

Is online learning right for me?

An online learning environment offers benefits such as a flexible schedule, no commute, and time to digest and reflect on information and conversations before responding. It also presents challenges and requirements that you must meet to be successful.

Some requirements are technical. You will need reliable computer hardware, software, and internet access, and you must know how to use them effectively. Online learning also requires soft skills such as self-discipline, organization, time management, written communication, and collaboration.

A key benefit of an online learning environment is the ability to work at times that fit your schedule, but that doesn't mean your courses are self-paced. They follow the university academic calendar, and you will have set deadlines for completing your assignments.

Your instructors and university staff are committed to helping you succeed, and you must do your part by making sure that you understand course requirements, assignments, and deadlines. If something is confusing or unclear, reach out to your instructor, fellow students, or support staff for clarification. If you find yourself struggling with some aspect of your coursework, it's important that you don't fall behind. Proactively seek a solution or ask for help.

Requirements

Technology

- Computer in good shape (Recent model and operating systems)
- Broadband Internet connection
- Email account
- Software (**Recent or up-to-date version**)
 - MS Word, PowerPoint, and Excel, or similar
 - Acrobat Reader and other plugins
 - Web Browser

Technical Skills

- Using a personal computer
- Using Email (receive, reply, send, attachments)
- Web searching
- Word processing
- Presentation software (PowerPoint, Prezi, etc.)
- Others: (May be needed in classes)
 - Spread sheets (e.g., Excel)
 - Google docs or other document sharing

Personal Skills

- Disciplined, organized, self-directed (be proactive, track requirements for all classes, log in daily or at least every other day)
- Time management (track due dates for all assignments, schedule time to complete)

Communication and Collaboration Skills

- Teamwork at a distance (active participation, collaborating with others in different time zones)
- Use various means of communication, both synchronous (e.g., teleconferencing, chat, Skype or Google+) and asynchronous (email and forum posts).

Research Skills

- Effective search strategies (Web search, library database search)
- Writing
- Familiarity with plagiarism and avoiding it (e.g., dangers of cutting and pasting)
- Properly cite sources

Useful Recourses for Technology Requirements

- [Common plug-ins](#)
- [Time Management Strategies](#)
- [10 Ways to Ensure Distance Learning Success](#)
- [YouTube](#) (Search for technology skills you want to learn)
- [Microsoft Office Support](#)