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10 TIPS FOR SUCCESS AS AN ONLINE STUDENT

Erica Houskeeper, May 9, 2017

Online education offers many benefits, including the flexibility to complete projects on your own time, while maintaining academic rigor and high expectations of students. However, it's a myth that online classes are easier than traditional classroom-based classes. Students need to prioritize and meet deadlines in order to thrive in an online learning environment.

Here are 10 tips for a successful online learning experience:

1. Be open minded about sharing life, work, and educational experiences as part of the learning process. Your personal and professional experiences matter in an online environment. Introverts and extroverts find that taking an online course requires them to utilize their experience. Participating in an online course eliminates the visual barriers that might prevent some individuals from expressing themselves.
2. Be able to communicate through writing. In an online class, nearly all communication is written, so it's critical that you feel comfortable expressing yourself in writing.
3. Be self-motivated and self-disciplined. With the freedom and flexibility comes responsibility. Taking an online course takes a real commitment and discipline to keep up with the flow of the course.
4. Be willing to “speak up” if problems arise. If you are experiencing difficulty with the course content, communicate this immediately to your instructor.
5. Be willing and able to commit to 5 to 20 hours per week per course. It is a myth that online classes are easier than traditional classroom based classes. In fact, many students will say online courses require much more time and commitment to successfully complete. Staying up with the class and completing all work on time is vital. If you fall behind, it can be very difficult to catch up.
6. Be able to meet the minimum requirements for the course or program. The requirements for an online course or program 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.
7. Accept critical thinking and decision making as part of the learning process. The learning process requires you to make decisions based on facts as well as experience. Assimilating information and executing the right decisions require critical thought.

8. Have practically unlimited access to a computer with internet service. The course related materials, syllabi, readings, lecture notes, assignments, and discussion boards are contained and organized within Blackboard. For an online course, there are no on-campus or face-to-face meetings. There is no specific day or time you need to log-in to the class each week. Still, there are assignments and due dates. Regular participation and contribution are expected on the discussion boards or other communication tools within Blackboard. A habit of logging in daily is essential for your success.
9. Be able to think ideas through before responding. Making meaningful and quality contributions to the online 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.
10. Feel that high quality learning can take place without being in a traditional classroom. If you feel that a traditional classroom is a prerequisite to learning, you may be more comfortable in a traditional campus-based classroom. The level of social engagement and the level of interaction between you and your instructor can be very rewarding in an online class. As an online student, you should be ready to:
 1. Participate in the online class 5-7 days a week
 2. Work with others in completing projects
 3. Use the technology properly
 4. Meet the minimum standards as set forth by the institution
 5. Complete assignments on time
 6. Enjoy communicating in writing

***Adapted from Illinois Online Network*