

E-LEARNING

E-Learning – use of online technologies for course assignments and activities.

VOCABULARY

Web Portal – a website considered as an entry point to other websites. Web portals commonly provide links to a variety of online tools, resources, and links.

Real-Time Chat – a network of Internet **servers** through which individual users can hold real-time online conversations. **Instant messaging** is a type of **real-time chat**.

Discussion Board – an electronic communication system that allows users to leave messages and to review messages, as well as upload or **download** **software**.

Email – a feature that lets a computer user send a text message to someone at another computer using the **Internet**.

Email Attachments – a file of any **file format** that is attached to an **email**.

Blog – a **website** that displays personal journal entries by one or more individuals in chronological (or reverse chronological) order and usually has links to readers' comments on specific postings.

Vlog – short for “video blog,” a specialized type of online journal in which the journal author(s) incorporate video clips (often in addition to text and other content) into their entries.

Wiki – a collaborative **website** whose content can be edited by anyone who has access to it.

Instant Messaging – a type of real-time communications that enables you to conduct a private **chat** with one or more other users.

Videoconference – a meeting or conversation conducted between two or more participants at different sites by using computer networks to transmit video and audio files.

Streaming Audio and Video – a technique for transferring data from one computer to another such that it can be processed as a steady and continuous stream.

List serve – a mailing list manager used for the distribution of **email** among the list's members.

Podcast – a type of audio file that is shared using the Internet and played using a personal computer.

HARDWARE

CPU (Central Processing Unit) – the part of a computer that interprets and executes instructions (that is, it is the “brain” of the computer). Sometimes referred to as the processor or chip, the CPU is where most calculations take place.

Hard Disk Drive – a rigid metal disk (called a platter) fixed within a disk drive and used for storing computer data even when the computer is turned off.

RAM (Random Access Memory) – all data does not require storage on the hard disk drive for later use. Storing data that are only required for a short time, while the computer is making calculations, is done using random access memory.

Modem or Network Interface Card – a dial-up modem is a device or program that enables a computer to transmit data over telephone lines and allows access to the Internet and World Wide Web. A network interface card, often abbreviated as NIC, is a device that allows your computer to be connected directly (that is, without using phone lines) to a network of multiple computers that are linked together, and then the entire network can be linked to the Internet and World Wide Web.

SOFTWARE

Software – programs that are used in your computer to perform tasks.

Operating Systems (Macintosh and Windows) – the foundational software installed on a computer that negotiates the basic functions between the hardware (such as hard disk drive, modem, and CD-ROM,) and the software (such as Microsoft Word, Adobe Acrobat PDF Reader, and Netscape Navigator).

Microsoft Office Suite – a collection of Microsoft’s primary software applications for computers running either Microsoft Windows or the Macintosh OS.

Web Browser – a software application used to locate and display webpages. The three most popular browsers are Netscape Navigator, Mozilla Firefox, and Microsoft Internet Explorer.

Plug-In (Add-In) – an accessory program designed to be used in conjunction with an existing application (especially common with Web browsers) to extend its capabilities or provide additional functions.

Antivirus Software – a utility that checks emails, memory, and disks for computer viruses and removes those it finds.

Adobe Acrobat PDF (Reader and Writer) – the document-exchange software that allows documents created on one platform to be displayed and printed exactly the same on another, no matter which fonts are installed in the computer.

File Transfer Protocol – used to transfer files over a network (such as the Internet and UNIX).

Web Authoring Software – (HTML-Hypertext Mark-up Language) is a program that allows you to create webpages using similar tools and resources as you would when developing a new document in a word processing program.

STEPS FOR COMPLETING ONLINE COURSES SUCCESSFULLY

Student-To-Student Tip – start out in your comfort zone and then branch out into unknown content territory after you have learned how to use the online learning tools.

Be Realistic with Your Time – the time necessary to complete the requirements of online coursework (for example, class time, time working on assignments, time discussing topics with the instructor and other students, and time studying for exams) will be roughly equal to the time that you would spend on traditional classroom assignments and activities. Make education a priority. If you do, making the time to learn will be less of an effort and will become an opportunity to expand life's possibilities. Learning should be exhilarating, not a chore.

