



How to be Successful in the Online Transition:

A Guide for Students

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Welcome!

The recent spread of the Covid-19 virus has resulted in Universities quickly adapting their on-ground courses to an online format. This quick switch to the online classroom is not ideal, and as a student, your prior experience with online courses will vary. It is understandable if this change is leaving you unsure about online learning. This guide is designed to help you (the student!) know where to start and keep you on track to be successful in your courses.

The guide will cover topics on how to get your environment ready, how to become familiar with the tools you might be using in your classes, and how to locate resources available to you. We'll also go over tips on how to manage your time and stay motivated, two of the most common concerns new online students encounter.

Understand your Course Administration

Moving courses online can take a variety of forms, and course administration will depend on your university. Some universities will use a learning management system (LMS), google docs (or other collaborative documents), video conferencing, or ask you to email assignments. If your university and/or faculty have not already informed you of the method they will use to administer the courses online, reach out to your faculty members for clarification. You'll want to know how they will be teaching the course virtually in order to know what tools to become familiar with and to be sure you are meeting your faculty member's expectations for the new course structure.

In addition to how your course will be administered, your faculty may ask you to use collaborative tools, such as google docs or a video conference system, such as [Zoom](#). If you have questions about the tech tools you will need to be familiar with, take a look online for how-to guides, many companies will offer online forums or tutorials. If you have additional questions on the tech tools, please contact your university's Office of Information Technology.

Get Access to Your Required Technology

Once you know how your course will be offered online, you'll want to be sure you have access to the required technology for you to complete your coursework. Common technology requirements might include:

- Stable wifi access that can support video conferencing
 - Companies, such as Comcast, Charter, and At&T are offering free wifi services, see [here](#) for more information
- A computer*
- Access to your university's virtual private network (VPN): a VPN is a tool that allows your home wifi to mimic your on campus wifi, giving you access to programs and software that may only be accessible on campus
- Access to the digital tools your instructors have told you they will use:
 - Video conferencing



- Course specific software, such as programs you may only have access to on campus or that require an access code from a textbook. If you have question regarding what program or software you may need access to, please contact your faculty member.
- Access to (download) relevant apps for your learning management systems, textbooks, etc.

Keep in mind that you may be able to check out technology from your university library.

*As mentioned above, many learning management systems are accessible via an app. If you find that your wifi connection does not support video conferencing you likely will be able to simply call in on your phone to any live class sessions held over video conference.

Become Familiar with the LMS

An LMS, or learning management system, is a common tool used for creating and hosting online courses. You may be more familiar with the name of the LMS your university uses; some examples are Blackboard, Canvas, Brightspace and Desire2learn.

If you have never used your LMS before, visit the help resources for your LMS online (a few are linked below for your quick reference) or your Office of Information Technology's website to see if they have resources on using the LMS that would be available to you virtually.

- [Canvas Getting Started](#)
- [Desire to Learn/Brightspace Help](#)
- [Blackboard Learn Help for Students](#)
- [Moodle Student Tutorials](#)
- [Sakai Guides and Documentation](#)

If you have used the LMS before but have only used it infrequently (for example, to track your grades), log in and explore the other functionalities present. Here are some examples of tools you should become familiar with in the LMS:

- Syllabi: Where to find course syllabi
- Course Materials: The location of course readings/videos/recorded lectures
- Assignment Submission: Where (and how) to submit assignments
- Grades: Where to view and track your grades
- Announcements: The location of course announcements
- Discussion Boards: Location of discussion boards

It is important to note that your faculty may not use all features available in an LMS, and faculty may vary in the way they use the features (example: one faculty may structure course discussions differently from another). If you still have questions about your course after exploring the LMS and reviewing the syllabus, please consult your faculty. If you're having a technology-related challenge start with the campus information technology office or the support links listed above.



Locate University Resources

Like the online classroom, the way you access central university resources can take a variety of forms when you are away from campus. While you may not regularly use these services, it is best to know in advance how to get in contact with them in the event you need to. Consider how you might access the following offices at your university remotely; find their contact information on your university's website and reach out to find out more information.

