

Online Courses

Online courses can offer students welcomed flexibility and tremendous opportunities to learn in a technology-enhanced environment. Plan ahead for success by keeping the following tips in mind!

1) Assess your motivation and availability. Before you enroll in an online course, recognize that there is large time commitment involved and YOU will need to motivate yourself to stay on track. Will you have enough time each week to dedicate to your online course?

2) Be prepared. Make sure you have the necessary course materials before the first day of class. Visit the USM bookstore at <https://usm.ecampus.com/> before the start of your course.

3) Practice with the Learning Management System (LMS). Much like with face-to-face courses, every online course is different. Learn how to navigate Brightspace and find course materials. Ensure you know how to submit an assignment and how to participate in an online discussion. If you are unsure how to access your course online, check your @maine.edu email for communication from your professor.

4) Read your course syllabus carefully to know what is expected of you. This includes due dates for assignments, how and when you will participate, and grading procedures. Make a game plan day one.

5) Create a weekly schedule. It can be easy to fall behind when you are not physically going to a classroom. Set a weekly schedule for when you will complete online course work and stick to it. Logging in periodically is not enough. Schedule weekly times for reading, reviewing course materials, participating in discussions, and completing assignments. Don't procrastinate!

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Tips to Maximize Your Success in Online Courses at USM

6) Access Brightspace daily once the course begins, paying special attention to all announcements your instructor posts on the course homepage. (Often times announcements may offer further explanation of the week's work or even contain important changes to the course content or due dates.)

7) Choose the where as well as the when. Manage your learning environment by completing course work in a space with minimal distractions, ideally a place where there is reliable internet connection and technology support if you need it.

8) Connect with your instructor. Introduce yourself via email, or schedule to meet with your instructor during her or his office hours. Ask questions as they arise so you don't fall behind.

9) Participate actively. Many online instructors use a discussion forum with specific guidelines for posting. Know what's expected of you! Recognize the value of participating, as interacting with your instructor and other students provides an opportunity for active learning.

10) Review other required technologies. Online courses often incorporate technologies and platforms other than the LMS, such as social media, videos, and blogs. Gain comfort with these as early as possible by practicing with the technologies well before any related assignment is due.

For technology support, contact the USM Help Desk at (207)780-4029 or usm.maine.edu/computing/helpdesk. For additional information on academic resources and strategies, visit usm.maine.edu/agile.