Review Distance-Learning Options – the use of technology to enhance your college education is not limited to the Internet and other online offerings. Distance-learning courses and programs commonly use a variety of e-learning technologies to support your education. You should identify and assess all available distance-learning options. This will increase the likelihood of finding the right match between your expectations and the offered learning opportunities.

Balance Your Academic and Work Commitments – for most students, the increasing cost of a college education requires the negotiating of course demands with the commitment to work full or part time. In selecting the opportunities that offer the greatest likelihood of success, one of the major variables that you should consider is the balancing of your educational and work commitments.

Balance Your Academic and Personal Commitments – As a college student, a primary distracter from your studies will more than likely be your many personal commitments. Although social activities are important to your success in college, they too must be balanced with the requirements of your coursework.

Review Prerequisite Requirements – Most college and university courses will require that you have a range of prerequisite skills and knowledge. Therefore, you will want to check the prerequisite requirements for any course in which you are considering enrolling (especially those course that may require that you use online technology).

College Computer Labs – Most colleges provide computer labs for students. Make sure the computer lab you use has the specialized software to operate the programs that you will be using.

Online Library Services – Colleges and universities today typically offer a range of online services through their libraries. Contact the college librarian to find out the range of services available.

Technical Support – Each college or university will commonly offer a variety of technical support services that you should take advantage of while registered as a student. Contact the Technical Support Services of your college to identify all resources available to you.

Tutoring Labs – tutoring services are available in most courses taught by your college or university. Make sure to check with each lab to determine what is available to you.

Choosing a Search Engine:

~ Know Which Search Engines to Use

~ **Noodle Quest** – a strategy wizard that can help you identify which search engine to use based on the information you need to acquire.

<http://www.noodletools.com/noodlequest/>

~ Types of Searches

~ **Key Word Searches** –

~ Most commonly used, best for general searches

~ Review keywords in webpages; provides you with a list of webpages containing information that may be useful in your desired topic of research.

~ Be careful! This type of search engine can give you many useless web pages.

~ Examples: Altavista.com, Google.com, Hotbot.com, Directhit.com, Lycos.com, Excite.com, and Fastsearch.com

~ **Web Directories**

~ The “Yellow Pages” of the Internet.

~ Quickly identifies webpages that have been broken down into broad categories, gives you more direct hits on useful webpages.

~ Examples: Yahoo.com, About.com, and Looksmart.com

~ **Metasearches**

- ~ Uses the help of many other search engines to provide you with the necessary information that you are searching.
- ~ Typically used when you have had very little luck with your favorite search engine; like keyword searches, metasearches can have a high number of useless information.
- ~ Examples: dogpile.com, Metacrawler.com, and Savvysearch.com

Tips for using your Web Browser

- ~ To use the resources on the World Wide Web, one must learn to use the tools available of the Web browser.
- ~ The most up-to-date plug-ins for the Web browser must be downloaded.
- ~ Adding websites to your Favorites (or bookmarking) will allow you to access the resources you want, when you want.
- ~ Once you have accessed your course website, you should create a shortcut. This will place an icon on your computer desktop making the browser open to the courses' website.
- ~ When completing work for an online class, it may be helpful to open the links in a new window. The new window can be opened by clicking the right button on your mouse, then clicking the "Open in New Window" option.
- ~ By right-clicking on the area of the webpage you want to print, you can select the print option and only print the contents of that window.
- ~ When you post your comments on a discussion board, your argument may not appear. Click the "Refresh" button on the Web browser's menu bar, and it will show you the updated webpage.
- ~ Cookies are files that will automatically be downloaded to your computer. The cookie can contain information that is either good or bad. It downloads itself to your computer to obtain mailing addresses, credit card information, and other types of information that will probably be harmful to your identity. To control the ability of a cookie to download itself you can change your security settings.

Tips for using Email

- ~ When given a student e-mail address by the school, it may be helpful to use Microsoft Outlook or Qualcomm Eudora to manage your e-mail account. This will allow you to view, create, and edit e-mail messages.
- ~ Typically, schools will require you to use your school e-mail account for all coursework. This allows your institution to manage your e-mail account. By using your school e-mail account, your instructor may be more willing to accept a late assignment.
- ~ Be careful when opening an e-mail with an attachment. Attachments can contain viruses that can be harmful to your computer. Do not immediately open the attachment. If you do not know the sender, e-mail them to be sure the e-mail was meant for you and the attachment is not a virus.
- ~ Most e-mail software will allow you to have a signature at the bottom of your e-mails. This signature should provide any information necessary for contacting you. You should not include quotes, jokes or other unnecessary information in your signature.
- ~ It is easiest to create folders in your e-mail account to organize your messages. It is recommended because it allows for quick access to important assignments.

