Becoming a Successful Online Learner

Inquire: Skills for Online Learning

Overview

Not surprisingly, many of the skills and habits required for successful online learning are the same ones used in traditional face-to-face classrooms. For example, it’s important to be organized and manage your schedule effectively. You need to stay abreast of all coursework and deadlines. You should take responsibility for completing all reading assignments and take notes to ensure that you understand the major ideas and concepts.

There are, however, several skills unique to becoming a successful online learner. These include things like being a motivated independent learner, having good computer and digital skills, and becoming comfortable with solving problems on your own. Successful online learners also know how to communicate effectively in an asynchronous environment.

Big Question: What skills do you need to develop to become a successful online learner?

Watch: Taking Control of Your Online Learning Experience

There are many advantages to taking an online course.

Online courses are “asynchronous,” meaning students and instructors are generally not logged in or working at the same time. Communication occurs mostly through email or feedback on assignments.

This provides students greater flexibility about when and where they study and complete their coursework.

This flexibility or freedom, however, comes with certain responsibilities or requirements that are not part of traditional, face-to-face classes.

Successful online learners must be able to study and learn independently. This means taking responsibility for your learning process. For example, while learning online offers plenty of opportunities to communicate with instructors you, as a student, will often need to initiate contact.

Another part of taking ownership for your learning is being able to manage your time effectively. You are responsible for keeping up with coursework and scheduling your time to meet all deadlines, assignments, quizzes, and exams.
You will also need to have or develop proficiency in digital skills and completing coursework on a computer. You should also be able to upload video to YouTube, find and share YouTube video links in your written assignments, and share access to files from Google Docs and Google Sheets. Basic computer skills including connecting to WiFi, using the microphone and camera on your computer, and sending and receiving emails with attachments.

Finally, as an online learner, you must be prepared to deal with the unexpected problems that may occur when working outside the confines of the classroom. You may experience a problem with your computer or access to the Internet. The electricity could go out in your home or the coffee shop where you study. A successful online student identifies solutions for unexpected "catastrophes" by thinking ahead about solutions to potential problems.

So, as you get ready to begin your online learning experience, are you ready to take ownership of your learning?

Read: Characteristics of a Successful Online Learner

Overview
Students taking traditional face-to-face classes in college meet at scheduled times in physical classrooms. This gives them an opportunity to interact with instructors and other students. They learn about other students through class discussions and conversations before and after class.

Online students generally have a different experience. They study independently and “asynchronously.” This means that the instructor and students don’t have to be logged into the classroom at the same time for learning to occur. Online students typically complete course assignments at a day and time that works best for their individual schedule. They enjoy greater flexibility in terms of managing their schedules, but greater responsibility for managing their learning experience.

Here are some of the important study habits and personality traits of successful online students.

Independent Learners
Successful online students are comfortable working independently and taking responsibility for their learning experiences. While learning online offers opportunities to communicate with instructors, you, as a student, will often need to initiate contact. In addition, you should remember that online communication is not as immediate as the communication in a traditional face-to-face classroom. Although online instructors answer questions and provide clarification of information to students as they would in the traditional classroom, students must be comfortable waiting up to 24 hours for a response to their emails.

As an independent learner in a TEL Library course, your typical week might look something like this.

1. Working through the lesson material for a module, including (for 4-6 lessons):
   - Watching the introductory video;
   - Completing the readings;
   - Reviewing glossary terms;
   - Taking the Check Your Knowledge quiz for each lesson to make sure you understand the information presented.
2. Studying the material covered in the module by:
   ● Reviewing the learning outcomes for the module and listing concepts or information that you have not yet learned or mastered;
   ● Identifying the main points and supporting details for the readings in each lesson;
   ● Familiarizing yourself with the glossary items and terms introduced;
   ● Reviewing the questions in the Check Your Knowledge quizzes.

3. Completing the module quiz.

4. Completing a rubric-based Evidence assignment that is submitted to your instructor for grading by:
   ● Reading the assignment instructions carefully;
   ● Reviewing the assignment grading rubric and making a list of all required elements for the assignment (you will use this as a checklist before submitting the assignment);
   ● Completing the assignment and submitting it on time.

Successful online students must be self-disciplined and goal-oriented as they work to complete their assignments, complete peer-review activities, and study for quizzes and exams. Online classes move quickly, and instructors often will not allow students to "make up" missed online discussions or assignments.

