DURHAM COLLEGE
SUCCESS MATTERS

Top tips for succeeding in an online course

Top tips for succeeding in an online course

1. Be organized from the start. This includes:

- Creating a distraction-free study area.
- Reviewing the course information package.
- Printing the outline and reviewing the learning outcomes.
- Recording test, assignment and exam dates.
- Buying the required texts and learning about the features of each book.
- Ensuring you have reliable access to a computer and the Internet, and that you have the necessary software.
- Exploring the e-learning system including how to submit work and participate in discussions.
- Finding out who can help, if you need it.

2. Connect with your instructor.

Your instructor is available to help you. Ask questions and learn as much as you can about their expectations and preferred method of communication.

3. Understand the requirements.

The structure and methods of assessment vary from course to course and may include assignments, discussions, quizzes, group work, exercises and open-/closed-book tests. Be sure to do the following:

- Refer to the outline throughout the course.
- Consider the mark value and due date for each component.
- Print off the rubric, an assessment tool that clearly indicates marking criteria, to use as a checklist to clarify what is required.
- If unsure, get clarification from the instructor.

4. Read the course material.

Allow time to complete both the required and recommended course readings. Make notes from the text and answer review questions to improve your comprehension and reinforce your learning.

5. Participate in discussions.

Many courses have a discussion component for participation and peer interaction. Discussion posts are typically graded for their quality so be sure to write thoughtfully and carefully.

6. Determine how you learn best.

Think about what type of learner you are. Do you learn best by reading, listening, writing or discussing? Online courses may give you an opportunity to demonstrate your comprehension in different ways. Think about what has worked in the past and which areas you can improve upon. Be realistic about your expectations and learn from each experience.

7. Manage your time.

Make a realistic study schedule that considers your family, work and school responsibilities and the time of day you are most productive. Block time each week to work on your online course. Recognize that situations may come up which require you to adjust your schedule. Be somewhat flexible, but don't allow it to turn into procrastination.

8. Stay organized.

Organize your materials electronically and on paper. Create electronic folders for your course materials and assignments and clearly name your documents so you can access them throughout the course. Print off essential items including assignment rubrics, lecture notes for studying and returned assignments with instructor's feedback. Highlight important concepts in your text and/or course binder. This will save time and help with open-book tests.

9. Remain focused on your goal.

Whether you are taking an online course as part of a diploma or certificate or for personal or professional development, focusing on your goal will help you to stay motivated even when the course content is challenging and the workload is heavy.

10. Use available academic supports.

Your instructor and staff from the School of Continuing Education, Campus Library, Access and Support Centre and Student Academic Learning Services are all available to provide support with your studies. Be proactive and ask for help if you need it.

Student Academic Learning Services
www.durhamcollege.ca/sals

If you require an alternative format of this publication, contact marketing@durhamcollege.ca.

MARCH 2016