Tips for Using Microsoft Word

- ~ It is recommended that you have word automatically save your word every 3 to 5 minutes. In order to set this up you will need to follow the following directions:
 - ~ Click **Tools** on your menu bar
 - ~ Click **Options**
 - ~ Click **Save**
 - ~ Type in the minutes you want Word to save your document.
- ~ The first time you save a document to Word, you will be asked to name the file and select the folder in which you want the document stored. Type in the name you want the file to be then click Save.
- ~ If you have created a Word document that extends onto the following page, you can use the Shrink-to-Fit feature that can be accessed through the Print Preview option.
- ~ If you are working with a group on a project, you can track the changes made to the document by activating the Track Changes through the Tools menu. This will allow you to see the changes made to the document and approve or reject the changes.
- ~ Tables may be necessary for a project or to help make your point in a discussion. You can use the Table AutoFormat. This feature provides many table styles that, when selected, are automatically applied in your document.
- ~ The ruler on Word will allow you to use consistent indents, tabs, and margins for any document.
- ~ By going to Insert, then clicking on Page Numbers, this allows you to add page numbers to your document.
- ~ Additional information regarding the document can be added to the top or bottom of each page by using a header or footer. Inserting the titles, chapter names, and dates can be useful when you are creating any word document for a course. You can add header or footer information through the View menu.
- ~ Word count will automatically count the number of words in your document. Access this through Tools.
- ~ Using the comments feature when you are reviewing the work of another student. They may also be hidden later.
- ~ Word can insert footnotes and endnotes into the document to add additional information that may be useful to the reader, but is not necessary to say within the main text.

Tips for Technology Support

- ~ It is necessary to become familiar with the online support services offered to you, as a student. Technology support provides course support by the manufactures of the software and the institutional support are key people to be familiar with.
- ~ Explore you school's website to determine what resources are available to you.
- ~ Make a list of contact information regarding which people you should call about your software, and which to call about the server.
- ~ Developing a plan in the event of your computer, or the software, failing is important:
 - ~ Identify alternate on-campus computer labs that can be used anytime.
 - ~ Identify classmates you can contact if you lose internet access.
 - ~ Get a secondary e-mail account like Yahoo or Hotmail.

- ~ Have the contact information for your instructor
 - ~ Have the contact information for technology support
 - ~ Back up your course files every week.
 - ~ If power failures are common in your home, you may want to invest in a power backup system that supplies your computer with energy through a battery when the power goes out.
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Create a Plan for Online Success

Planning for Online Success

- ~ The opportunities to complete assignments at your convenience can be misleading, swaying you to procrastinate or encouraging you to attempt the course without a well-thought-out plan.
- ~ You must not only set out a clear plan of activities that will lead to your eventual success in the course, but also ensure that you keep your plans. From setting time aside each day for accessing online materials to creating a study environment with few distractions.
- ~ Starting the first day of class, you will want to define a clear statement of what you want to accomplish.
- ~ You need to make an initial estimate of how much time the course requires, what types of study environments are best, and how to balance your academic, work, and personal commitments.
- ~ Maintaining good study habits can be difficult, but it is necessary to stick to your plan to achieve your goals.

Short-Term and Long-Term Goals

- ~ Achieving success in college requires that you can both visualize and plan for your success in long-term as well as the short-term.
- ~ However, neither long-term nor short-term planning in isolation from the other is effective.
- ~ Daily and weekly planning is at the core of short-term successes that leads to long-term accomplishments.

Setting Realistic Expectations of Online Coursework

- ~ Establishing realistic expectation of online coursework can provide a practical foundation for planning for your success.
- ~ Because it is sometimes difficult to gauge the expectations of the course, with regards to the technology, you may want to ask your instructor the following questions:
 - ~ Will I be expected to participate in a synchronous chat each week?
 - ~ Will the number and quality of postings that you make to the discussion board determine my participation grade?
 - ~ Do you require online readings or traditional textbooks or both?
 - ~ What types of online support services are offered by the college or university?
 - ~ Should I expect to receive replies from you to my emails within 24 hours?

