

Access Computing Online Learning Strategies for Students with Disabilities

Guidelines and Advice for Students

Over the last few years, postsecondary institutions continue to move many of their courses online. In this publication, some participants in projects supported by the DO-IT center at the University of Washington share their experiences and recommendations for other students with disabilities who are taking online courses.

Executive Functioning

- Develop a schedule for yourself that incorporates classes, meals, sleep, and other aspects of self-care.
- As your space allows, set up a comfortable workstation with any materials you need to access throughout your day.
- Determine how to handle distractions. Find a quieter space, use earplugs or noise canceling headphones, and/or silence your phone. Communicate with your family or roommates in order to minimize distractions when you are online.
- Add class sessions, assignments, exams, and other tasks to your calendar. Use reminders if it helps you to complete these tasks.
- Print the syllabus or other documents that you might want to access frequently.
- Determine what tutoring, coaching, or writing center resources are available online at your institution.
- Begin your work early to ensure you meet deadlines. Work ahead, if it helps you manage your workload.
- Take breaks as needed. Set a timer and get back to work after the timer goes off.



Self-Advocate

- Connect with faculty via email or utilize online office hours.
- Advocate for your accommodations. Give faculty feedback about what helps you learn and what does not.
- Be mindful that your accommodations may change as classes move online. You may want to request access to recordings of class lectures or the option to use external software like voice recognition specific word processing programs during online exams. Involve your disability resources office as appropriate.
- Make sure you understand expectations about participation and communication. Ask questions of your instructor or classmates as necessary.

Technological Resources

- Direct faculty toward resources related to accessible online learning. A good resource is DO-IT's 20 Tips for Teaching an Accessible Online Course (uw.edu/doit/20-tips-teaching-accessible-online-course).
- Learn how to connect to online meetings. Get comfortable with the settings and learn how to connect via phone if you experience difficulties connecting online.



- Familiarize yourself with course management tools and document sharing tools used at your university.
- Format responses for online discussions using familiar software (like spelling and grammar check in your word processor or a speech recognition tool) and then cut and paste the text into the online discussion tool.



Online Etiquette

In synchronous online classes and meetings consider ways that you can facilitate access for yourself and others.

- Ask your instructor to set clear expectations for how to engage. This may include utilizing chat functions, asking questions verbally, or using hand-raising functions in conferencing software and/or using the course discussion board.
- Use the chat window for sharing URLs or other resources.
- Look at your name in the participant list and be sure it shows your preferred name.
- Be mindful of whether your camera is turned on or off. Try to keep your laptop relatively still and ensure you appear professional when your camera is on.
- Mute yourself when you are not speaking to avoid background noise.

Consider how to appear professional over email.

- Use your school-issued email address.
- Consider whether to use an email signature that includes your full name, your college, your anticipated graduation year, and your major(s) and minor(s).
- Check spelling and grammar of emails.

Other Resources

- What I Wish Someone Told Me BEFORE Taking Online Classes (<https://www.rasmussen.edu/student-experience/college-life/what-i-wish-someone-told-me-before-taking-online-classes/>)
- 7 Tips for Success When Taking Online Courses (<https://online.illinois.edu/articles/online-learning/item/2015/09/16/7-tips-for-online-success>)
- Online Students Share Time Management Tips (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L2FWUQvIths&feature=youtu.be>)

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