How to Succeed in an Online Course

1. Make the commitment
   a. An online course is not easier, it's just offered in a different format.
   b. We offer courses in a variety of lengths (4 weeks, 7 weeks, and 15 weeks).
      i. A student can expect:
         1. About 10 hours of work per week per course in a 15-week course
         2. About 15-20 hours of work per week per course in a 7-week course
         3. About 25 hours of work per week per course in a 4-week course
   c. Know that you are not alone. There are people to help you every step of the way. Begin forging relationships with your advisors now so you have someone to go to when you need it.

2. Have reliable access to the Internet
   a. If you don't have a connection at home, chances are good that your participation will be limited.
   b. Plan ahead for where you will do your work if your regular Internet access is disrupted for some reason

3. Log in early
   a. After you register but before the semester starts, log into all the things you will need:
      i. USM Email
      ii. MaineStreet
      iii. Blackboard
   b. If you have issues, contact the USM Computing HelpDesk at helpdesk@usm.maine.edu or 207-780-4029.

4. Get organized from Day 1
   a. Review the syllabus carefully. This is your course contract. Print it or save it somewhere you can access it easily.
   b. Map out how and when you will complete the assignments for the course.
   c. Contact your instructor immediately if you have questions or problems. Students are able to engage with faculty at USM in the same manner they would if they were students in face-to-face courses. Our faculty are here, on-campus and are willing to meet with students outside of the online courseroom.

5. Develop good habits
a. Starting in Week 1, check into Blackboard (or other online platform being used) at least 3 times weekly or more often if the professor requires it.
b. Manage your time well. Don’t wait until the due date for an assignment to begin working on it. You never know when life will get in the way.
c. Always begin your assignments in Microsoft Word or another word processing program. Blackboard times out after 60 minutes. If you know your work will take you around an hour, it is best to begin your work elsewhere and copy and paste it into Blackboard when you are ready to post.
d. Keep in mind that you will get out of the course what you put into it—if you read and respond at a minimum level, you will receive minimal return.

6. Keep it going
   a. Log in regularly. Maintain the good habits you set out for yourself at the beginning of the course.
   b. Don’t relax. Make sure you are managing your Blackboard presence well. Use proper grammar, spelling, and tone. You should not use informal language in your interactions in the courseroom.
   c. Watch your deadlines. Refer back to your syllabus often to ensure you are not missing assignments.
   d. Ask for help or clarification if you need it. You should never feel alone. Your instructor or someone in the Learning Commons might be able to offer you some assistance.

7. Bring it home
   a. Finish strong by putting those good habits to good use throughout the full course.
   b. Upon completion of the final for your course, begin getting organized for your next one.
   c. Think of ways you can apply your learning immediately in your life and in future courses.