- ~ Will there be a requirement for online group activities in the course?
- ~ How does student performance in online coursework compare with student performance in on-campus coursework provided by the instructor?
- ~ What suggestions do you have for being successful in online coursework?

Common Misconceptions of Online Coursework

- ~ *Courses that use online technologies require less time than traditional on-campus courses.* This is simply not true. Online courses usually require more time because they are primarily text-based teachings, thus taking more time to sift through the information.
- ~ *Not having to go to class means that I can wait until the last minute to participate.* Generally speaking, you should plan to participate in online discussions and coursework at least three or four days each week due to an online class being 24/7.
- ~ *Online instructors are always online.* You should never wait until the day before your assignment is due to e-mail your professor with a question or request feedback on a draft of a paper. Teaching courses is just one of the many duties that your instructors will have at the college or university, so you should plan ahead to ensure that there is adequate time for the instructor to reply to your questions or requests before your assignments are due.
- ~ *You can't make friends in an online course.* Many students find it easier to create friendships online because the environment doesn't have many of the social pressures that are common in classrooms (for example, body image, physical disabilities, or social cliques).
- ~ *Little feedback is given on Online assignments and activities.* It will vary by professor, like in a traditional college classroom. Many professors who use online technologies will use the tools and resources available to provide feedback to students sooner than the long-established 5 or 7 days that many on-campus instructors have between class meetings, and other faculty members may take days before answering your e-mail questions.
- ~ *If I don't like to participate in class, then online courses are better for me.* Learning is active, not passive. Your success will depend on your participation, much like in the traditional classroom.
- ~ *Online materials are always available.* Although online course materials are available 24 hours a day, instructors will often turn off the students' access to the course materials for a given week, module, or lesson are complete.

Clarifying Personal Expectations and Goals

- ~ You should base your expectations of yourself in the online course on past experiences with college classes. If you have few experiences with college-level classes, then you will have to rely even more heavily on the recommendations of your academic advisor, course instructor, and fellow students.
- ~ You have to realize that your learning style may have to shift. Online courses are largely independent, while learning in the classroom is lecture-based.
- ~ These are some questions you may want to consider while setting your expectations:
 - ~ Does this course require that I apply skills or knowledge that I have not applied recently?
 - ~ Am I familiar with the online technologies that I will be required to use in completing the course?

- ~ Is this course required for my major?
 - ~ Given the assignments and activities required in the course, how have I performed in the past when other classes had similar requirements?
 - ~ Will other courses that I am in rolled in this semester divert my attention away from my studies for this course?
 - ~ Is the topic of the course of great interest to me, or will I struggle to remain motivated?
 - ~ Have I developed the necessary learning skills and study habits to be successful in this course?
- ~ For each course, you will likely have different expectations. Each goal will provide you with operational definitions of success for each course. By achieving your goals, you will be achieving success in your studies.
- ~ Course goals should include the final grade that you would like to receive, as well as knowledge and skills that you want to take away from the experience.
 - ~ The goals should be measurable. Define what it will take to be successful, then you will know when you are successful.
 - ~ Your goals should be challenging, yet realistic.
 - ~ Examples of course goals:
 - ~ I will have an average score of 85 or higher on the four exams that I am required to take for my Algebra 101.
 - ~ My participation grade will be 40 out of 40 points in Public Speaking 200.
 - ~ I will score no lower than an 80 on each of my mid-term exams this semester.

Building Comprehension Skills

- ~ You should integrate time to find and utilize resources for building your comprehension skills.
- ~ There are four areas of comprehension: reading, listening, conversation, and feedback. Once you improve your comprehension in these areas, it will make success easier.

Reading Comprehension

- ~ Improving your reading comprehension starts by becoming an active reader: previewing readings, taking notes, asking questions, anticipating materials, summarizing what you've learned.

Listening Comprehension

- ~ Increasing your listening comprehension requires that you become an active listener: asking questions, taking notes, anticipating forthcoming topics, and so forth.
- ~ Keeping a list of questions while watching lecture, and e-mailing the questions to your instructor is a good technique to increase your listening comprehension.

