

## Resources for Completing Courses Online

We are in unprecedented times ... with the outbreak of the worldwide pandemic; COVID-19, many are being impacted in various ways. One of which being their access to academics. We are aware that many of our students are now relegated to completing their education for this year in an online format. We further realize that, while a necessary choice to uphold social distancing, for many of us this change poses a unique set of challenges. Namely: access to stable internet, health concerns, accommodations and support for disabilities etc. While we are unable to provide relief for all the potential concerns, we are able to provide some helpful guidelines to make the transition from physical classroom to online setting a little smoother.

### The DO's and DON'Ts of Online Learning:

- DO take time to review all the files and resources for your course available online.
- DON'T read material just once. Review your online material as many times as necessary.
- DO establish time to navigate through the online portal. Familiarity with the online system will make it easier to work in that space.
- DO have realistic expectations for yourself and online courses. The online format is vastly different from in-person courses and it make take you some time to adjust.
- DO manage your time! Time management is critical to performing well in your online courses (tips discussed below).
- DO download and/or print physical copies of resources from your online course to review while away from the online portal.
- DO set specific goals for yourself on a daily basis.
- DO attempt to solve difficult concepts from your course independently before seeking out help.
- DON'T give up. This is likely new for you, and it will take some time to adjust. But, while initially things seem daunting, you will adjust, you will get through this, and it will become easier for you!

### Common Considerations for Online Learning:

**Stable internet connection** – It is clear that, in order to be successful with online courses, one must have access to a stable internet connection. It is also clear that, for some students, this is a source of concern ... either because of financial reasons, difficulties with transportation, or other unexpected reasons. Here in Lawrence, Midco is offering what they call a “Lifeline” program. Where they will provide stable internet service for \$15 a month (and, with subsidy \$6 a month) for those in need. The service includes unlimited internet and, once approved, will take 3-5 to install for free. All necessary equipment is also included in this offer for free. Midco has also expressed that they will not be disconnecting internet services for current customers for the next 60 days (through May 15) regardless of payment of owed bills. You can find more information about (and the application for) the Lifeline program here: <https://www.midco.com/lifeline/>

**Establish an effective workspace** – Regardless of where you decide to study and complete work during this time ... it is important to make sure that your space is quiet, organized well, available for your use, and free of distractions. The space within which you will work is infinitely more important for an online course. Having a quiet space enables you to more easily focus on coursework. Individuals have differing levels of organization. For some, an overly organized space might be less helpful. It is important that the student determines an appropriate state of organization for their space. This has been shown to encourage creativity and makes completing work easier to do. Distractions can occur in various forms, some of the most common include social media, other less important tasks, media in general, and other individuals. It is imperative that these potential sources of distraction are minimized. It might look like alerting other individuals within your space of when your “work time” is and asking that they respect it, or it may mean holding off on watching your favorite show on Netflix until you’ve completed a specific task as it relates to your coursework.

**Determine how best you learn** – Once you have established an effective workspace, it’s helpful to understand how best you learn! When have you noticed you have completed your best work? Are you more of a night owl? Create some dedicated space in the evening to complete your work. Do you tend to need some time to “wake up” in the morning? Plan a morning routine that sees you engaging in various tasks to wake you up before engaging in work (ex. breakfast, exercise, watching an episode of your favorite show). In which classes have you noticed you have learned information the best and most enjoyed? Are there any themes that you can gather from these examples?

