

Strategies for Successfully Navigating Online Courses

1. **Preparation and Planning:** Determine how individual courses will proceed. Visit each course website regularly and carefully read the professor's plan for how online instruction will be conducted. Keep a due date calendar to keep track of any assignments, their weighted value, and their due dates.

Watch this video for 3 preparation and planning tips to effectively study for your online course: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H-deFSyeXSM>

2. **Treat the online course like a "real" course:** These courses require self-discipline and dedication to follow through. The tricky part about participating in online course is that they are in some ways flexible but usually also have concrete and consistent deadlines. Consider blocking out time in your schedule just as you would for a traditional face-to-face class to work on online assignments, participate in discussions, and attend virtual conference calls.

Watch this short CrashCourse video on planning and organization for your classes: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0AKAuRby7n8>

3. **Hold yourself accountable:** Since online courses are generally self-paced, you need to set weekly goals and reminders regarding important due dates. You may have difficulty keeping track of your course responsibilities without having a professor to regularly remind you of upcoming work in class.

4. **Practice time management:** To avoid cramming for exams, answering discussions posts before the deadline, or turning in assignments late you need to create and follow a schedule for all of your classes. Look at the syllabus or list of assignment your instructor provides and mark them on your calendar. Be sure to add in new assignments and due dates as they are assigned throughout the semester by your professor. Create a weekly schedule and designate specific times to complete readings, watch lectures, participate in forum, and study. Update any time management tool you use, indicating relevant changes including adjustments in quiz, test, and assignment due dates, times you are required to be online for a webcast or discussion, and any other new schedule items.

Watch this TedxTalk to see how this student changed her study habits with the Pomodoro method: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z7e7gtU3PHY>

5. **Create a regular study space and eliminate distractions:** Working from home can be distracting especially if you aren't used to doing so. Find a space in your home where you can avoid distractions such as technology and hunger so that you may complete your work in a timely manner. Try to establish a do not disturb routine and communication system if you are living with other people so that they don't distract you. You can tune out sounds with music or ambient noise machines, or you may want to turn your computer on airplane mode to avoid going on the Internet, if possible. You could also download a website blocker such as Cold Turkey or Freedom to limit the amount of websites you can access. Keep your course materials organized in your study space by using folders or specific desk drawers.

6. **Actively participate:** Participating in online lectures and discussion forums will help you better understand the course materials and engage with your fellow classmates. Be sure to check the course website regularly so that you keep up with announcements and assignment due dates. Schedule check in times in your schedule and treat it as seriously as you would treat attending face-to-face classes. Make plans to study and discuss coursework using chat functions, group meeting apps, or videoconferencing software. When in doubt, don't assume – ASK QUESTIONS. Contact your professor using e-mail or send a message on Blackboard. Ask questions and post your insights in online discussions. Make meaningful comments on your classmates' posts, not just "I agree" or "That's good idea." Further the conversation. Online classes can be very passive, but you can make them more active through meaningful and energetic discussion.

Watch this comprehensive video to learn how to make the most of online courses:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eF-Z1hJ67-Y>

7. **Take notes even when you're online:** When the lecture is just a PowerPoint, slow down and take your time! When slides only contain a few bullet points, it can be tempting to just read them and move on. Try reading them out loud and making comments to slow yourself down; force yourself to think about what's on the slide. When the lecture is a video conference, review your notes when you're done. Summarize the material in your own words, but also try to explain the material in terms of the other concepts in the class. Question as you go: note things that aren't clear to you. Take your questions and look for answers in the textbook or ask a friend or post your question on the class discussion board or email your professor.

8. **Know yourself and Adjust Accordingly:** Individual learners react to different learning environments in unique ways, no matter the setting. Think about yourself as a learner and student. How comfortable are you with online interaction? How well do you manage distractions when using a computer? Where and when do you learn best – and what times and places are surefire study disasters for you? Think about your unique needs and make any useful adjustments. Consider specifically what will be missing from your experience right now without in-person meetings, and see what you can do to build in those missing pieces in other ways, or substitute other types of interaction for them.

Adapted from Northeastern University (<https://www.northeastern.edu/graduate/blog/tips-for-taking-online-classes/>) and Rutgers.

For more helpful tips on learning online, check out these sites:

<https://goodcolleges.online/study-tips-for-success/>

<https://www.rasmussen.edu/student-experience/college-life/what-i-wish-someone-told-me-before-taking-online-classes/>

<https://www.collegeraptor.com/getting-in/articles/online-colleges/tips-for-surviving-your-online-classes/>

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Dj3YR30EXii5vDLQLfwnbeZY3FMAfRwCMT3vjstOiVY/edit>