Conversation Comprehension

- ~ Ideally, you should listen two-thirds of the time, and talk one-third of the time.

- ~ During an online synchronous chat, you should not feel pressure to respond to every line posted by other students or your instructor.
- ~ If you are attempting to every posting in the discussion, you will comprehend little of the conversation.

Feedback Comprehension

- ~ A lack of meaningful feedback in previous course experiences has produced, for many of us, an unconscious reflex that reduces our comprehension when others are giving us feedback on our work.
 - ~ By comprehending and applying feedback offered by other students and your instructors, you can improve your learning skills and study habits and increase the odds of your long-term and short-term success.
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Establishing Study Times

- ~ Dedicated study times are both an issue of time management as well as a matter of effective planning. It must be flexible so it will be easy to follow.
 - ~ Setting aside consistent blocks of times each week for working on online course assignments and activities is one strategy for developing a regular flow to your online studies.
 - ~ It will be important to prepare our study schedule for the entire course at the beginning of the semester to ensure that we don't have conflicts.
 - ~ By planning for the entire semester, you can visualize when potential conflicts may occur and plan your times accordingly.
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Creating an Effective Study Environment

Physical Studying Environment

- ~ Find a place with adequate access to the internet and electrical power.
- ~ Find a quiet place where you can concentrate
- ~ Limit the number of potential distractions
- ~ Take study breaks
- ~ Don't forget to drink water and eat nutritional snacks during study breaks
- ~ Find your ideal room temperature
- ~ Select a good computer desk and chair
- ~ Have essential close resources close at hand
- ~ Study where there is proper lighting

Online Studying Environment

- ~ Don't have a cluttered or disorderly computer
- ~ Eliminate online distractions
- ~ Work on one assignment or activity at a time

- ~ Make a plan for backing up your files
 - ~ Install and maintain an antivirus software application
 - ~ Install any required software at the beginning of the semester
 - ~ Don't plan to install unnecessary software during the semester
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Planning with Learning or Physical Disabilities in Mind

- ~ There is an ever-growing variety of assistive technologies that can be used to ensure that you have the resources for online success.
- ~ A list of assistive technologies that may be useful in preparing for success with online coursework:
 - ~ *Text-to-speech* can read text at the desired speed and voice while recording into a variety of file formats.
 - ~ *Talking word processor* is word processing software that has built-in text-to-speech features providing auditory feedback of letters, words, sentences, or whole paragraphs.
 - ~ *Voice recognition* allows a user to use his voice as an input device.
 - ~ *Talking Web browsers* are Web browsers that use plug-ins to add text-to-speech capabilities.

*For more information about this software, see the Office for Disability Services.

Familiarizing Yourself with Course Design

- ~ When you first have access to the course syllabus and other materials that outline the structure of a course, it is important that you note the dates on which assignments are due as well as submission requirements, test dates and formats, and other critical information regarding online technologies and other critical information regarding online technologies for planning your success.
 - ~ What you need to know from your syllabus:
 - ~ The instructor's e-mail and phone number
 - ~ Instructor's office hours
 - ~ Assignment and activity due dates
 - ~ Format for submitting assignments, activities, and exams
 - ~ Course policies for attendance and online participation
 - ~ How teams for group work, if any, will be facilitated and formed
 - ~ Required textbooks and online resources that go with them, if any
 - ~ Additional software
 - ~ Technical support for coursework
 - ~ What type of feedback will be given and how grades are provide
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Staying in Touch

- ~ Staying in touch with your instructor or online project group members is essential for your success
 - ~ When unexpected events do occur, let the instructor know immediately for alternative arrangements to be made
 - ~ When contacting your instructor about an unexpected event, use these guidelines:
 - ~ You should be prepared to provide specific information regarding the impact of the event on your studies.
 - ~ Include specific dates related to the impact of the unintended event
 - ~ Offer to provide supporting documentation
 - ~ Include a proposed plan of action that includes reasonable suggestions or alternatives for getting back on track
 - ~ Keep in contact with your instructor throughout the remainder of the semester.
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Time Management Strategies

