Suggestions for Succeeding in an Online Learning Environment

Philosophy

To many students, "online" is synonymous with "I can do this whenever I want." That is true to only a very limited degree. There are still due dates to meet and schedules to keep. There are still many demands on your time.

Many associate "online" with "easier." Absolutely not true! Distance learning requires a great deal of effort and concentration. You don't have an instructor readily at hand to answer questions immediately. You don't have classmates to run something by. It's up to you to know "what you know" and, more importantly, "**what you don't know**". It's up to you to use your resources to address "what you don't know."

Some may associate "online" with "I'm on my own." Absolutely not true. You have a network of people with whom you can communicate. Your professor is still available. You have classmates, tutors, and Network Services available for support. In addition, you may be required to attend live sessions or work on group projects.

Time Management

This aspect of online learning is absolutely critical, and it can't be overstated. If procrastination is detrimental in face-to-face courses, it is **lethal** in an online course. You will have multiple courses to manage. Each one carries due dates and deadlines. Different courses may require live sessions or group work. These demands require careful scheduling.

Procrastination is incredibly easy in online courses. All you have to do is walk away from the computer, and there is nothing to bother you. Once things start piling up, discouragement sets in, often followed by resignation. Don't let this be you!

Set up a regular schedule for completing work. Set up a regular space for online work. This time and space must be free of distractions. Get away from the TV. Put the phone away. Time spent does not always mean productivity. This requires planning and discipline. It must become a habit.

Resources

Your instructors assemble and provide resources to help you succeed. Screencasts, tutorials, help sessions, question and answer forums, and web links are all there to assist you. They are available for a reason. Make use of them!

Technology and Tools

At first, getting used to different technologies and tools can be discouraging. Credentials to manage, URLs to keep straight. Understanding the features and functions. All these can be daunting. Look for support. MLC has this portal specifically for you to use if you get stuck. This help portal is searchable - type in some keywords and you're off.

There are additional helps. Most tools have a "Help" link or a "FAQ" (frequently asked questions) link. You can post a question to the advisor. You must rely more on your own resources and initiative when courses are online.

The Good News

In spite of the challenges, there is good news. You can succeed with an online experience. Onlne experience do offer some advantages. You have more freedom in prioritizing your time. You can concentrate your efforts where needed, instead of sitting in a classroom. You can move at your own pace, within reason.

Finally, be assured that the Lord will bless your efforts. Those efforts are not always as visible to others, but they do bear fruit. God's blessings to you!

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