

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF ADVANCED RESEARCH STUDY

International Institute for Policy Review & Development Strategies

HOW TO OVERCOME THE COMMON CHALLENGES OF ONLINE LEARNING

Here are some of the most common obstacles you may encounter, along with a few suggestions to help you overcome each one:

1. **Feeling isolated:** The convenience of logging in to a class on your own, in your own time can be accompanied by the perception that you are, well, all by yourself. Know that you're not alone! In your first online course you'll find that many students have the same doubts, challenges, and questions you are struggling with. Taking initiative is key to overcoming this challenge by reaching out not only to your instructor and classmates, but also to the many professional services available to support your work (i.e., advisors, counselors, librarians, writing centers, help desks).

Tip: Participate in all class events and assignments, from discussion forums to real-time presentations. Ask questions and voice concerns during "virtual office hours" to connect with your instructor.

2. **Using new technology:** Online courses often require even tech-savvy students to learn how to use new types of hardware and software to communicate and connect within their classes. Troubleshooting skills develop with time and practice, but it all can be very frustrating at first.

Tip: Embrace the fact that technology is dynamic – you'll always be learning something new as systems get updated and new tools are adopted. Technology is also prone to problems and doesn't always work as it is supposed to. Gather the contact info for your school's tech help resources (as well as a few skilled friends) for quick access when you need it.

3. Managing time effectively: Many online learners are adding school to their already busy lives. Time management skills are critical to getting everything done. Making "anytime, anyplace" learning work for you means finding a place for it in your existing schedule.

Tip: Online courses can be quite structured. Check each class syllabus for details about due dates and add these to your calendar, also blocking time to get the work completed in advance. Make the commitment to fulfilling your course requirements.

4. **Taking on the student role:** Online learning is a popular option for adult students who are working and raising families, but interested in pursuing academic goals after a long absence from school. Working with other students and instructors is different than working with office colleagues and supervisors.

Tip: Look to your instructor to set the tone for the course and consider yourself part of a learning team that includes not only your teacher and classmates, but also the support services mentioned above.