- ~ Ten strategies for managing time:
 - ~ 1. Don't Procrastinate
 - ~ 2. Don't Wait for Perfection
 - ~ Managing your time requires that you negotiate a balance that makes it possible for you to do high-quality work that will accomplish your goals while attaining similar goals in your other college courses, work obligations, and personal commitments.
 - ~ 3. Combine Activities
 - ~ Find out how to meet the requirements of several obligations through the same activity.
 - ~ 4. Don't Expect Your Instructor to Always be Online
 - ~ 5. Keep to a Schedule
 - ~ 6. Use Your Free Time Wisely
 - ~ 7. Learn to Say No
 - ~ 8. Make Use to Technology
 - ~ 9. Manage the Time That You Spend Online
 - ~ 10. Know Your Studying Prime Times
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Developing Positive Online Relationships

Online Relationships

- ~ You will want to adapt the same skills for creating a positive relationships that you will use when you are in the classroom, the library, the student lounge or anywhere else.

~ We have to pay special attention to these skills when we are attempting to develop useful online relationships.

Making a good First Impression Online

~ Online relationships with your fellow students will be very similar to those that you will have in the conventional classroom. Follow these steps for creating the right first impression:

- ~ In your initial e-mails, make sure they are grammatically correct and that the spelling is checked.
- ~ Personalize your e-mails to fellow students
- ~ Provide fellow students your contact information
- ~ When you are talking with someone online, the nonverbal clues that you may rely on for building a successful relationship in person may not be available.
- ~ Propose what you believe should happen next and then ask for feedback to make sure your proposed schedule is workable in their schedule.

Effective Online Communications

~ Five strategies for effective online communication:

- ~ 1. Spell Check and Grammar Check Everything Related to Your Coursework
 - ~ Misspelled words or incorrect grammar may give the wrong impression about your abilities as a student, the priority the course has for you, your attention to detail, or other characteristics that would keep fellow students from wanting to work with you throughout the course.
- ~ 2. Compensate for Not Having Nonverbal Communications
 - ~ Researchers estimate that about 55% of what is actually communicated is actually passed on through nonverbal communications. Making up for nonverbal communication strategies is therefore an essential element for your success. Trying using emoticons and acronyms to express your ideas and words.
- ~ 3. Avoid Miscommunications
 - ~ Typically, in conventional conversations, you most often naturally pick up on clues of miscommunication, but in online discussion, you will most likely have to work at searching out clues of possible miscommunication.
- ~ 4. Avoid Writing in All Capital Letters
 - ~ Writing in CAPITAL letters is often referred to as shouting or “flaming” and is considered unacceptable in most academic- or school-related conversation.
 - ~ Shouting or other confrontational communications rarely accomplish any goals and typically shut down future opportunities for success.
- ~ 5. Be Sure Not to Reply to Everyone on the Listserve
 - ~ When replying to a message, click on the “Reply” button, not the “Reply to All”. You will then be replying to one person and not everyone in the class.

Staying Organized Online

- ~ Several strategies for staying organized:
 - ~ Maintain a separate folder within your e-mail account for each course.
 - ~ Create a folder for each of your courses in the file directory or file folders on your computer.
 - ~ Be careful not to send e-mails to the wrong students.
 - ~ Separate e-mail accounts may be useful to keep course-related e-mail separate from other personal or work-related e-mails.
 - ~ Include the date that you created the file in the name of the file.
 - ~ When submitting files, double-check to make sure that you are submitting the file in the right format and in the correct manner.
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Adding a Personal Touch

- ~ By adding a personal touch to your online communications, you can make great strides in developing the type of social relationships that are most useful for your success and theirs.
 - ~ Sending individual e-mails to each student can show that you are taking time to write them specifically.
 - ~ If you do have to send a mass mailing, use the Bcc: field to add the recipients to the e-mail.
 - ~ Add a unique question or comment to the individual e-mail to let each student know you are keeping in touch with them.
 - ~ Resist sending every e-mail joke or chain letter that you receive to others in your class.
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Attachment Etiquette

- ~ Don't change the Extension Included at the End of the File Name
 - ~ These extensions are critical because they indicate to the computer which software application to use in opening the file.
 - ~ Include in the Email Message or Discussion Board Posing the Name of the File and Software Application Used to Create the Attached File
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Getting to Know Your Instructor

