How to Succeed as an Online Student

Before You Apply
What are online courses like? Explore online delivery methods on the ODU Distance Learning web site.

What does it take to succeed in online courses? In general, successful online learners are:

- Good independent learners;
- Disciplined about their class work;
- Comfortable with technology;
- Proficient readers with good comprehension; and
- Comfortable communicating on the Internet with professors and peers.

Does this describe you? Take our online quiz to find out.

Are your computer skills ready? Answer the computer literacy survey to assess your skill level.

Once You’re Accepted
Follow our new enrollment checklist online to set up your university accounts. Your MIDAS user name and password will let you access your ODU student email account and ODU’s learning management system. For undergraduates, the checklist will also help you access an online Transfer Student Orientation and schedule your Writing Sample Placement Test.

ODU students are expected to uphold the Honor Code and follow the tenets of the Monarch Creed at all times.

In addition, these resources may help you as a new ODU Distance Learning student:

1. Stay in touch with your advisor. Map out your long and short term educational goals.
2. Register for courses through LEO Online. We’ve written a guide to help you find the right courses.
3. Purchase your textbooks early so you’re prepared to keep up with course requirements.
   Textbooks for ODU Distance Learning courses can be ordered online.
4. Familiarize yourself with ODU Library resources for Distance Learning students.
5. Review University policies and procedures, which cover tuition refunds, disability accommodations and more.

Before the First Week of Class

1. Technical planning
   a. Log into ODU’s learning management system to become familiar with the site. Once a course site is available for your registered courses, review the syllabus and make sure you understand course requirements and expectations, including instructor contact information and policy, readings, grading criteria, and policies such as attendance, tests and make-ups, and special needs.
   b. If you will be taking your course via web conferencing, check the system requirements and test your computer’s readiness with the Browser Compatibility test. For help, contact ODU Tech Support.
   c. If your course requires Adobe Connect, check your hardware and software to make sure you meet the online course requirements. Practice using the software so you are ready for the first class. If you need technical support, contact ODU’s Technical Support Center at ithelp@odu.edu or 1-877-348-6503 (toll-free), 757-683-3192 (local).
   d. If your course is 2-way, you will need to install software on your computer or device in order to connect to ODU’s video conferencing bridge. The software and instructions are available online.
2. Academic planning
   a. Set up a comfortable and quiet study area at home. Keep distractions and noise to a minimum. Maintain this area as your study space. Alternatively, consider studying at a library or office.
   b. Plan on spending 8-10 hours per week for each online course you’re taking.
   c. Get organized. Establish a consistent work schedule to meet course syllabus deadlines.
   d. Like all universities, ODU expects you to do your own work. Review ODU’s plagiarism policy on page eight of the Code of Student Conduct.
   e. Review the university’s support services and keep contact information handy.
   f. Plan to connect with classmates outside of class (for group work, for example) using various technologies: Skype, Facebook, Twitter, message boards, email, phone, etc. Use the methods you prefer, but remember that the university does not provide support for some of these technologies.
   g. Tests and exams that are not taken online will likely require a proctor. If you need a proctor, plan to complete this step by the first week of class. See the ODU DL web site for details.

During the Semester

1. Use your time well.
   a. Review the syllabus and weekly requirements to make sure you stay on track.
   b. Record tests and assignments on a calendar and estimate your weekly workload.
   c. Create a study routine to complete assignments on time. Try to study at the same time each day, and space out your study periods with regular breaks (about 10 minutes per hour of study).
   d. Don’t procrastinate! Submit assignments early and ensure that your instructor has received them.
2. Communicate with your instructor and classmates.
   a. Use only your ODU email account to email your instructor or other ODU departments. Official ODU communications will always be sent to your ODU email account.
   b. When contacting your instructor, always include your course ID as part of the subject line, such as “Assignment Question DL101”. If you email your instructor from inside the learning management system, the course ID will be added to your subject automatically.
   c. Provide feedback to your instructor about the course, such as the syllabus, material, assignments, and progress. Always be courteous, even when you disagree with your instructor. Be concise when presenting counterarguments.
   d. If you face any problems or feel like you’re getting behind, don’t be afraid to ask questions.
   e. Support your classmates by interacting and responding in class and on discussion boards.
3. If your instructor does not have specific file-naming conventions for assignments, create a meaningful name to help you stay organized. Example: lastname_course_assignment = smith_DL101_assignment1
4. Develop your own strategies to stay engaged with your course tasks.
5. Check your grades regularly, and contact your professor if one of your grades is inaccurate.
6. If you have online tests and exams, begin them promptly. Allow for extra time in case of technical problems. If you need to use a proctor, schedule exam times with your proctor as soon as possible.
7. Maintain a regular schedule through the end of the semester.
8. Complete all course evaluations. They provide faculty with valuable feedback to improve future courses.

After the Course is Over

1. Check your grade online to ensure that it is correct.
2. Stay in touch with your classmates.
3. Share successful learning experiences with classmates.