There are various theories on how people learn, though the consensus is that we learn in different ways. Do you learn best by physically seeing the information? You might benefit from printing out the syllabus for your course or even looking up videos on YouTube to supplement what you are learning in the course. Do you tend to learn best when you are practicing what is being taught? Be sure to build time into your schedule to practice pieces from the course (even if not assigned). Do you find that you understand information better when you hear it? You would likely benefit from reviewing the audio from your course multiple times while taking notes or, if not available, recording yourself verbally reviewing information from the course to listen to later. Once you have stabled a routine that works well with your learning style, it is important that you do whatever it takes to stick to your routine. This short assessment will help you determine your learning style and provide further tips for your style: <http://www.educationplanner.org/students/self-assessments/learning-styles-quiz.shtml>

**Practice time management** – One of the most important pieces of online coursework is practicing effective time management. While online courses provide you with the flexibility to determine your own schedule, this flexibility can also become a detriment if discipline is not practiced. Without proper time management skills, you might find yourself rushing to complete an assignment soon before its deadline and/or turning in less than stellar work. How you might manage your time is based on several different factors (personality, your schedule, and even your personality) there are some universally helpful tips:

- Look at your syllabus early and often. Make a note of all upcoming major assignments and place on a calendar (or make a note elsewhere) to better remember. Being aware of

upcoming major assignments will help you better organize your time to accommodate. It will also help you schedule your outside commitments to work around pockets of increased work.

- Create a schedule for your week and stick to it! Be specific, designate blocks of time in which you will complete certain tasks. You might determine that from 9-10 in the morning you will review your notes from the previous chapter, from 12-2PM you might complete a portion of your readings for the week, from 7-8PM you might email your professor with concerns for the next day. Also, set reminders for yourself to keep to your schedule. It takes work and commitment to keep a weekly schedule. Do not expect this to be easy, but it is incredibly beneficial.
- Create to-do lists. At the beginning of each week, make a list of tasks to accomplish by the end of the week. First, this will help to make you aware of all the tasks that need your attention for the week. And, secondly, it will help you determine how to prioritize your weekly routine. It can be difficult to determine which tasks to complete first. I would recommend using the Eisenhower Matrix (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7hSs1NhmpOI>)
- Allot a certain amount of time to each task. At the beginning of your day make note of all the tasks you have for the day. Then identify how much time you expect each task to take. And, finally, plan specifically when within your day you will set aside time for that task.
- Take note of how you have been spending your time for the past week or so. Periodically review your time-spending habits. Make notes of where you have been successful with managing your time. Also, make notes of areas where you have struggled and make a plan to address those areas of concern for the future.
- The general rule with time management is to keep things SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time bound). Whether it's a task, a goal, or schedule .. be sure that you are specific about what exactly it is, that there are ways to measure your success with that task, that it is reasonable given your circumstance, relevant to your goals, and that you place a time frame on when you expect to complete said task.

**Know and utilize the support you have around you** – It is incredibly easy to feel isolated when taking online courses, as you rarely see your classmates or teacher in person. That compounded with the reality of our current situation ... it can be rather easy to isolate oneself. Please resist the urge to. It is been shown in research that isolation can be detrimental to one's mental and physical health. Here are some guidelines on how to remain connected with your online class!

- Take the initiative to introduce yourself to your classmates from your online course! The online course thrives on collaboration. Being intentional about building relationships with your class, even though not in person, will go a long way to alleviating some of the potential isolation. You might consider emailing your classmate to introduce yourself and learn more about them. It would also be helpful to do the same with your professor!
- Ask for help when in need. The temptation with online courses is to feel that you have to engage in learning alone. However, this is not the case! It is imperative that you try to work out difficult topics on your own first, however always feel free to communicate with your classmates about where you might be having difficulty. You might find 1) others with the same difficulty and/or 2) a classmate who can provide assistance to resolve the difficulty.

- Remain in regular contact with your instructor. One of the key markers of a student's likelihood of seeking support from an instructor when experiencing difficulty is previous established contact. By that I mean, the more frequently you communicate with an instructor on a normal basis, the more likely you are to reach out to them when you are experiencing difficulty (and the more likely they are to be sympathetic to your concerns).

One a final note, take advantage of online communities you are a part of! You might be a member of a Reddit thread or an online gaming community through Discord, or have friends in different states you know. Take this time to invest in your relationships within those communities. You might schedule a time once a week to video chat with a friend from a different state, you might hop on voice chat with members of your gaming community to chat about your day, you might even engage with other writers on sites like Reddit about whichever topics interest you.