up to you to devise creative ways to use your other senses for learning, such as writing flashcards on uniquely textured paper, or lighting incense while you study. This will create sensory associations with the content you're learning, helping you recall the information later.

3. Avoid distractions like browsing the Internet or TV noise.

While you're studying, it is possible to get into a state psychologists call "flow," which happens when you're completely focused and immersed in the activity you are doing. Distractions like the buzz of a phone or a TV show stop you from achieving this level of focus. Also, avoid distracting websites when you're supposed to be working. Minimizing these interruptions while studying will increase your efficiency and retention.

4. Study small amounts every week rather than cramming.

As soon as you start learning the material covered in your course, begin to study for the mid-term and final. Even just 15 minutes every night before bed can improve your retention of the material. Come finals week, you'll have a good base of knowledge before you ever crack open a book to prepare for the exam. Consistency and habitual studying are much more effective than large infusions of knowledge the night before a big test.

5. Ask for help as soon as you need it.

Your instructor is more than happy to answer any questions you may have. Don't be afraid to speak up, and do so as soon as you start feeling unsure about a concept or lesson. If you wait until the end of your course, you won't be prepared for tests, and the confusion will snowball until it's unmanageable.



Study Tips for Your Online Program

- Say, “No,” to distractions - and do not let procrastination wear you down.
- Study when you are wide-awake to improve retention of the material.
- Whenever possible, study at the same time each day, in the same area, to help create a routine.
- Break up your coursework into individual assignments, then into smaller, more easily managed sections.
- Stick to your goals by utilizing small pockets of time to complete the easier or shorter sections.
- Skim the text first to help you identify important areas and familiarize yourself with the terminology.
- Do not rewrite the information verbatim when taking notes. Instead, try to summarize the key terms and topics. This will help you when it is time to review and study for tests.
- Use acronyms or rhymes to help you remember small details and major concepts.
- Make sure you are completing all of your assignments on time, to avoid falling behind.
- Use practice tests to help improve your knowledge and find which areas you need to study most.
- Stop studying when you get tired or distracted to prevent studying the same material twice.



Tips for Studying While Working

Maintaining a work-life balance is tough, and adding continuing education courses can make it that much more difficult.

Here are six tips to help you balance your coursework alongside your career:

1. Plan your workday.

Find out what your deadlines are well in advance, and put them in a place you can easily reference them at home and work.

2. Make good use of your time.

Try to utilize time that would otherwise be lost, such as time spent browsing the Internet or watching TV.

3. Get the right balance.

It is exhausting to study for a professional qualification while you are working. Make sure to eat properly, get exercise, socialize with others, and rest.

4. Remind yourself of what you are doing and why you're doing it.

Have a clear reason why finishing the program is important. If your reason to complete the course is weak, your motivation to complete the course will diminish.

5. Let your manager know you are taking online classes.

This will show your commitment to personal development and individual growth.

6. Be prepared to say, "No".

Remember to look after yourself. When you are studying, make sure it is clear to everyone around you, so you can avoid interruptions.

