

Tips for Online Classes

The tips and advice below can help you address the unique challenges and get the most value out of your online classes.

Treat an online course like a “real” course.

When it comes to online classes, you need to have the discipline to sit down and say, “I am going to work on this,” as well as the dedication to actually follow through. Though you can be flexible as to when you choose to complete your work during the week, you cannot put it off indefinitely.

Hold yourself accountable

Set goals at the beginning of the semester, and check in with yourself weekly. In a traditional classroom setting, you will often receive verbal reminders of upcoming due dates. However, without a professor actively reminding you, it’s up to you to make sure you’ve allotted enough time to complete the work so you’re not starting an assignment the day it’s due.

If you are having trouble holding yourself responsible, remotely pair up with a fellow classmate, or enlist the help of a spouse or friend to check in as an accountability partner. By being organized, proactive and self-aware, you can get the most from your online class even when life outside of school becomes chaotic.

Practice good time management

The flexibility to create your own schedule is often one of the biggest appeals of taking online classes. However, that freedom can also be a problem if you do not have good time management skills. Without them, you might find yourself cramming before tests or handing in subpar assignments.

How you manage your time will depend on your schedule, learning style, and personality, but here are some common tips to help you practice and improve your time management skills:

- Look at the assignment schedule at the start of the semesters and make note of major assignments. Mark them on a calendar you check regularly so you know what your workload is for the week ahead. Install the Brightspace Pulse (D2L) app on your mobile device and sign up for notifications.
- Create a weekly/daily schedule that you follow, designing certain hours each week to reading, watching lectures, completing assignments, studying and participating in discussions. Commit to making your online coursework part of your weekly routine and set reminders for yourself to complete these tasks.
- When working on your assignments, try time-blocking, allowing yourself a certain amount of time for each task before moving on to the next one. You can use a timer to keep you accountable.

Create a regular study space and stay organized

Set up a dedicated learning environment for studying. By completing your work there repeatedly, you’ll begin to establish a routine. Whether your workspace is at your kitchen table or your bedroom, it is

important to determine what type of environment will work best for you. Experiment to discover which type of setting boosts your productivity. Wherever you choose, make sure there is high-speed internet access so you are not trying to take an online course over a lagging connection.

Setting up a regular workspace or office will also help you to stay organized. Knowing exactly where important dates, files, forms, books and assignments are located will help keep you on track towards hitting your goals.

Eliminate distractions

From Netflix to social media to dishes piling up in the sink, you will be faced with many distractions that can easily derail your studies. As an online student, you will need to learn how to lessen these distractions and set aside time to focus.

Exactly how much of a challenge these distractions will prove to be depends on your own personality and situation. Some may find that they can tune out a noisy home by listening to music. Others might choose to work from a local library or behind a closed door at home. Ultimately, you will need to find a strategy that works best for you.

Regardless of where you choose to work, consider turning off your cell phone to avoid losing focus every time a text message or notification pops up. And if you're still having trouble resisting the temptation to check your email or surf the web, try downloading a website blocker such as Freedom.

Figure out how you learn best

Once you have established where you will learn, think about when and how you accomplish your best work. If you are a morning person, try to make time to study early in the day. More of a night owl? Set aside time after dinner to do your studying.

Not everyone learns the same way, so think about what types of information help you best grasp new concepts and employ relevant study strategies. If you are a visual learner, for example, print out transcripts of the video lectures to review. Do you learn best by listening? Make sure to build time into your schedule to play and replay all audio and video-based course content.

Actively Participate

Participate in the course online forum to help you better understand course materials and engage with fellow classmates. This might involve commenting on a classmates' paper on a discussion board or posting a question about a project you are working on. Read what other students and your professor are saying, and if you have a question, ask for clarification.

Make sure you are checking in as often as you can. The flexibility of online learning means that if you have 30 minutes before dinner, you could squeeze in a discussion response around your schedule. Set a goal to check in to your class discussions and emails every day.

For More Assistance:

Use NetTutor. It is an online tutoring service that all students have access to in D2L.

Contact the Student Success Center at 864-941-8356.

Adapted from Northeastern University