

## Succeeding in Online Courses

### How do I know if I can succeed in an online course?

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Succeeding in accelerated online courses is much different from succeeding in traditional classroom courses. A different set of skills and habits is required for students to be successful in any accelerated course, especially those that are taken online. Research conducted over the years has demonstrated that students who can identify with most of the characteristics listed below are likely to be successful in accelerated online courses:

- They are self-starters who do not procrastinate.
- They are good at meeting deadlines.
- They are motivated to read, write, and participate in class activities.
- They can work independently and in teams.
- They are resourceful in solving routine technological problems.
- They are strong in reading, writing, and English language grammar skills.
- They schedule specific time each week to participate in online courses.
- They don't delay in asking questions when they don't understand something.
- They have reliable and consistent access to the Internet.
- They are proficient in basic computer and e-mail skills.
- They are disciplined in managing their time and daily schedule.

Course materials including written lectures, readings, assignments, exams, quizzes, and presentations are all contained in a learning management system (LMS). Students access their online course via the Internet using a unique login and password. This information is provided to online students through their Notre Dame College e-mail accounts the weekend prior to the start of their course. Using the login information, students access their course(s) and work through a series of eight one-week lessons. Each lesson is self-contained, and all work in that lesson must be completed within that week. Each lesson will contain directions from the instructor regarding requirements and expectations.

One activity used to engage students in each lesson is a forum. Forums are online threaded discussions that require students to respond to a prompt or set of directions posted in the lesson. After posting their initial reflection, students then read classmates' postings and respond with postings that help further the discussion and develop the concepts learned in the lesson. The instructor may also participate in the online discussion, helping to guide students in the development of the topic. Forums allow students to develop and share their thoughts at times that are convenient.

The majority of online courses span only eight weeks, which means they are more intense than on-campus courses of 15 weeks. This means that students in online courses will spend about twice as much time per week completing work as students in the same courses in the on-campus format. This fast-paced, intense experience requires students to have a number of personal characteristics to ensure success. These include:

- Discipline to complete projects by deadlines. Excellent time management skills are critical.
- Persistence to attend to course assignments at least four days each week. It is helpful to set aside specific times on a routine basis to participate in the course.
- The ability to learn from the printed word. The majority of materials and communication are available through reading and writing.
- Excellent reading and writing skills in the English language.
- Excellent basic computer and e-mail skills.
- Flexibility in dealing with technology problems.

## What do I need to participate in an online course?

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Taking online courses at Notre Dame College is rewarding and fulfilling; however, to succeed, students must be highly organized and disciplined.

Minimally, students need the following:

- A desktop or laptop computer purchased in the last few years  
A recent version of **Microsoft Office** products including Word, PowerPoint, and Excel
  - MS Office is available for free download for students at <https://portal.office.com>  
(use your NDC email address and NDC Password to log in)
- An Internet browser (highly recommended: **Google Chrome**)  
A recent version of **Adobe Acrobat Reader** (<https://get.adobe.com/reader/>)  
Reliable **high-speed Internet** access (cable or DSL)
- A **backup plan** in the event the computer crashes
- **Virus protection** software is strongly recommended.
- A media player such as QuickTime or Windows Media Player