10 Tips for Being a Successful Online Student

Like all great advice, most of these tips are common sense things we know that we should do. Make the commitment to be successful and follow as many of these as possible.

1. **Accept that the first online class will feel overwhelming**
   Let’s face it, the first time you try anything new it feels overwhelming. Be patient – this may be new to you and your professors. Things may not work the first time. It takes time to learn how to maneuver through the system and to communicate with others online. Your confidence will build as you become more comfortable with how things work. Think about ways to motivate yourself now, so when you feel overwhelmed you keep yourself grounded in your overall education goals and keep moving forward.

2. **Take full advantage of CSU, Chico resources**
   CSU, Chico has a variety of online and on-site resources available to students. Tutoring and SI are available online ([https://www.csuchico.edu/slc/](https://www.csuchico.edu/slc/)) and virtual Meriam Library research tools, and support are available. Though the Meriam Library building is closed (all due dates extended to the end of semester; fees waived), the library will continue to provide online research resources and virtual research support, including 24/7 chat support and the ability to schedule Zoom appointments with librarians. Familiarize yourself with available resources to use them for increased learning experience and success in your online courses.

3. **Log on to your course frequently**
   Make sure to check your course a minimum of 4-5 days a week. Once you get into the online discussions, you will want to see who has commented on your postings and read the instructor’s feedback. If you let too many days go by, you will get behind and find it very difficult to catch up.

4. **Participate…Participate…Participate**
   Regular participation is very important to a quality online experience for everyone. Engage in online discussion – studying alone can be isolating, so there will be forums for discussion, and if there aren’t try and create some (yes, even if it’s a Facebook group).

5. **Take the course and yourself seriously**
   Online courses affect academic records and financial aid. Give an online course the same attention, effort and time you would an in-person class. Get agreement from those around you – if you are studying at home or in shared accommodations, let people know you are studying by putting a big “I’m studying” sign on your door.

6. **Budget your time, set schedules, and complete work on time**
   Set up a manageable study schedule for yourself and stick to it. Students who succeed are those who log in and make progress every day. Effective time-management skills don’t just happen. They have to be learned. Once you do, they will benefit you throughout your life. Follow the tips below to develop yours:
   1. **Review the syllabus for each of your courses.** Develop a long-term plan for completing your major assignments.
   2. **Make a daily "To Do" list.** Have fun checking things off the list as you complete them. It takes time to develop good habits, but you'll gain satisfaction from being well-organized and accomplishing your tasks.

7. **Be polite and respectful**
   Being polite and respectful is not only common sense, it is absolutely essential for a productive and supportive online environment. In a positive online environment, you will be able to express your thoughts and opinions openly and feel your contribution has been valued by both your classmates and your instructor.

8. **Persistence**
   Persistence is perhaps the biggest key to success in online learning. Students who succeed are those who are willing to tolerate technical problems, seek help when needed, work daily on every class, and persist through challenges.

9. **Speak up if you are having problems**
   Communication skills are vital in online learning because students must seek help when they need it.
Technical difficulties are not an excuse for late or missed assignments. If you are having technical difficulties, or problems understanding something about the course, you MUST speak up otherwise there is no way that anyone will know that something is wrong. Chances are that if you don’t understand something, others have the same question. Follow these tips:

1. **Use the tools provided by the school to communicate with your instructors.** These might include e-mail, discussion groups, chat room office hours, cell phones, and even text messaging. Instructors and staff want to help you to succeed in your classes and will answer your questions. It may feel awkward to talk with your instructors this way, but don't worry. If your instructor has chat room or cell phone office hours, don't be shy about using those tools to communicate with your instructor.

2. **Use appropriate style and language for school.** When communicating with instructors and other staff, you should write in full, grammatically correct sentences and with a respectful tone. Many students are used to a very informal style of writing in chat rooms, blogs, text messages, and so forth.

3. **Because of the distance, it's tempting for some students to say things out of anger or frustration that they would never say to an instructor in person.** Treat instructors with respect and courtesy.

10. **A good study environment**
Another critical component of academic success is a good study environment. Follow these tips:

1. **Get some peace and quiet.** You will need a quiet place to work without distractions from things like television, family, or roommate. Let friends and family members know the hours that you will be “at” school.

2. **Beware of surfing the black hole of the Internet.** It is easy to lose track of the time as you wander from site to site.

3. **Consider ergonomics.** Adjust the height of your chair, keyboard, and screen so that you are comfortable. Forearms and thighs should be level and parallel to the floor. Wrists should not be bent while typing.

4. **Set up good lighting and comfortable seating.** Lighting in the room should be at least as bright as the computer screen to avoid eyes strain.