




How to Succeed as an Online Student



To be successful as an online student, it is very important that you commit yourself to investing enough time to complete your work.

Online classes can be far more convenient than going to a classroom. However, participation, homework and reading assignments will not necessarily take less time when they are online. Your assignments may be in greater depth. You may do more writing, because it is now a replacement for speaking.

You must budget this much time every week to each class:

-  The same amount of time you would have been in class that week, if this was a classroom class.
-  The same amount of time you would have needed to do homework, if this was a classroom class.
-  The same amount of time you would have needed to read your reading assignments, if this was a classroom class.

By taking a class online you have saved the time it would have taken you to travel to class and back, and you can schedule your coursework around other obligations.

This guide will provide you with several tips that will help you take online courses, and with homework in general.

On Time, Every Time

If you are taking a course with due dates, threaded discussions, and possibly group projects, it is very important for you, your instructor, and your classmates that you complete your work and participate according to schedule. If you fall behind completing assignments in an online course there is the possibility that you will continue to fall further and further behind, until you are not able to complete the course. This can happen when students do not use good time management.

Keeping a schedule

It is very important that you make a schedule for yourself to log in and do your coursework just as if you were expected to physically be in a classroom on certain days. You must also budget at

least the same amount of time for assignments that you would spend on homework if you were taking a classroom-based version of the course.

They're counting on you!

In your courses you may be expected to participate in a threaded discussion. Your contributions will be of value not only to you, but to the other individuals taking the course. If you post your message late, your classmates may not read your contribution, and also might not provide you with feedback. This would be similar to walking into a classroom an hour after class is over, and stating your position to an empty room.

If you are working with a group of other students on a team project, their grades may be partially based upon the quality and timeliness of your participation.

In some online courses, the workload of the instructor or teacher can be more than that of all the students combined. Some online instructors or teachers will write three paragraphs of comments for each paragraph that each student has written. When a student begins submitting work late, the workload of the instructor or teacher increases. Usually, instructors and teachers will provide timely feedback to every threaded discussion message posted (This will not be visible to you if they are sent to the other students as private messages).

Support of Family Members



Students will sometimes decide to take online classes because family and/or job responsibilities require them to be at home or at work during normal classroom times. Talk to other members of your family and ask for their help. Try to help them understand that although you will be at home, you will need as much "quiet time" as you would to be in a classroom and complete assignments from any other course.

This can be a challenge for adult students, leading some to work on their courses after their children have gone to sleep.

Procrastination

Sometimes family members may give you quiet time to work, and you may find yourself tempted to use that time to do other things. As they are potentially making a sacrifice to give you that time, don't abuse their support and generosity. Reward them by making them proud of your efforts and accomplishments as an online student.




Often we procrastinate because of temptations and distractions. If you spend your coursework time browsing the Web or playing games, you may need to work in the same room with other family members that can monitor your activities. You must focus on what you need to accomplish, be conscious of how much time you have, and get to work. When possible, remove any temptations or distractions that may stop your progress.

Managing Off-line Assignments

Just as in a classroom based course, "homework" and reading assignments may be the bulk of your coursework. Plan your week with realistic times set aside to do your coursework. See "Short on time" below for tips on managing these kinds of assignments:

Short on time...

Think of times when you might be waiting. If you use public transportation or expect a long wait for an appointment, for example, make this time gained.


-  Print or write down your assignments. You can print from the file menu in your browser, or by right clicking and selecting "Print."
-  Use this as a book mark in the book you must read and carry the book with you.
-  If you have written assignments you must complete and will not have a computer at hand, carry a pad of paper and a pencil or pen to draft your written assignment with. Later, type this into your computer. If you have a Palm® device, consider purchasing a keyboard.

Traveling...

If you are going to be traveling and will not have access to a computer, print as much of the course as you can work on. Inform your teacher or instructor of your situation. See the tips in the section above.

Stretching the day

If you must work on your course in the evening or late at night, here are tips that may help. If you find yourself falling asleep at the keyboard, try this:

-  If you are using a laptop, try to have a desk or table that you always do your coursework on. Laptops allow us to get very comfortable, by letting us work lying on a bed, sitting back on a couch, etc. Try sitting in a regular chair with good posture. Do not work in bed or on a couch you sometimes fall asleep on. Try moving from the coffee table to the kitchen table.



No



Yes

- Do not work in the dark. Although your monitor may provide you with enough light to type, your body might need a well lit working area or room to stay alert.



No



Yes

- Thirty minutes is the "squirm limit" for many people to sit at a computer. Take regular breaks that involve walking or other physical activity.
- Try eating a light meal or snack before beginning.
- Some people find that listening to music at a low volume helps them to

concentrate, as well as shut out background noise. Avoid music with vocals, as this can interfere with your concentration when you are trying to read or write.

Do not turn on a TV. It is not possible to watch TV and work on your course. You may be distracted, or find that you simply watched the show and did nothing else.



Ask yourself if it would be possible to get up early and work in the morning, instead. If you are a morning person, or feel too tired when you come home, try working in the beginning of the day.

Ask for help when you need it



If you are taking a traditional online course with a facilitator (teacher, instructor, etc.), ask them for help when you need it. Do not wait until it is too late to catch up. You may be able to ask for help in the [Forum](#) by sending a message to your instructor or teacher.

Your live 24-7 help desk is (702) 799-2039

Technology:

Learn how to use the student tools in your online course

Multimedia

Do you have the most common [plugins](#) installed? If your course uses audio, do you have speakers?

Are you using a browser that will work with Online Professional Development software?

This page has detected that you are currently using Microsoft Internet Explorer 6 as your web browser.

Recommended Browsers:



[Netscape Communicator 4.78](#) | [Netscape Navigator 6.2.2](#)



[Microsoft Internet Explorer 5.5 SP2](#) | [Internet Explorer 6.0](#) - (you will need [Microsoft Virtual Machine](#))

An online community

If you are taking a course with other students, take advantage of the tools Online Professional Development provides to create community, and to communicate and collaborate with your classmates: