

89 Things to Embed in the First 10 Days of an Online Course

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This document will list things students need to know in the first ten days of an online course. The “things” are separated into topics. Each topic states an assumption that the instructor will do “something” to require the student to know how to do the “thing”. Each “thing” may not be applicable to every online course. Many “things” can apply to fully online courses as well as hybrid or blended courses.

Successful Online Learners

The instructor will expect the student to be ready for online learning.

Students Should Know How To

1. Assess his or her technical abilities
2. Obtain ready access to a computer and the Internet
3. Perform basic computer and Internet Browsing functions
4. Communicate efficiently and effectively in writing and through voicemail
5. Manage time to complete tasks and meet deadlines
6. Direct his or her learning
7. Work independently

Access and Login

The instructor will design, develop and deliver a course Website. The instructor will make an initial contact with the student, mostly likely via US mail or E-mail. Students will be required to have a specific username and password to access the site. The instructor will inform students of system availability and scheduled down times.

Students Should Know How To

8. Navigate to the course address
9. Access or create username and password and if they are case-sensitive
10. Request or reset a lost password
11. Login to course site
12. Avoid the need to use the course management system during scheduled down times

Course Orientation

The instructor will design a student orientation to the course. The orientation will be held online, face-to-face, either or both. The instructor will describe how the student will be made accountable for the orientation material (quiz, scavenger hunt, assignment...) The instructor will describe how to participate in the orientation. The instructor will describe what signifies the start of the course and how to begin.

Students Should Know How To

13. Navigate the course
14. Obtain required course materials such as texts, CDROM's and course packs
15. Find key tools for the course
16. Begin the course

The Course Timeline

The course will take place in a given time. The start time, end time and duration may be the same or different for all students. The instructor will describe if the course timeline will follow the time of the "traditional" term, be self-paced, require students to move through the course in a cohort, or allow open entry/open exit.

Students Should Know How To

17. Access the course calendar
18. Be informed of important dates and deadlines

The Course Learning Cycle

The instructor will design the course activities in an organized pattern or structure. The pattern should repeat itself from module to module. With repetition of the pattern students should be able to become familiar with the cycle of activities and responsibilities for each module.

Students Should Know How To

19. Identify the structure of the learning cycle
20. Be accountable for what is due during each cycle

Required Face-to-Face Meetings

An online course may or may not require face-to-face instructor/student and/or student/student meetings. An instructor will describe required face-to-face meetings including purpose, date, time, duration and location. Face-to-face meeting purposes may include proctored exams, library visits, lab sessions, audio-visual access, field trips, service learning, access to computer software and attendance at live performances.

Students Should Know How To

21. Attend the face-to-face meetings on the proper day at the proper time and location
22. Inform the instructor of an absence from the face-to-face meeting

Browsers, Downloads and Players

The course site will contain course material in formats including text, images, electronic presentations, video and audio files. To view these files a student must have the required software, downloads and players installed on his/her computer.

Browsers: Internet Explorer, Netscape, AOL

Downloads and Players: Word and PowerPoint Viewers, QuickTime Player, RealPlayer, Flash, Windows Media Player, WinZip and Adobe Acrobat

Students Should Know How To

23. Access to a computer with the minimum hardware and software requirements for the course
24. Download required browsers, viewers and players
25. Connect to the Internet but launch a browser such as Internet Explorer or Netscape if AOL is the student's Internet Service Provider
26. Open multiple browser windows.
27. Open a Website with dynamic content to "fool" the ISP into perceiving there is activity.

E-mail

E-mail will be used as a course communication tool between instructor and student and among students.

Students Should Know How To

28. Change an E-mail account in a course management system
29. Forward E-mail from one E-mail account to another
30. Use a signature on E-mail
31. Provide a secondary method of contact such as second E-mail address, pager and/or telephone number

Netiquette

Communication and conduct in the course community will be held to the standards of academic achievement, discipline, equal opportunity, student rights and responsibilities policies specified for any course at the institution.

Students Should Know How To

32. Contribute to the course in a meaningful way
33. Compose course assignments, E-mail messages and discussion board postings using appropriate tone, language, grammar and spelling (no flaming!)
34. Avoid cheating, plagiarism or giving or receiving unauthorized assistance on tests or assignments
35. Know and understand student rights and responsibilities

Communication Processes

The instructor will request that students use specific communication tools and process for specific purposes. The student will know, understand and follow the processes when communicating with the instructor and classmates. The instructor will specify how frequently the student should check announcements, E-mail and discussion boards to stay engaged in the course. The instructor will specify approximate instructor response times to set students' expectations.