- Library Resources
- Financial Aid Office
- Office of Information Technology/ Technology Service Desk
- Academic Advising
- Disability Support Services
- Career Services
- Counseling Services

Practice Netiquette

Netiquette is the online form of classroom etiquette. Your online classroom can include opportunities to engage with your classmates through discussion posts or through the use of live sessions using a video conference service such as Zoom. Here are some tips for netiquette to help ensure you have great experiences discussing online:

Online Forums/Discussions:

- Before posting anything online, read what others have posted to avoid repetition.
- Do not respond too quickly; take the time to reflect upon what you have learned in the assignment.
- When responding to someone else's posting(s):
 - Summarize or quote what the student has said and include their name.
 - State your position clearly.
 - Always re-read what you've written in response to another. How would this sound if it were written to you? How would you interpret what the person is saying? Should you send it?
- Be sure to respond to someone else's comment(s) about your original posting(s).
- If you agree or disagree with someone, make sure you backup your position with solid reasoning and justification.
- Cite sources whenever using someone else's ideas or words. Remember:
 - Do not use cut and paste.
 - Make sure the information is referenced properly, including author, title, year of publication, URL, etc.
 - Paraphrase, don't quote verbatim.
 - Give credit where credit is due.
 - Make sure the sources are reliable.
- Online Forums/Discussions are not Instant Messaging:
 - Do not use abbreviations.
 - Use proper grammar and proper case (e.g., capitalize only when proper to do so).



- No foul language.
- Spell check your contribution before posting.
- Keep in mind that some people are not comfortable sharing their thoughts, even in an electronic format. If you are comfortable, encourage the participation of others. If you are a bit hesitant to post, challenge yourself to post some thoughts. All input is valuable.

Video Conferencing:

Please keep a few things in mind as your surroundings will be visible to everyone participating in the live session.

- Find a quiet area, free from things that may distract others (pets, people, television, phone, doorbell)
- Do not drive while you're in class -- not only is this dangerous but it is also difficult to be an engaged student
- Help members of your family or support system understand your need for quiet during live sessions
- If you need to eat or drink, please do so when you are not "on camera"
- Log in approximately 10 minutes before the live session starts
- Keep in mind the session may be recorded for review
- Follow the instructor's guidelines for participation (e.g. raise your hand if you plan to talk)
- Use the chat box to engage in a back-channel discussion about the class content (but be careful not to get too distracted and be sure to remain professional in your chat messages)
- Always connect via video and leave your camera on for the duration of your class - (only turn off video when absolutely needed)
- Be sure to connect in a location that has strong internet connectivity
- Make sure your face can be seen on the camera
- Consider the image you present on camera -- wear appropriate clothing as you would to any other class; sit up (don't lie on a bed -- you wouldn't in a brick and mortar classroom); stay awake.
- When in breakout groups stay on task to what was assigned by the instructor

Develop Time Management

Good time management is an essential skill to practice, particularly for online students. As an online student, the flexibility in your learning can be a benefit to your schedule, but can also make it easy to put coursework at the end of your to-do list, or to allow for other responsibilities to take priority over your coursework. Here are the basics, or A, B, Cs of time management:

Activate a plan & prioritize

In order to be successful in your online classroom, you need to create a structure or schedule that you follow to ensure you complete what's assigned to you. As you're making your schedule, carve out time that you will devote to your school work and treat this time as a non-negotiable, much like a part time job. With the mid-term interruption, consider using the time your class would regularly meet and the time you had set aside to complete homework for that course as your time to still work on that course. This way you will not see an interruption in your schedule.



Review all of your syllabi; with the change to online, deadlines and assignment expectations may have changed. Put due dates on your calendar for readings, assignments, etc. Then, designate study times for each class, and stick to them. Some people find success carving out an hour or two to do school work after the kids go to bed or before going to work in the morning and some are only able to do small amounts of work during the week, so they will plan larger chunks of time to get school work done during the weekend.

Don't skimp on doing the readings. Your professors will be expecting you to come prepared to discuss and unpack the readings. Remember that your expectations for participation as an online student are the same as when you had class on-ground.

Be present

Check in daily to the learning management system or at least 3-5 times per week. Don't just log in but make it a priority to be fully present when you are engaging in asynchronous or synchronous discussions, and when completing the readings and assignments. The more you interact with your peers, faculty, and staff members, the more you will feel just as engaged as you were in your campus classroom.

Likewise, be present when you are engaging with your other roles. If you've planned your time well, you've allocated time for family, self-care, work, etc.

Communicate

The people around you need to know how to support you. This means that your most immediate support system, such as your partners, roommate, co-workers, supervisor, etc. need to understand your goals and should be brought along for the ride when it comes to your schedule. The change from taking your courses on-ground to an online format could leave your support systems assuming your goals or schedule has changed. Tell them when you plan to do your school work and ask them to give you the time and space to be present (there's the B again) -- and to hold you accountable for making your school work a priority during your scheduled times!

