

Tips for Navigating Online Courses

Taking Control of Online Learning

These tips and tricks are designed to support you as you navigate online courses. At first, classes will seem overwhelming as you learn to maneuver through online courses. You will adjust to Blackboard pages that are set up differently per professor and virtual communication. As you implement new strategies for online learning, you will become more comfortable with your new schedule and feel in control of your learning.

1. Daily Blackboard and Email Check-In

Set a reminder each day to check Blackboard and your AU Email. All communication will be done online, so it is imperative that you are checking e-mail and Blackboard every day to see if your faculty have provided class updates.

2. Organize all class material per class in a folder on your desktop so that all information is quickly accessible

Download the syllabi, assignment descriptions, and any other PDF/Word Docs provided by your professor and put them in an individual class folder on your computer's desktop. The folder should be labeled with the class name. EX: CORE-200

3. Create a weekly study schedule that you follow that closely mimics a standard school schedule in order to treat an online class like a true in-person course. *You still have the same amount of work, just without the formal classroom setting.*

[Utilize a weekly calendar](#) to designate certain hours each day to class readings, discussion boards, test prep, and participation.

- Hourly paper calendar or Google Calendar is recommended
- EX: On Tuesdays from 12:55-2:10, chunk specific time in my calendar to work on BIO-110.

Input all due dates into a calendar from March – May so you are aware of all upcoming deadlines.

Set yourself reminders for each designated chunk of time to remind yourself to sit down and actively work on that specific course.

4. Create a Daily To-Do List

After you review all upcoming due dates and thoroughly check Blackboard and email, create a [checklist of tasks](#) you want to accomplish during your study schedule blocks.

Be specific and detailed so you can look at [your to-dos](#) and know the exact expectations.

5. Break Things Down: Hold yourself accountable with self-designated due dates

If professors are not providing scaffolded due dates, we recommend [breaking down large assignments](#), readings or studying into 1-2 hour chunks that are associated with a due date that you create on your own. You are in control, so break down the assignment into manageable chunks that work for you and your learning.

Input these due dates on your calendar system and Daily To-Do List so that you are consistently working towards the professor's due date.

6. Find a distraction-free environment at home or locally

If you feel that you will be consistently distracted at home for various factors, find somewhere private that is conducive to your learning.

Vocalize your study schedule and boundaries to those around you so you can create a distraction-free environment that will help you stay engaged in your material.

7. Connect with Others: Actively participate in your online classes

Participate in discussions, forums, journal, blogs, or online meeting sessions to help you stay engaged in the course material.

Email your professor to set up a virtual meeting each week/every other week to discuss your progress in the class, ask any questions you might have, or look ahead to upcoming assessments. If you are having trouble, ask for help early on because classes usually build off one another.

Comment on a classmate's discussion post, ask additional questions, and follow discussion-post guidelines.

When you have questions, email a peer in the class that you may know and ask them for advice and support. Communication with other students is vital to your learning and overall class engagement.

8. Google Apps – save your work!

We recommend doing most of your work on Google Docs, Sheets, Slides or Excel to ensure all your work is saved in the appropriate place. From Google Apps, it is easy to export your work, save them as a document, and upload it to Blackboard.

If you prefer Microsoft Suite, ensure that you are consistently saving all your hard work.

9. Online Lecture Notes

If you have weekly PowerPoints/Slides you must review, voice-over lectures, videos to watch, or large readings, you must have disciplined note taking.

- Dedicate a certain time each day, as if you were going to a physical class, to critically reviewing all PowerPoints/Slides or lectures and take notes.
- You have the capability to pause pre-recorded videos and lectures and slow down to ensure you fully understand the material. If your class usually meets for 1.5 hours, dedicate 1.5 hours to fully engaging in this week's course material.

Pro Tip: The more organized your notes are, the more prepared you are for test preparation and the study process. Make built-in study tools whenever you can to reduce making additional test prep materials!

10. Synchronous Online Classes (meeting live/virtually all at the same time)

Collect information and materials before class begins.

- Ensure that you have read all required course material prior to beginning the live course
- Write down any questions you have about the material you are about to cover live

Set up a classroom space in your preferred environment and put your electronic device somewhere slightly elevated. Treat this as a real class that is distraction-free. Keep your camera on.

Set up a notebook or preferred notetaking tool to have in front of you as you take notes during the live lecture.

Organize your notes in the same format you would in person. Use headings and dates to keep track of what materials are covered in each section of your notes.

If there is a chatroom provided, ask all your questions in the chatroom so the professor can answer in real-time.

11. Test Preparation for Online Courses

Review all testing guidelines to see if the exam will be monitored, open-book, in a chatroom, etc. You want to know the expectations from the professor before you begin to reduce anxiety around test taking.

Know exactly when the testing window is and prepare for the due date. We recommend taking the test well in advance of the due date (don't wait until it's due just in case of technical issues!)

Find a good spot to take the exam that is cleaned and organized.

Do not begin the exam until you have all materials fully organized and ready to go (if it is open-book).

Don't forget to press submit!

12. Study Strategies for Online Assessments

Follow the syllabi to know exactly what you will be tested on.

Gather all material that you may need to study for an upcoming quiz or test.

Assess the material and see if you need to create additional study materials (Quizlet, flashcards, outline, practice test...).

Dedicate time each day towards study and [plan at least 2 weeks in advance](#) for this process.

13. Use Your Online AU Resources

Utilize the various campus resources that are operating remotely to assist you in your academic journey.

Sign up for virtual meetings for academic support services that will keep you accountable and on track with your studies.

- Writing Center, Disability Support, Academic Coaching, SI, Tutoring, Math and Stat Lab

Email your professors, TA or classmates to set up 1:1 time to meet when you have questions or concerns about the class.

Utilize the AU Library website for chatting with a librarian, utilize free online resources, or looking up commonly asked questions by students.