- ~ Don't be shy about communicating with your instructor when you have questions or want an alternative perspective on a topic. After all, your instructor is the most valuable resource you have for being successful in college.
 - ~ Don't Wait Until the End
 - ~ Waiting for the last weeks of a course to make initial contact with your professor isn't likely going to do you that much good.
 - ~ Use a Professional Communication Style
 - ~ E-mail and other online conversations with your instructors should be treated as professional communications.
 - ~ Find Areas of Common Interest to Start the Conversation
 - ~ It is valuable to review your instructors' biographies on the college's website to find more about their interests and to discover interests that you may have in common.
 - ~ Ask for Feedback Throughout the Course
 - ~ Many students find that receiving feedback throughout a course is useful for ensuring their success.
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Creating a Supportive Online Learning Community

- ~ In most college courses, success will come with much less effort if you take the time to develop a learning community in which you can freely share ideas, obtain peer feedback, and together discover what it takes to be successful.

Support Functions of an Online Community

- ~ Motivation
 - ~ Life will interfere with your studies without regard, obstructing your path toward success.
 - ~ Maintaining your positive attitude about your studies is essential, and having a few supportive friends online can help you through those tough times can be valuable.
- ~ Peer Feedback
 - ~ Peer feedback is likely the most helpful yet underutilized tool available to students who want to be successful.
- ~ Technical Support
 - ~ Your college's technical support services may not always be the best place for you to go when you have questions or technology problems.
 - ~ Do not be afraid to ask questions or to request help from those around you; with technology, there truly are no dumb questions.
- ~ Study Groups
 - ~ Study groups can be active online communities.
 - ~ You can use e-mail, chat, and instant messaging to reduce the amount of time you have to meet together, allowing each study group member to add flexibility to their schedule.
- ~ Enjoyment

~ You may be surprised how many interesting people you can meet, especially when they all don't have to be sitting with you in the same classroom for the conversation to get started.

Maintaining Motivation in an Online Course

Selecting Courses

~ If you select courses in which your odds of success are low, then finding and maintaining your enthusiasm throughout the course, however, will require additional attention and resources.

Finding an Application

~ You should try to link the topics that you are studying to their application outside the course context. Focusing on how the knowledge and skills that you learn from your biology class will be useful to you as an environmental engineer after college can encourage you to maintain your concentration when studying for an exam.

Keeping Your Goals in Mind

- ~ Link your long- and short-term goals to help ensure that using either as a source of motivation will keep you on the right path.
 - ~ Setting your goals in measurable terms will help you better assess where you are, where you want to be, and how to know it when you have arrived.
 - ~ When you write your goals down, you are also more likely to stick with them until they are achieved.
 - ~ Keep a copy of the file with your goals on your computer's desktop or print out a copy that can be posted on the bulletin board next to your desk.
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Developing Your Motivational Support System

- ~ At the beginning of each semester, identify at least two individuals who you can rely on when your motivation slips.
 - ~ Peer feedback is a crucial element to motivation.
 - ~ Find a mentor who can help prepare and guide you throughout your college experience.
 - ~ Motivation is a two-way street, and you can't expect others to always provide the encouragement.
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Visualizing Your Success

~ You can focus your thoughts on many of the benefits of your pending success and still find the necessary inspiration to succeed.

Communicating with Your Instructor

- ~ Your instructor will typically be an excellent source of motivation.
 - ~ When you are struggling to sustain your motivation, e-mail your professor and ask a few questions that may be helpful in revitalizing your motivation.
 - ~ If family or other personal illnesses result in reduced motivation during the semester, you should contact your instructor immediately.
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Being an Active Participant

- ~ Likely, the most useful strategy for sustaining enthusiasm throughout the semester is to remain an active participant in the course.
 - ~ Remain involved in course discussions, group projects, and other activities.
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Rewarding Yourself Throughout the Semester

- ~ Set immediate goals throughout the course that will provide you with milestones that when accomplished successfully are worth celebrating.
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Developing Healthy Habits

- ~ Maintaining healthy habits like a balanced diet, consistent exercise, and adequate rest are all essential ingredients to sustained motivation and a successful college experience.
 - ~ Review your eating few habits every few weeks to determine if you are getting an adequate balance of nutritional foods.
 - ~ Exercise on a regular basis, especially around times when you are studying long hours.
 - ~ Manage your time to ensure that you are able to get sufficient amounts of sleep each night.
 - ~ Schedule routine visits to your doctor and dentist.