

Important Notes

Taking an online course can be very exciting and satisfying, but it can also be frustrating and discouraging. To make our course a success, please read the following notes first:

1. Expect to put more time into an online course than into a traditional course.

Online courses are not less time-consuming than traditional courses. You still have all the same objectives to master as with a traditional course. In addition, you also have to deal with technology requirements, self-motivation, delay in feedback from the instructor and the other course participants, challenges of group work via the Internet, etc.

Expect to spend 10 hours a week on the course "Web 2.0 for Foundresses" at least.

2. Meet the technical requirements.

Have access to the Internet (preferably high speed) and to any required software or additional hardware. To lessen your chances of becoming frustrated and discouraged also familiarize yourself with the online course environment before the actual course begins.

To learn more about the online environment of the course see the "How to Moodle" manual.

3. Make sure you have a private space where you can study.

Your own space where you can shut the door, leave paper arounds, and work in peace is necessary and helps to avoid distractions.

4. Establish a support network.

Elicit the support of your colleagues, family, and friends before you start out on your online adventure. This built-in support system will help you tremendously since there will be times when you will have to sit at your computer for hours at a stretch in the evenings and on weekends. When most people are through with work and want to relax is most likely when you will be bearing down on your course work. It helps to surround yourself with people who understand and respect what you are trying to do.

5. Be self-motivated and self-disciplined.

With the freedom and flexibility of the online environment comes responsibility. The online process takes a real commitment and discipline to keep up with the flow of the process.

6. Log on to your course every day (weekends excluded)

The more often you log on and receive feedback from your instructor and/ or the other course participants, the better off you will be. If you delay in logging on, it could increase the response time between you and your instructor and/or the other course participants. For example, if it takes two days for your instructor to respond and two more days to get the message because you have not logged on, then it could be up to a week before a

resolution can occur. If you let too many days go by without logging on to your course, you may get behind and find it very difficult to catch up.

7. Participate!

Be open-minded about sharing life, work, and educational experiences as part of the learning process. The online learning experience eliminates the visual barriers that hinder some individuals in expressing themselves. Contribute your ideas, perspective, and comments on the subject you are studying, and read about those of the other course participants. Your instructor is not the only source of information in your course - you can gain great insight from your peers and they can learn from you as well.

8. Respond in time

To keep communication going it is also necessary to reply to a forum post or an email within 24-48 hours (weekends excluded).

9. Be willing to "speak up" if problems arise.

Many of the non-verbal communication mechanisms that instructors use in determining whether learners are having problems (confusion, frustration, boredom, absence, etc.) are not possible in the online paradigm. If a learner is experiencing difficulty on any level (either with the technology or with the course content), s/he must communicate this immediately. Otherwise the instructor will never know what is wrong.

10. Be able to think ideas through before responding and be able to clearly communicate your response(s).

Meaningful and quality input into the virtual 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; you will not always be right, just be prepared to accept a challenge.

11. Accept critical thinking and decision making as part of the learning process.

The learning process in both traditional and online classes requires the learner to make decisions based on facts as well as experience. Assimilating information and executing the right decisions requires critical thought.

12. Be polite and respectful.

Just because you are anonymous doesn't mean you should let yourself "go." Remember, you are dealing with real people on the other end of your modem. Being polite and respectful is not only common sense, it is absolutely obligatory for a productive and supportive online environment. In a positive online environment, you will feel valued by your instructor, valued by the other course participants, and your own work will have greater value as well.

Reference

Isothermal Community College (2009): Online Student Manual created by the Distance Learning Office at Isothermal Community College and Pitt Community College. URL: <http://www.isothermal.edu/publications/Online_student_manual.pdf>