

Introduction to Online Learning

Time management

Pomodoro Technique

For many of you, this will be your first online course or the first time you have studied while also trying to balance work and family commitments. In this section I've provided some tips and resources to help you get started with online learning.

As adult learners, **you get out what you put in** – that is, if you only do the minimum needed to get credit in an online course, then you will get the minimum out of the course. If you use online learning as an opportunity to expand your knowledge and you take every opportunity you can to learn, you will get more out of the course.

Learning objectives

In this chapter, you will learn about:

- Appropriate behaviour in online forums (Netiquette)
- Tips for online learning
- The Pomodoro Technique

Netiquette

Netiquette is a term used to describe appropriate behaviours when working on the Internet. It is an old concept, but one that everyone should be reminded of on a regular basis.

Albion provides a good summary of the [Core Rules of Netiquette](#).

Tips for Online Learning

For many of you, online learning is a new experience. Many of the best practices for online learning are the same as for face-to-face learning. The bigger issue is that you won't have a face-to-face class to ensure you are keeping pace with the course.

Time management is always the number one issue for students. One thing that I find with online courses is that students forget to account for the extra three hours they would have spent in the classroom – so they look at online as only the 'homework' component of the course and not the interactive part of the course. I recommend that you plan to check-in to your courses at least three times during the week. Most students do the majority of their work on weekends, however, many online courses are designed to include interactivity throughout the week.

If you know you are going to be away one week, or traveling for part of a week, try to get ahead before you leave. Also if it coincides with teamwork, ensure that you tell your teammates.

Dedicated study space: Find a space that helps your focus on your studies. Everybody is different. Some students like the white noise of a coffee shop where other prefer the silence of the library.

Reduce distractions: With online courses there will always be distractions on your computer – Facebook, email, text messages can all distract from studying. I'm on a Mac, and one thing I do is to turn off notifications when I want to study, and I use a different workspace window. So I don't get any pop ups that break my concentration.

Ask questions: Do not allow yourself to get frustrated. One strategy I employ is to set a time limit for how long I will try to figure something out. If I cannot, then I either ask a question or walk away and work on something else for a bit. Usually, that time away gives me a new perspective to that helps me solve the problem. If you are stuck, don't be afraid to ask questions – your classmates are also likely stuck.

Learn the technology: Allocate some dedicated time to learning how to use the tools you need to be efficient in your classes. Spending a little time early on learning how to use Microsoft Word styles, for example, will save you a lot of time down the road.

Beat deadlines: Try to get assignments done early. Inevitably something will come up at the last minute that will make it difficult for you to get your assignment completed. If you start early, you will be under less pressure later. Now, if something does come up and you just cannot finish online, let your instructor know as soon as you realize you are going to have a problem.

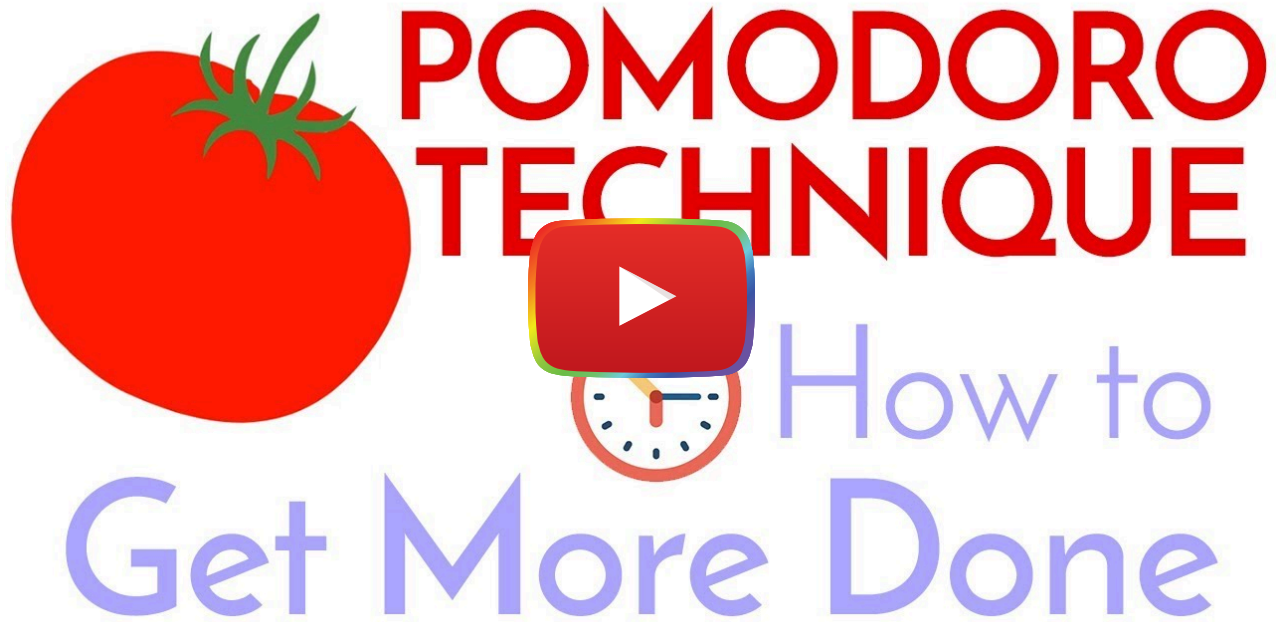
Identify your learning goals: Not everyone is taking a course for the same reason. You are here for a reason. It might be helpful to write this down somewhere to remind yourself of it whenever you go through a difficult patch in the course.

Consider the [Pomodoro](#) technique: Pomodoro is based on the idea that you can focus for short stints of time – although this is slightly different for everyone. Personally I use 30 minutes. I have an app called TimeOut that tells me when 30 minutes is up and actually kicks me off my computer for 5 minutes. This helps my body from getting stiff, but it also helps me refocus my mind, so that I can get things done. Often when I'm procrastinating, I can convince myself to just do one Pomo – which then gets me kick started and next thing I know, I'm working for hours (with a 5 minute break every 30 minutes).

Figure out what works for you: Some of you may have been out of school for a while, and likely when you were in school you were at a different place in your life. Take the first few weeks to really pay attention to what works well for you and what doesn't. You can then integrate this into your schedule. For example, I'm a morning writer. I get my best focused work done first thing in the morning. I started setting an alarm and getting up earlier because it meant more productive hours for me. Once it hits dinner time I'm done for the day. My brain is shot by then, so I generally leave that time to browsing / reading / and answering the occasional question. Each one of us is different, figure out what works for you.

The Pomodoro Technique

Below is a great video that introduces the Pomodoro Technique. I find that even when I'm busy or stressed, I can find 20-25 minutes to sit down and focus, and by doing this, it reduces my stress and makes me more productive.



[Watch on YouTube](#)

Additional Resources

Since Covid, the number of resources available to help learn how to learn online has increased dramatically. I've curated a few of the ones I think might be useful:

- [Online Student Readiness Tutorials](#) by the California Community Colleges Online Education Initiative. These are great tutorials to help you prepare to learn online. Tip: You can go through them faster by reading the text rather than watching the multimedia presentation. They also have an audio MP3 version of the tutorials so you can listen to while setting up your home learning space.
- [Online Student's Manual for Success: How to study smarter, find a tutor, and excel in the digital classroom](#) by Claudio and Strempek
- [21 Study Tips for Online Classes Success](#) by Good Colleges Writing Team
- [Tips for Successful Online Learning](#) by Joyce via EdX Blog



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