Tips for Succeeding in an Online Course

Familiarize Yourself with Each Course (Early and Often) As you begin each course consider these specific tips:

- Read the **Syllabus** and **Course Outline,** in detail
- Note the instructor's **contact** information and virtual office hours
- Create a schedule with all due **dates**
- Read all **Announcements,** either in your course (News) or via email
- Follow the exact assignment details
- **Ask** for clarification if you do not understand what is expected of you

Stay Organized

Courses are usually divided into modules or units, lasting 1-3 weeks. Pace yourself throughout the week and focus on the task at hand (i.e. don't try to do everything all at once). Most instructors provide a checklist or rubric, so use that as a guide. Before submitting an assignment check that you have not forgotten an individual element.

Ask Questions

Your instructors all want you to succeed. If you don't understand a course-related instruction or expectation **ASK**. Many instructors maintain a General Question & Answer Forum, which is an ideal place to ask questions that may benefit classmates. Faculty may also allow **anonymous** postings, so you can ask questions without identifying yourself.

Effective and Active Communication

The key to staying on track is **communication**. As soon as you anticipate problems alert your instructor. Don't wait until the last minute to ask for help. Your instructors are there to help you succeed.

Develop a Schedule

The best way to stay on top of tasks is to develop a plan. Plan to spend at least 7-10 hours each week on assignments, preferably not all on the due date. Regardless of when you plan to work on your next assignment, carefully read the instructions or grading rubrics early. That way, if you have questions, you will have plenty of time to ask for help. Having a routine will help you stay focused and help avoid procrastination.

Have a consistent workspace

Set aside a few hours each week when you can close your door, turn off your phone, and just get work done. If you have a family or roommates make sure they understand the need to leave you undisturbed during scheduled learning time. The support of your family and friends is crucial for your success. Wherever you chose to study make sure the space is comfortable, quiet, and stocked with everything you need. If your usual study place is noisy and hectic consider an alternate location.

Stay Connected (get to know your classmates and instructors)

Just because you are online doesn't mean you can't make friends and bond with classmates and instructors. Throughout your coursework you will interact with others in forum discussions, group projects, emails and virtual meetings.
You could also form a study group or support network with other students who live nearby.

Apply What You Learn (and reflect)

One strategy for internalizing what you learn in the classroom is to apply target skills and knowledge immediately to real-world situations. Practical application will also increase your motivation and build solid mental models from which to build deep knowledge. Reflection is yet another strategy for success. After every assignment, and at the completion of each course, review the learning outcomes and ask yourself how well you met both course and personal goals. What did you learn and how do you plan to apply what you have learned? By personalizing and self-assessing your course experience you take ownership of your own learning, and ensure your efforts lead to worthwhile results.

Relax Smart

"Work hard…play harder" is a good motto to live by. But if you want to stay on task and not get behind, play smart. Ask questions early and often, and if you can, complete assignments early. That way you can reap the reward of a relaxing or adventurous break (or however else you choose to relieve stress and "decompress"). You can also assure success by calmly following each of the tips above without a sense of panic. Relaxation is vital to success, so plan ahead so you can truly savor and cherish your free time as a well-deserved treat.