Prepare Students for Online Learning

Create online learning environment that is safe and adequately reflects students expectations. Students who are new or suspicious to online learning need preparation and the right mindset to succeed. This is why setting the right tone, constant virtual presence, and easy to find course expectations, clearly outlining course structure and schedule, activities format, and grading is so important.

A few helpful lists are listed below. Teachers can post or send out one of them in advance to students in order to prepare them and set the foundation for mutual progress in the learning process.

Tips for Taking Online Courses

Taking courses online can be a little like taking courses in a foreign country. Most of us are still learning the norms and expectations of the online environment. Even though the technology is wonderful and exciting, we would never say that this environment is the right learning environment for every student. It works well for some students most of the time. It provides exciting opportunities for people who are constrained by time, place or other factors.

Online courses can work for any student, just as a physical, onsite classroom with face-to-face instruction can work for any student - but we all know the quality of the "fit" with a particular instructor or a particular class environment varies. Taking an online class requires just as much time and effort as class on campus - and there are some new twists for most of us.

To see if online classes are right for you, answer these questions:

- Do you like to work independently?
- Are you persistent?
- Do you need convenience and an adjustable schedule?
- Are you comfortable asking for clarification and continuing to ask when you need more information?
- Are you comfortable working at a computer?
- Are you comfortable working primarily with a text-based medium?
- Would you be comfortable phoning or faxing your instructor if you had problems with anything in the course?

If you answered "yes" to most of those questions, then you should do well in the online learning environment. If you hesitated, be certain to keep a very close touch with your progress.

Reading is key

Remember that you won't have all those non-verbal cues that you get in the physical classroom and neither will your instructor. Also, your instructor's role will be much less that of the distributor of information, and much more that of a guide or resource for you in exploring an area of knowledge. Almost all your information will come in the form of words. Words on the screen help the instructor "see" you much more clearly. The teaching style used in online courses may be different from the traditional college model. Taking a class online means you won't be sitting quietly in the classroom; participation is even more essential.
Communication is key

As always, effective communication is critical to success. It's even more important in the online environment because your instructor can't see your frown, or hear the question in your voice. Here, you'll be responsible for initiating more contact, for being persistent and vocal when you don't understand something. Your instructor wants to help - please write your question and send it along, express your confusion, your concern, and be direct! You will save a lot of time, and both you and your instructor will know better what you intend. Be sure and ask about anything and everything that has to do with course content, course procedure and evaluation.

Do's and Don't's

- Take time to review all the help files available.
- Don't read material just once. Multiple reading, line-by-line reading are among the keys to understanding mathematics.
- Spend some time just navigating your way through the class and making sure you can figure out what the buttons are for.
- Don't expect too much, to soon. Study and then re-study.
- Manage your time. You will find that your time management skills will be critical in an online class. Why? Because it's very easy to spend either far too little time, or far too much time on the class. Set designated blocks of time to work on the class. This will help you stay up with the assignments and with the interaction required in most online classes.
- Download or print out pages for reference and review away from the computer.
- Set priorities and pay close attention to what your instructor says about priorities.
- Try hard to solve problems independently before you ask for help.
- Don't give up. If you haven't had a mathematics course lately, the first part of the course may be daunting. This will ease.

More Rules of the Road

1. **Participate.** In the online environment, it's not enough to show up! We need to hear your voice to feel your presence, and we especially need your comments add to the information, the shared learning, and the sense of community in each class.

2. **Be persistent.** Remember that we're all working in a fairly new environment. If you run into any difficulties, don't wait! Send a note immediately to the instructor of the course listed on the syllabus. Most problems are easily solved, but we have to hear from you before we can help.

3. **Share tips, helps, and questions.** For many of us, taking online courses is a new frontier. There are no dumb questions, and even if you think your solution is obvious, please share it! Someone in the class will appreciate it.

4. **Think before you push the Send button.** Did you say just what you meant? How will the person on the other end read the words? While you can't anticipate all reactions, do read over what you've written before you send it.