It's also important to communicate with faculty and staff about your needs. If you have learning differences or specific scheduling needs in advance, contact staff or faculty members so that they can work to proactively support you (more on that in the support section of orientation). Likewise, if you encounter challenges and need help along the way, please reach out -- don't wait until you are so overwhelmed that you are unable to submit assignments or attend live sessions, communicate, communicate, communicate

ABCs of Time Management



Activate
a plan & prioritize



Be present



Communicate



Stay Motivated

It is no secret that the online classroom requires different levels of motivation—your classmates and faculty are not there in person to keep you accountable. Here are some tips to help you stay motivated:

- Determine the best time of day for you to complete your coursework and schedule it in. A recommendation would be to use the time you had previously blocked off for class to complete your assignments; you are already used to dedicating those hours in the week to that course!
- Find a quiet place to complete coursework. Consider light, sound, and other distractions. With many of us spending more time at home during this time, you may find it helpful to set up an office space with a door (if available).
- Communicate your needs with your support system. Everyone has different study habits, communicate what you need to be successful with family, partners, roommates, and friends.
- Find an accountability partner. This could be a friend who checks in on you each day or week to ensure you've completed your coursework, or could take the form of a study buddy in your courses that you meet with virtually.
- Know your resources. Online learning can feel isolating, learn who you can reach out to at your university, and in your classes for support or to answer questions.

Establish a Support Network with Classmates

If you have heard any perceptions about online learning, it is likely that you have heard that online learning is isolating and you are unable to form the connections you would in an on-campus course. This perception can be true, but it is all up to you. Online courses are enriched when students form a support network with one another and you are at an advantage—you've met your classmates in person already! Here are some suggestions for establishing a support network:

- Email classmates to gain a sense of who might be interested in virtually meeting regarding the course (you can use a video conference software to meet)
 - Set up a recurring time to meet, a weekly virtual study group is a great way to ask questions of your peers
- Use a messaging service such as GroupMe or Slack to communicate with one another and share the invite with your classmates
- If your classmates are comfortable, connect on topics other than coursework when you meet—get to know one another's hobbies, career aspirations, families, etc.

Care for your Mental Health

As a pandemic, Covid-19 has interrupted your daily life and may have caused you to worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones. As difficult as it may be, do your best to not worry about the things you cannot control. Continue to monitor the guidelines offered by the CDC



(<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>) and visit the website of your state's Department of Health for more information on state-specific updates.

It is important to know you are not alone in worrying about Covid-19, reach out to your support system to talk through concerns you may have. It may also be helpful to take a break from watching the news. As you adjust to your new schedule, be sure to set aside time to do the things you enjoy.

If you need additional resources for mental health or other crises, visit the Eluna Network's website for national hotline contact information: <https://elunanetwork.org/resources/crisis-hotlines-common-hotline-phone-numbers/>

Get Some Exercise

To support your physical and mental health, stay active! Gyms may be closed and/or you may wish to avoid them during quarantine, but there are plenty of creative ways to get physical activity. Here are just a few:

- [Daily COVID19 CrossFit Workouts](#) from the VENT Human Performance Center in Ventura, California
- [Free OnDemand Workouts](#) from Les Mills International
- [Rucking Workouts](#) from GoRuck
- [Yoga Online](#) from CorePower Yoga

Keeping the Kids Busy

If you've now find yourself in a space where you're "homeschooling" or needing to keep your kids busy at home, check out the following resources for ideas:

- [Age-appropriate Home School Curriculum](#)
- [Homeschooling Preschool](#)
- [Giant list of ideas](#)
- [Learn at home with Scholastic](#)
- [60 awesome websites for learning math](#)
- [Free STEM activity calendar](#)
- [Elementary spanish resources](#)
- [Education companies offering free resources during closures](#)

Just for fun!

You're probably super busy juggling all of your responsibilities but if you need a little entertainment, consider these:

- [Take a virtual museum tour!](#)
- [15 Broadway Plays and Musicals You Can Watch On Stage from Home](#)
- [20 Virtual Field Trips](#)
- [Five National Parks Virtual Tours](#)

Closing

In closing, while this document is designed to help you to continue to be successful in your courses with the recent and abrupt change to your learning, remember that you are not alone in this change. Reach out to your



peers for support via chat, social media, or video conferencing. The support of your peers can help this time feel less isolating, and less scary.

In addition, you don't judge a book by its cover, so we recommend not judging online education by this one experience. Your university staff made this decision with your health and safety in mind, and your faculty are needing to make swift changes to their curriculum and may be learning how to use the LMS right alongside you. Know that online education can be equal in quality and engagement as on-ground education.

Welcome to the world of online education, we wish you continued success with your coursework!



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