Capable Readers and Communicators
Reading is the primary way to study the concepts and topics in an online course. You are expected to learn the information presented in lesson texts and apply that information in your assignments. For success on quizzes and exams, you will need to identify the main points and supporting details for the readings in each lesson.

Good Computer and Digital Skills
Completing coursework online requires that you be proficient in computer and web-based skills. Basic computer skills include sending and receiving emails with attachments, using productivity programs like Microsoft Word, and creating video and audio recordings. You should also be able to upload video to YouTube, find and share YouTube video links in your written assignments, and share access to files from Google Docs and Google Sheets.

Set Schedules and Meet Deadlines
Online instructors expect students to manage their schedules and complete all coursework on time. Online students who are successful in completing their courses know how to schedule their time to meet deadlines for assignments, quizzes, and exams.

Successful online students generally log at least three to five hours of online work a week for a three credit hour class. In addition, most students find they are successful if they log two hours of homework for every credit hour of class.

Not Easily Frustrated
Students in an online class sometimes are faced with obstacles that are out of their control: a computer breaks, wifi goes down, the electricity goes out. A successful online student identifies solutions for unexpected "catastrophes" by thinking ahead about solutions to potential problems.
Practice Proper Netiquette

Successful online students show respect for the online class community and remember their "manners" when communicating with fellow classmates or instructors. They understand that, regardless of any frustration they may be experiencing, it is always important to communicate politely and respectfully with others.

Take Responsibility for the Learning Process

Successful online students understand that their instructors are facilitators of their learning process and that it's up to each individual student to be a dedicated and goal-oriented self-starter. Online students put their coursework at the top of their list of priorities.

Successful online students take ownership of their learning and are not afraid to ask questions. However, they wait to ask questions until after they have attempted to understand the material on their own by re-reading a lesson or assignment instructions.

Reflect Poll

I know I will be a good online learner because…
- I have excellent computer and digital skills.
- I am an organized self-starter who keeps up with everything.
- I am a good problem-solver.
- I know how to read a text and identify the important information.

Expand: Preparing and Submitting Evidence Assignments in TEL Courses

Introduction

TEL courses feature Evidence assignments for most modules. These assignments are designed to help you demonstrate mastery of the information you are learning by applying it to specific situations and scenarios. Completing these assignments successfully will require that you pay close attention to assignment details.

Completing Evidence Assignments

Every module in your TEL course will have a module-level Evidence assignment and Quiz. These activities will require you to learn and apply the core topics and information from the lessons in the module.

You can find a link to the module Evidence assignment on the module page. It will appear below the links to the different lessons in the module.

Clicking on this link will take you to the Evidence and Assessment page for the module. This page gives you access to the Evidence assignment and module Quiz and also has a list of module learning outcomes, glossary terms, and resources.
The module Evidence link takes you to the Evidence assignment page. This page features the instructions and questions for the assignment, as well as a rubric that shows how the assignment will be graded.

The Questions tab provides detailed instructions for the assignment, generally dividing the work into distinct steps. You will need to read the questions carefully and make note of any specific requirements.

Before beginning work on the assignment, you should also review the assignment rubric. This is the grading chart for the assignment. It shows the different criteria by which the assignment will be graded, as well as the point totals associated with each criterion. In addition, the rubric informs you of how many points will be awarded for different levels of work effort, ranging from Unsatisfactory to Excellent. You may find it helpful to use the rubric as an assignment checklist that you review before submitting your work. This will help ensure that you have included all elements that may affect your grade.

Sharing Writing Assignments via Google Docs

Some TEL courses require students to write formal outlines or essays as part of an Evidence assignment. These can be written in Google Docs and shared with the instructor by pasting a shared link to your document in the assignment text box. Here is a video that shows how to create and share a Google Doc for such assignments.

Link to Resource: https://youtu.be/zQPiz_NDB2w

Lesson Toolbox

Additional Resources and Readings

A list of characteristics to develop in order to become a successful online learner

- Link to resource: https://www.uis.edu/ion/resources/tutorials/pedagogy/successful-online-student/

Lesson Glossary

None

Check Your Knowledge

1. Successful online students generally log at least __________ hours of online work a week for a three credit-hour class
   a. 3-5
   b. 20-25
   c. 1-2
   d. 7-8

2. The module-level Evidence assignment and Quiz require you to learn and apply the core topics and information from the lessons in the module.
   a. True
   b. False
3. Online courses provide students greater flexibility about when and where they study and complete their coursework.
   a. True
   b. False

Answer Key:
1. A  2. A  3. A

Citations

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