5 Steps to Being Successful in an Online Learning Environment

Ugh, you were just notified that your speech class next semester is fully virtual, meaning it is fully *online*. Now what? Fear not! I am well-versed in the area of online learning. Starting my first semester here at Western brought a lot of excitement. I could not wait to go to class and meet new people! Then, I got to peek at my schedule. That excitement was very quickly crushed when I saw that my program is comprised of mainly online courses. At first, I really struggled with this idea. How in the world was I supposed to learn everything that I needed for my degree through Zoom?! Maybe it was because of how much time I had to spend behind my computer screen during high school (thanks covid), but I had very little confidence in myself. That was until I got logged into Blackboard and started on my courses. I caught on relatively quickly and was able to manage everything to be successful in my courses. Now, it did take some practice and additional learning. Let me share with you some of the best tips I have picked up through my online learning adventure here at Western.

1. **Create a schedule**

I cannot stress this one enough. While creating a schedule sounds tedious and unnecessary, this is the tip that has given me the most success. Create a schedule and stick to it. Be intentional with each of your classes. Set aside time each day or each week for every class to ensure that it gets done. By setting this time aside, you are doing yourself a huge favor. Life can get crazy, so you need to make sure you are giving yourself enough time each week to get your homework done. Having a schedule that works for you really helps take a load off when the weeks get stressful and daunting.

1. **Choose a good work space**

This is another non-negotiable step for success. Maybe you have roommates or kids or noisy neighbors that make getting your work done even more difficult, trust me I understand the struggle. Therefore, it is important for you to find a quiet space for you to work on your courses. Maybe this space is the library or your desk or even the Union Market here at Western. For me, I love going to a coffee shop, buying a cold brew, putting my headphones in, and getting to work. Wherever your quiet place is, take the time to get there; you owe it to yourself.

1. **Reach out for support**

While it is very easy to feel like you are going through this online learning journey alone, that is quite far from the truth. Take advantage of the resources and support you are given. Use that “Contact Instructor” button on the lefthand side of the Blackboard course page. Reach out to peers for help! If you are struggling with content, chances are there are others struggling right along with you. Lean on each other for support. Western has a fantastic support system for each subject area called the Learning Commons ([Learning Commons | Western Technical College | La Crosse, WI (westerntc.edu)](https://www.westerntc.edu/learning-commons)). This is here to support you and help you be successful. Use it! They have the most wonderful staff. Personally, I strongly recommend using their writing center to have papers reviewed. Whatever need you may have, don’t be afraid to reach out for help. Everyone at Western is rooting for your success just as much as you are.

1. **Take time for yourself**

If you’re anything like me, it can be very easy to get caught up in the whirlwind of school and online work. However, one of the biggest lessons I have had to learn and accept is that it is crucial to take time for myself and continue to do things that fill my soul. It feels like school is the whole of your life right now, especially with the busy schedule of online learning, but it is important that you also prioritize taking care of yourself as well. Whatever this looks like for you, I cannot recommend this step enough. Don’t let yourself get burnt out, make sure you’re allowing yourself to recharge. You cannot be successful if you don’t first take care of your mind and body. Some of my favorite ways to take time for myself are going on walks, hanging out with my friends, going to the gym, and watching my favorite shows. Whatever brings you joy, allow yourself the time to do it!

1. **Believe in yourself!**

Like I said earlier, I had very little faith in myself and online learning at the beginning of my journey. However, I have surprised myself in so many ways. While everyone at Western is rooting for you and your success, the most important person that you need in your cheering section is yourself. You have to keep an open mind and believe that you can achieve amazing and difficult things. This hard work has been incredibly rewarding. Trust me, all of this is well worth it. Go easy on yourself. This way of learning is still new territory for most of us, so cut yourself some slack. Most importantly, believe in yourself. You are capable of learning new things and achieving things that require hard work and dedication.

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A person in a red dress

Description automatically generated with medium confidence**About the Author**

Hi everyone! Thank you for taking the time to read my work! My name is Emma Eilers and I am from a very small town, Mauston, here in Wisconsin. Currently, I am in my first year here at Western. I am studying in their Digital Marketing program and loving every second of this new adventure in my life. I hope these tips can help you just as much as they have helped me!