Is eLearning Right for You?

If you are considering taking an online course but don't know much about them, take the following steps.

1. eLearning (or Distance learning or online learning) is simply being taught material through the internet by an instructor. To be successful in the course, you will need to have the proper equipment, reliable internet access, and be motivated to take an online course.	**Factors for success:** ■ Equipment ■ Internet access ■ Software requirements ■ The course management system Another very important factor is your personality and motivation.
2. As far as equipment goes, you will need a reliable computer. Usually a newer computer should be sufficient. Your internet access does not need to be fast only that it needs to be able to maintain a connection. Both the Java runtime environment and internet browser can be easily updated by simply going to the developer's site and they are updated automatically.	**Equipment:** ■ Reliable system ■ Internet access ■ Up-to-date browser ■ Java runtime environment Microsoft Internet Explorer or Mozilla Firefox are recommended browsers.
3. There is not much requirement for software needed for a course. Usually, you will only need the Microsoft Office Suite and Blackboard. It is important that you understand how to utilize Blackboard to ensure your success.	**Software:** ■ Microsoft Office Suite **Course management system:** Blackboard learn+ It is important that you learn to drive the vehicle before you start racing down the course.

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4. It is important that you know how to utilize e-mail and as well as the messaging and discussion tools provided to you by Blackboard. Also make sure to clearly communicate when online. There are no gestures to help you get your point across from you to your recipient.	**Communication:**
	  ■ professor
	  ■ fellow students
	
	Important to recognize:
	  ■ eye contact
	  ■ body movement
	  ■ gestures
	  ■ voice inflection

5. Do not fall into the assumption that online classes are easier and take less time to complete. You are learning the same material but online. In some cases, it may take more time for you to complete an online project than an in-class project.	**Motivation:**
	
	Dispel a common myth about eLearning
	  ■ Easier
	  ■ Takes less time
	
	This cannot be further from the truth. eLearning is simply not easier and in most cases takes equal or more time to complete successfully.

6. Even if you have all the required materials and equipment. If you do not display any of the traits that describes a successful eLearner than consider not taking an online class.	**Common traits of successful eLearners**
	  ■ Self disciplined ■ Self directed
	  ■ Self motivated ■ Organized
	  ■ Self starters ■ Achievement oriented
	
	If you have these traits you may be a successful eLearner. *If you don't, you might consider not taking an eLearning class.*

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7. It is also important to understand how your grades work with your professor as well as planning ahead and managing your time effectively. If you still are unsure of taking an online course, try to take only one.

Pointers that may help in your success:

- It is important that you understand the rules of the game, understand the requirements, and understand the grading system right from the beginning.

- Don't wait until the last minute to take an exam or submit a paper. The technology may not be working.

- Plan your work, and work your plan. Keep to the schedule and don't get behind.

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