

Tips for online learners

Learning in the online environment is clearly different from taking classes in the face-to-face classroom. The tips below will help you maximize your learning in online courses.

Time management

- **Create a routine:** Set aside regular times for working on the course. Get in the habit of logging in early the week to check assignments and deadlines for that module, then schedule times to complete work and post
- **Work when you're at your best:** If you're bright-eyed before dawn but beat by 8 p.m., plan your study time accordingly. Schedule your reading and writing assignments for when you're mentally sharpest. Jot down your thoughts and reactions as you read in case you have to delay your online responses until later.
- **Keep track of your progress:** Know the due dates and deadlines for all assignments.
- **Keep up:** It's easy to fall behind and hard to catch up if you don't make regular progress. Log in at least four or five days a week, to keep pace with the course in smaller increments of time. To minimize stress, avoid procrastination (unless you feel you work best under pressure).
- **Create a comfortable place to work online:** Find a place that is quiet and away from distractions assignments and activities
- **Work online but read offline:** If you have long documents or articles to read, download them and read them after you log out of the course, especially if your time online is limited or you have a slow Internet connection.

Maximizing learning

- **Read, read, read:** Read all of the course information, including the syllabus, study guides, and course materials carefully to be sure you know the expectations and process for completing coursework.
- **Participate:** Online, you can't just show up, sit quietly, and listen. The value of these courses lies in rich, lively conversations that broaden the

topic. Sharing your thoughts, reactions, and experiences is key to learning the material and learning from others' responses.

- **Reflect, then respond:** To get the most out of your courses, take advantage of the program flexibility to spend some time thinking about the readings, how they relate to your experience, and the comments of classmates before responding.
- **Be aware of time zone differences:** Your online classmates may live in different time zones or even different countries than you do. Differences in time zone can account to delays in getting a response from your instructor or a classmate, so pay attention to what time it is where your messages are being received, and when scheduling online group discussions or real-time chats.
- **Stay in touch with your instructor:** Keep the lines of communication open and take advantage of the opportunity to communicate more frequently with your instructor.
- **Ask for feedback:** Find out how you're doing as an online learner by asking for feedback from your instructor and classmates to be sure you're on the right track.
- **Don't be shy:** When in doubt, ask! Let your instructor know if you can't make something work, don't know how to do something, or don't understand what is being asked of you. Chances are, someone else is also wondering. If necessary, go low-tech— pick up the telephone and call your instructor for course-related questions or talk to tech support for technology issues.

Technology survival tips

- **Know the tech specs:** Before class starts, check the technical specification and make sure your computer meets the hardware and software requirements for EriksonOnline course. We'll provide a tool to test your system. Log on to familiarize yourself with EriksonOnline and make sure everything works.
- **Brush up your basic skills:** Before you tackle an online course, get comfortable with the essential skills. If necessary, take advantage of our tutorials.
- **Try out all the tools:** Learn to use each of the online tools (discussions, chat rooms, online resources, access to the library, e-mail, file sharing) to

share information, exchange ideas, gather resources, and stay connected with other professionals. These skills will serve you well long after the class is over.

- **Use ‘em or lose ‘em:** You’ll invest some time in developing new tech skills, so put them to use to improve your teaching practices, enhance your parent communication, strengthen your documentation process, and increase your networking and advocacy efforts.
- **Ask for help:** Don’t let struggles with technology get in the way of your learning. Our tech support aims to offer truly helpful human assistance by e-mail or phone, and there are many help resources available when you’re logged into your EriksonOnline course.
- **Ask a teenager:** Many successful online learners report that the best technical assistance comes from a teenage son or daughter (even a younger child will do), a spouse, partner, or friend who is into computers. And once you have mastered the art of learning online, think how “cool” you’ll be in the eyes of your teenager!

Source : Donohue, C., & Clark, D. (2004, Nov.). Learning Online: The Places You’ll Go! Exchange, pp. 49-54. Available online at www.ChildCareExchange.com

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