5. **Be patient.** As much as your instructor will try to be prompt in answering questions, please do not expect instantaneous responses to your queries. Learn how to set break points in your study, so that you can return exactly to the point when your question is answered. Be patient with yourself as well; give the material a chance to soak in.
6. Plagiarism, cheating and other violations of ethical student behavior are serious actions in a learning community. You should expect to be treated accordingly. Specific policies regarding such actions are spelled out in the Student Handbook, which is available in hard copy from the College.

Adapted from: Tips for Taking Online Classes (http://distance-ed.math.tamu.edu/tipsforonline.htm)

What Makes a Successful Online Student?

The online learning process is normally accelerated and requires commitment on the student’s part. Staying up with the class and completing all work on time is vital. Once a student gets behind, it is almost impossible to catch up. Basically, the student needs to want to be there, and needs to want the experience. The instructor may have to contact students personally to offer assistance and remind the student of the need to keep up.

Just as many excellent instructors may not be effective online facilitators, not all students possess the necessary qualities to perform well online. In your online course, you may want to include reference links to resources and tips for your students to use to help them be more successful online learners. Clearly outline your expectations and the necessary characteristics of a successful online student so your students can understand if the online environment will be a productive learning environment for them. Provide a questionnaire for prospective students to fill out to assess whether they are good candidates for online learning. Like the facilitator, the online student possesses unique qualities.

In general, the online student should possess the following qualities:

Be open minded about sharing life, work, and educational experiences as part of the learning process.

Introverts as well as extroverts find that the online process requires them to utilize their experiences. This forum for communication eliminates the visual barriers that hinder some individuals in expressing themselves. In addition, the student is given time to reflect on the information before responding. The online environment should be open and friendly.

Be able to communicate through writing.

In the Virtual Classroom, nearly all communication is written, so it is critical that students feel comfortable in expressing themselves in writing. Many students have limited writing abilities, which should be addressed before or as part of the online experience. This may require remedial efforts on the part of the student.

Be self-motivated and self-disciplined.

With the freedom and flexibility of the online environment comes responsibility. The online process takes a real commitment and discipline to keep up with the flow of the process.

Be willing to "speak up" if problems arise.

Many of the non-verbal communication mechanisms that instructors use in determining whether students are having problems (confusion, frustration, boredom, absence, etc.) are not possible in the online paradigm. If a student is experiencing difficulty on any level (either with the technology or with the course content), he or she must communicate this immediately. Otherwise the instructor will never know what is wrong.
Be willing and able to commit to 4 to 15 hours per week per course.

Online is not easier than the traditional educational process. In fact, many students will say it requires much more time and commitment.

Be able to meet the minimum requirements for the program.

The requirements for online are no less than that of any other quality educational program. The successful student will view online as a convenient way to receive their education – not an easier way.

Accept critical thinking and decision making as part of the learning process.

The learning process requires the student to make decisions based on facts as well as experience. Assimilating information and executing the right decisions requires critical thought; case analysis does this very effectively.

Have practically unlimited access to a computer and Internet Service.

The course content and interaction are engaged by computer through the Internet. Some content and activities may be accessible by "dial-up" or mobile services but most online learning will be best accomplished with broadband service. The student must have access to the necessary equipment.

Be able to think ideas through before responding.

Meaningful and quality input into the virtual classroom is an essential part of the learning process. Time is given in the process to allow for the careful consideration of responses. The testing and challenging of ideas is encouraged; you will not always be right, just be prepared to accept a challenge.

Feel that high quality learning can take place without going to a traditional classroom.

If the student feels that a traditional classroom is a prerequisite to learning, they may be more comfortable in the traditional classroom. Online is not for everybody. A student that wants to be on a traditional campus attending a traditional classroom is probably not going to be happy online. While the level of social interaction can be very high in the virtual classroom given that many barriers come down in the online format, it is not the same as living in a dorm on a campus. This should be made known. An online student is expected to:

- Participate in the virtual classroom 5-7 days a week
- Be able to work with others in completing projects
- Be able to use the technology properly
- Be able to meet the minimum standards as set forth by the institution
- Be able to complete assignments on time
- Enjoy communicating in writing.


