Portrait of a Successful Online Learner

While online and hybrid courses offer great advantages for students, they require a certain skill set to be successful. As you consider if online and hybrid courses are right for you, read the following common characteristics of successful online learners.

ORGANIZED

Online learners manage due dates, schedules and course calendars. They understand how to access course materials and have a plan for their workflow. These learners have a dedicated workspace and know how to balance their time so coursework stays manageable.

SELF-DISCIPLINED AND INDEPENDENT

Successful online learners know how to self-advocate. They ask for help prior to deadlines and know how to manage their time accordingly. They understand what skills are needed to take an online course and don't make excuses.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Netiquette and proper grammar (e.g., no 'text-speak') in email and discussion posts is appropriate in college courses. Successful online learners understand how to keep a friendly tone while being professional. They are clear in their communication and discussion posts so fewer misunderstandings occur.

COMFORTABLE WITH TECHNOLOGY

Successful online learners have basic technology troubleshooting skills and understand where to get help for issues they can't fix. They know how to find and log in to the Learning Management System with ease and can join virtual conferencing calls without issues. These learners efficiently search the internet to locate resources and information, and understand the difference between factual and misinformation online. Their typing and word processing skills are strong enough not to delay their work.

ETHICAL

Understanding copyright and what is allowed within each online course is a skill needed by online learners. Successful online learners share credit and give attribution when applicable. They produce original work and follow guidelines set in each course syllabus.

ENTHUSIASTIC

Ready to start day one, successful online learners are proactive and don't wait to get into their courses. They tend to be one of the first discussion posters, providing conversational, yet professional responses. They find connections with others or infuse personal experience and wonderings into their work. These types of learners are focused on personal end goals while supporting and encouraging classmates to do the same.

OPEN-MINDED

Being open-minded is essential to online courses. Successful learners welcome new technologies and methodologies to support their learning. They listen to differing opinions and beliefs, and take the time to ask clarifying questions without instantly reacting to opposing viewpoints. Assuming positive intent with classmates and comments, successful online learners pause before jumping to conclusions.

PROACTIVE AND METACOGNITIVE

Successful online learners read the syllabus and access course content as soon as it becomes available to understand time commitments and expectations. They continually self-assess to gauge understanding of the content. If there are questions, they reach out early to gain clarification. Metacognitive learners are aware of how they like to learn (e.g., alone or with a study group, quiet space vs. crowded space, reading/writing/hands on, etc.) and understand how to intentionally focus to comprehend unknown content.

There's a place for you.

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