Announcements - public communication posted by the instructor and shared in the course community.

E-Mail - private communication, not to be public in the course site or shared other than instructor/student or student/student.

Discussion Board - public communication shared in the course community.

Group Discussion - semi-private communication shared among the assigned members of a group.

Frequently Asked Questions - public communication shared in the course community. A reference to seek answers to questions before a question is posed to the instructor or posted to a discussion board.

Tutoring/Student Services - requests made for specific services such as online tutoring, advisement or counseling.

Help Desks (Technical or Instructional) - requests made for assistance with technically-specific problems such as software or hardware failure or instructionally-specific problems or questions.

Students Should Know How To

36. Send and receive E-mail
37. Attach files to E-mail
38. Zip files to be sent via E-mail/unzip files sent via E-mail
39. Post to a discussion board
40. Access and post to a group discussion board
41. Access tutoring or other online student services
42. Request assistance from a help desk

Testing Procedures

Students will be evaluated. Instructors will describe the number of tests to be taken in the course, what type of tests will be given, what the timeframe of the test will be, if the test will be timed, if the test will be password protected and if the tests will require a proctor.

Students Should Know How To

43. Access a test online
44. Submit a test online
45. Correct a test online
46. Access a paper-based test
47. Submit a paper-based test
48. Arrange/verify a testing site and/or proctor
49. Check an online test grade and interpret test results
50. Maintain integrity and honesty in the online testing environment

Assignments

The course will require the student to complete assignments.

Students Should Know How To

51. Complete assignments
52. Save the assignment in the required format - document formats, as an attachment to an E-mail, in the body of an E-mail message
53. Submit the assignment - as an attachment to an E-mail, in the body of an E-mail message, into a digital drop box, hard copy sent to a particular location

Critical Policies

The instructor will specify critical policies regarding late work, make-up work, revised work, extra credit, course participation and requests for incompletes and earn final course grades.

Students Should Know How To

54. Submit late or make-up work
55. Submit revised work
56. Earn extra credit
57. Participate in the course
58. Request an incomplete status in the course
59. Earn a final course grade
60. Use resources without plagiarizing

Printing

The instructor will provide students with text, documents and links Websites. The student will read the text, documents and Website content either online or after printing. The instructor will provide the student with suggestions and cues on what to print.

Students Should Know How To

61. Print documents using the File Menu or Printer button
62. Print Web pages using the File Menu or Printer button
63. Print Web pages and linked documents using the right-click menu
64. Use the right-click Open in New Window command to open a file in a full browser window
65. Use the right-click Save Target As command to download the file then open it in a full browser window or its native application

Online Services

The institution will provide services for students in online courses.

Students Should Know How To

66. Register and withdraw from courses online
67. Access online library services
68. Access tutoring services
69. Access online advisement and counseling services
70. Access help desk services
71. Provide screen-captures of screen displays, if necessary
72. Access course companion Websites

Group Work

The instructor will require students to participate in a group-based task or activity.

Students Should Know How To

73. Use group communication and collaboration tools
74. Play a responsible role in a group
75. Contribute to a group in a timely manner
76. Initiate group collaboration, if necessary, to complete the assigned task
77. Meet group deadlines
78. Avoid controlling or monopolizing the group
79. Encourage participation among all group members

Feedback

The instructor will request feedback from students. Instructors may request feedback from identified students or allow feedback to be anonymous.

Students Should Know How To

80. Access feedback or survey tools
81. Provide meaningful feedback
82. Provide feedback in a timely manner
83. Provide anonymous feedback if an option

Contingency Planning

The instructor will expect the student to have access to the tools required for the course. The instructor will expect the student to complete the tasks and meet the deadlines as described in the course. The acceptance of late work or non-participation due to technical failure will be at the discretion of the instructor.

Students Should Know How To

84. Access a secondary computer if his/her primary computer fails
85. Access on-campus computer labs, local library or other public-access computer labs
86. Access a secondary E-mail account if his/her primary account fails
87. Contact the instructor via telephone if all computer-based technology fails
88. Document dates and times assignments were submitted by the use of E-mail date and time stamps, document properties or electronic submission receipts
89. Retain copies of all submitted assignments