

Checklist for Successful Web-Based Learning

The successful online learner requires self-motivation and self-disciplined study habits. Since the online environment lacks much of the structure present in the face-to-face classroom, students must commit and structure their when adhering to deadlines. It is extremely important that students meet the technical and computer skill requirements referenced in, “**Technical Recommendations for Successful Web**” hand out. In web-based courses, the following skills are required to succeed:

Learn and Use Time Management

- **Allocate at least the same amount of time each week for an online course as you would for a face-to-face course.** The time needed will be approximately 3-4 hours per credit per week for a 15-week course unless otherwise stated in your course syllabus. In addition, many courses require students to participate in activities both during the week and, as needed, on weekends. Don't count on being able to complete your coursework ONLY on the weekends; make sure that you set aside at least some time during the week, as well.
- **Most web-based courses require that work be completed every week.** It is necessary to regularly review the course syllabus, calendar, and/or schedule for due dates.
- **Log on to your online classroom several times per week** so that you can take part in online discussions and read all messages in a timely manner.
- **Use a planner or calendar** and make sure that you have a single location in which you can quickly see the due dates for all assignments and activities in your courses. Blackboard has a built-in calendar tool; however, not all instructors posts due dates to that tool. It is the student's responsibility to maintain and use a planning or calendar system to ensure that they submit their work on time.

Get to Know Your Course, Classmates, and Instructor

- **Start early** and take sometime within the first couple of days of each semester to familiarize yourself with your Blackboard courses. Instructors have tremendous flexibility in how they use Blackboard and which Blackboard tools and features they deploy. Make sure that you understand the Blackboard-related requirements and expectations for each of your classes.
- **Make contacts** among your fellow students, forming study groups if possible or preferable.
- **Interact** in large or small group written "discussions" with other students.
- **Ask questions.** Instructors want students to be successful and expect students to ask questions. The virtual space in online learning can be a barrier only if you let it get in the way. If you have a question about course content or need clarification on a difficult concept – ask. First, refer to your syllabus—is the information you are you looking for already there? And when you do ask a question know what you are asking and why. Be clear and concise in your communication.

Familiarize Yourself with the Blackboard Learn Tools

- Messaging and Communication—Email, discussion forums, blogs, journals, wikis are the primary forms of communication between the instructor and students as well as among students.
- Review the Blackboard Quiz Tips PDF
- Review the Getting Started with Blackboard PDF
- Utilize the Blackboard Help Site

NOTE: All three of the resources referenced above are available on the UHCL Blackboard login page.

Excellent Written Communication Skills

- Moving from the face-to-face classroom to the online environment involves a transition from the spoken to the written word.
- Many online courses also require a great deal of reading in the course site.
- Netiquette in email and discussion postings:
 - Always address your recipients (e.g. Dear Class/Instructor) and sign your name.
 - Choose your words carefully. It is easy to sound brusque or even nasty when all the other person sees is a typed message. Humor is more difficult to convey in a written message.
 - Proofread your email messages and discussion postings before sending or posting them. The more accurate your messages, the more likely they'll be understood.
 - Do not use "text-speak," the abbreviations common to online social chatrooms and text messaging, such as BTW (by the way). Your online course is an academic environment. Please communicate accordingly, as this prepares you for on-the-job professionalism as well.
 - A message written with all capital letters is viewed as shouting. Most people will find this offensive. It is also more difficult to read.