
Five Tips to Prepare Yourself as an Online Learner

BEFORE YOUR COURSE BEGINS:

1. **Set up a learning/workspace that will work well for you.**

Having a good study environment is an important component of academic success. As you prepare for your online course(s), here are some suggestions to keep in mind:

- Set up a dedicated learning space that will support your routine and ability to focus, including basic considerations such as environmental noise, a comfortable chair, and good lighting. You may want to experiment in the first week or two to discover what type of setting works best for you.
- If your course(s) include synchronous (real-time or live) online classes, be aware of how much of your private space is visible in the background when your video is on. Hide or move out of view any personal items that you would prefer not to share with everyone in your online classes.
- For the least stressful experience throughout the course, your workspace should have reliable Internet access.
- Minimize distractions or interruptions in your workspace area. *E.g. turn off your cellphone, ignore the laundry and dishes and other household chores while you are in class and studying, etc.*

IN THE FIRST WEEK OF YOUR COURSE:

2. **Orient yourself to your online learning environment and the technology you will be using.**

Take some time in the first week of your course to familiarize yourself with the technology used in your course. Your course websites will vary in how they have been set up and which tools your instructors have chosen to use; explore the website layout for each course you are taking so that you know where to locate what you need when things get busy.

- Access and review online tutorials & videos. You will find many tutorials on the [eLearning Tutorials at Camosun](https://elearningtutorialscomsun.opened.ca/) site [<https://elearningtutorialscomsun.opened.ca/>]. If you cannot locate a tutorial or the support information you need, ask your instructor for direction.
- Practice navigating through the course site and locate the tools (e.g. Assignments, Discussions, Content, Grades, etc.) that your instructor has chosen to use during the course.
- Identify the services or supports you need from the college while you are taking the course and how you can connect with them. *E.g. Library, Writing Centre, Centre for Accessible Learning, Information Technology Services.* [<http://camosun.ca/covid19/ncov-student-services.html>]

3. **Begin to practice your time management from the first day of the course.**

Online learning can be more flexible than the structured routine of on-campus classes. However, without that daily structure and in-class reminders from your instructors, this same flexibility can present time-management challenges for students. The following are some suggestions for independently managing your time:

- Review the Course Syllabus in the first week; make note of the major assignments and associated due dates.
- Set up a calendar to note the due-dates and other scheduled events for your online term.

- Create a weekly schedule/routine for yourself to follow. Dedicate certain times each week to reading, participating in synchronous and asynchronous class discussions, completing assignments, etc.
- Schedule mini-deadlines for yourself to avoid getting behind. Set reminders for yourself to complete tasks or check-in with your instructor.

THROUGHOUT THE COURSE:

4. **Be an active participant. Don't be afraid to ask questions.**

Communication is another critical component of online learning. Without being able to see your body language or other non-verbal cues, your instructor may not be aware when you are confused by something in the course.

- Take note of the communication tools that your instructor is using in your course and when your instructor is providing office hours.
- Ask for help when you need it.
- Make connections with your instructor and peers.
- Participate in online discussions and synchronous (live-class) sessions. Participation in these opportunities can be the difference between being part of a learning community vs. learning alone and in isolation.
- Use respectful language and tone in your communications.

5. **Commit to your own self-care.**

As part of a healthy and sustainable online learning routine, it is important to factor personal time into your days. A few suggestions related to self-care include:

- Schedule regular breaks and relaxation time, get rest and exercise and fresh air.
- Accept that some days will be more productive than others.
- Reward yourself when you complete a challenging task.