

Succeeding in Online Classes

Approaching the Online Learning Platform

- Read and understand the course syllabus and professor expectations
- Engage the support of family members to help you succeed. Let them know what you're dealing with before the semester begins.
- Spend time early in the course exploring all parts of the course. When you are exploring, do some searches in the online library and make sure you are familiar with the online research tools.
- Understand your priorities--- manage the use of your time by blocking time for the semester on your calendar for reading, discussion board posts and projects. Also block time for exercise, meditation and eating right.

Are There Different Types of Online Classes?

Not all online courses have the same delivery method or time commitment. Depending on your course type, you can expect a more or less flexible online class experience. The major types of online classes include the following:

Asynchronous Classes: Here you'll still be expected to follow a traditional course schedule, but you'll have a window of time to complete assignments and watch lectures, rather than a definite set course time. Students do not virtually attend class together at the same time.

Hybrid: Hybrid classes are often used in programs that require significant hands-on skills, such as nursing or social work degrees. Students learn didactic information online and attend on-site clinicals or practicums to master related hands-on skills.

Self-Paced: These classes do not follow a traditional semester or quarter class schedule. Instead, students use the online learning portal and materials to complete assignments at their own pace.

Synchronous Classes: These courses require students to log on at particular times to participate in discussions or training, or to watch live lectures. These are the online classes that are most similar to traditional, on-site courses.

How Can I Make Friends in Online Classes?

One of the most common misconceptions about online education is that classes are less social than they would be on campus. In reality, a small, engaged online class can be more social than traditional classes, such as large, anonymous lecture halls filled with hundreds of students. These tips can help you engage with your online peers.

Choose Interactive Courses: Nothing helps you get to know your fellow students better than lively online dialogue via chat, forums, or group blogs. Try to select classes for their interactive potential, and you'll have better luck getting to know your peers and probably a more valuable educational experience as a whole.

Pay Attention: Of course you'll pay attention to the class material, but pay attention to

your peers as well. Remember what their interests are, remember what they have to say, and repeat it back to them with additional commentary. This strategy can help foster a lively discussion, and it's also useful for building peer relationships.

Take the Lead: Your classmates might be shy, so don't hesitate to be the first to initiate conversation. Ask questions, make jokes, and above all, share ideas. Be interested in your fellow students and in what they have to say.

How Should I Conduct Online Research?

You have a paper due in two weeks. How do you know which online sources are the best to use? Here's a hint: free-essay-spam-site.com is a bad choice. (Not a real site. We hope.) But not all questionable sources are so obviously poor. Here are some tips for finding and using appropriate online sources for your papers.

Ask: Your professor may be able to refer you to industry-specific journals. It is also a good idea to contact the reference desk at your local library to find good sources.

Evaluate Your Sources: Searching online for credible sources can be a challenge. Consider who published the information and what they have to gain or lose by publication. Does it come from a credible source (such as a government or university website) or does it seem like the work of an individual or a questionable organization with an axe to grind? Check with your professor for specific guidelines; some instructors may not mind students using Wikipedia, while most will forbid it. The more information you gather, the more you will be able to compare in terms of credibility and usefulness and the more you will have to say when it comes time to actually write the paper.

How to Use Citations: There are several key ways you can use citations to improve your research experience. For specific information on formatting citations, check style guides or visit an automatic bibliography site (you enter the source information, and it provides you with properly formatted citations). This may seem trivial, but using the proper format for citations is crucial; maintaining consistency helps people find your sources and is a hallmark of good academic writing. Within your paper, you will use in-text citations or footnotes, plus a separate bibliography or works cited page at the end. Remember, many professors will not read a paper that isn't written in the proper format, so ask about style guidelines before you get started.

Know Advanced Search Skills: While typing a phrase into Google will get you millions of search results, you won't be maximizing all the resources available to you. Did you know that you can search specific sites, such as educational sites or non-commercial sites by adding "site:.edu" or "site:.org" to your search term? Other special search operators can be found here.

Use Online Databases: There are several online databases of scholarly or general interest articles, such as [ProQuest](#) or [EBSCOhost](#) available to students. Most universities subscribe to these databases and make the content free for their students. If you're having a hard time locating your university's free databases, contact a librarian.

How Can I Succeed at Online Group Work?

Many students dread group work, so why on earth do professors keep assigning it? Believe it or not, group work offers several educational advantages. Studies have shown that working in

groups has significant benefits. In group work, students are more likely to retain information and gain a better understanding of the material. Furthermore, collaboration is exactly what the "real world" demands on a regular basis. These tips can help you navigate the communication and logistical issues that arise in online group work.

Choose a Leader: Designate one person in the group to be the leader. This person is responsible for ensuring that the group is able to communicate successfully. He or she can set up times for meetings, remind people of deadlines, and keep records of key discussion points and group decisions.

Organize: Divide tasks equally, but don't just let everyone do their own thing. Each person should perform a task that suits his or her interests and strengths as much as possible, but the group should also include a peer review process to modify the project as necessary.

Rise to the Challenge: If your group does wind up with the much-dreaded slacker (or worse yet, if you are the only person in your group who ever seems to do anything), make sure that you keep track of exactly what each group member does or does not do. Let the professor know who contributed and who didn't, in a polite and professional way. Complete the project to the best of your ability, even if you feel that you are doing more than your share of the work. Believe it or not, this sometimes happens in real life too; it's not fair, but at least you will gain the knowledge and the grade that you deserve.

Stay Ahead of Schedule: Don't leave things until the last minute. Bring your group together well ahead of the deadline to evaluate your project jointly and conduct any necessary revisions.

Use Technology: Your group leader can be the point person to arrange virtual meetings via group instant message, video conference, or chat. Your online course may also have specific technology that your group can access, like limited-use forums or class blogs. You can also use technology, such as cloud-synced document and calendar software, to collaborate easily no matter where you are.