7 Online Study Tips for Adult Students

https://eclearn.emmanuel.edu/courses/1390874/pages/prepare-students-for-online-learning?module_item_id=17150301
Online education is more popular than ever. It can be a way to earn a degree without being limited by geography or class schedules. Many online students are working adults who choose online programs to earn new degrees, skills, and professional certificates to advance in their careers. With online learning, you can study at your own pace. Yet if you want to succeed in your online education, it’s important to develop good study habits. Here are seven online study tips to help you in this area.

1. Choose the Best Online Program

There are now many good online degree programs. Do your research and find a college and online program that is appropriate for your goals. For example, if you want to take nursing classes, identify which colleges offer good programs in this field. Also find out what kind of technology is used to make sure that you are able to access the lessons.

2. Develop a Consistent Schedule

One of the biggest advantages of online learning is that it allows you to make your own schedule. If you want to succeed, though, you can’t be too casual about time. It’s best to treat your online classes as though they were live classes. Choose a time that’s convenient for you, but then stick to that schedule.

3. Take Advantage of Interactive Tools

Online programs usually provide helpful tools to help you communicate with your professors. Make sure you make good use of these tools. If you have questions, take the time to send an email to your professor. Take advantage of interactive features such as chat sessions and video conferencing so that you can get the most from your classes.

4. Connect with Other Students

Online learning programs usually provide resources that allow you to connect with other students. This can not only help you make new friends, it can be useful for your academic success. Just as you can form study groups in person, you can do the same online. Students pooling their minds and abilities can do better than individuals working in isolation.

5. Keep Your Study Materials Organized

It’s important to keep track of your study materials. Otherwise you can lose track of what you have to read, assignments that are due, tests and so forth. Create a system that works for you, and make sure you keep everything neatly organized in folders. If you’re taking multiple classes, you should make a different folder for each class.

6. Find Your Ideal Study Environment

With online studying, you can take your laptop anywhere. Choose the location that helps you focus and feel the most motivated. This may be indoors or outdoors, in a public place or in your own bedroom.

[Learn how to get college credit for your life experience.]

7. Incorporate Offline Study Tactics

While the internet is very useful for studying, you can also benefit by including traditional offline techniques. This includes doing research at a brick and mortar library. You can also benefit by writing certain material down and using flash cards.
Prepare Students for Online Learning: Online Course Design Best Practices

Online study can be efficient and convenient. At the same time, it takes a certain amount of self-discipline to create your own schedule and stay organized. Keep the above tips in mind to help you succeed with your online education.

Source  
[http://blog.studentadvisor.com/7-online-study-tips-adult-students/](http://blog.studentadvisor.com/7-online-study-tips-adult-students/)

What does it take to be a successful online learner?

- A proactive, self-motivated learning style
- Good time management skills
- Basic computer skills
- High-speed internet connection

Here are some tips:

- **Arrange for computer access in advance**: You need regular access to a computer that meets technical requirements for participating in online and blended courses.
- **Establish good study habits and stick to them**: Dedicate time each week to participate, study, and complete course work online. An online education offers flexibility but it requires discipline and strong time management skills. Be mindful of work deadlines, travel, and other commitments when setting aside time for your course(s).
- **Interact with your classmates**: Share your perspectives and experiences with others, so that you can enhance course topics. Participation demonstrates your mastery of the subject matter and promotes community with your peers, who play an important role in your educational growth.
- **Stay engaged**: Stay engaged with your lessons, instructors, and classmates. You may not have a lot of time to devote to school work each day, but make a habit of checking-in on a regular basis to look at new content, discussion posts, announcements, etc. Over time, this will help you manage the workload and get the most out of online learning.
- **Raise questions as they arise**: Don't wait until an assignment is due or past due to ask questions, report technical problems, misunderstandings, or other barriers to completing course work on time. Remember that your instructor does not have the benefit of seeing your body language or fielding your questions in real-time. If a problem or question arises, speak up immediately.
- **Apply your knowledge**: Apply skills and concepts you learn to activities, problems, or processes in your professional setting. Knowledge and skill-building is most powerful when you apply them to situations in your own life.

Boston University Distance Education office has posted on their website a very short questionnaire about students readiness to study online: [Is Online Education Right for You?](http://www.bu.edu/online/prospective-students/survey.html) It can be used to test and self-test potential candidates for online courses who are undecided whether the format is suitable to their learning preferences and habits.