

What does it take to succeed as an online student at CVTC?

Ultimately, being a successful online student does not have much to do with technological skills or comfort level with a computer – although always nice to have. Success in online courses principally depends on an active commitment and a well placed attitude:

Ability to Structure Your Commitment: Online classes are just as academically demanding (if not slightly more so) than face to face classes. The difference, of course, is that the class does not start promptly at the top of the hour and you are not surrounded by classmates who are fun to chat with before and after class. It is going to take self-discipline to sit down behind your computer and “go to school.” If you have trouble with self-discipline, on-line course work will quickly ‘get away from you.’ Then again, if you lack self-discipline, you are going to find it difficult to get to face to face classes on time. The ability to structure one’s commitment is the key to much of life; it just happens to be a critical ‘must have’ as an online student.

Tolerance for Technology: As much as we would wish otherwise, technology can be difficult. Sometimes the school’s technology fails; sometimes your home equipment fails, sometimes instructions for how to use new technology is not ideal. To succeed as an online student, it is very useful to have some tolerance for things not going well on occasion. The ability to relax, regroup and re-boot can be invaluable. It does no good to get upset with your self, the situation, your instructor or technical support. Part of the trade-off for anytime, anywhere, education is putting up with technology.

Please Participate: Question: What is as boring as watching paint dry? Answer: An online class where students do not actively participate. Online classes are collective efforts. Share your thoughts and questions and hopefully others will do the same. If you do, taking an online class can be a lot of fun and you will learn a lot more in the process.

Take Command of Your Learning: In a face to face classes, if one or more students appear not to understand a lesson or what is expected of them, they often give non-verbal cues that teachers can detect (e.g., that sort of pained look that says, “I don’t get it”). In a face to face class, you can always raise your hand and ask for clarification and teachers readily ask follow up questions just to make sure that students understand. Online courses inherently lack this immediacy. To be successful in an online course it is important to carefully monitor your own learning. Ask questions of your understanding and do a little cross-checking of the facts and principles. If after some effort, you still do not understand, it then becomes extremely important to seek answers and help from your teacher and classmates.

Being a passive learner in an online class is an invitation to calamity; please take command of your learning.

Be Nice: Learning is not a top-down process where the obligation for teaching resides singularly with the instructor. Each of us is obligated to contribute to each others' learning. Try to respect differences of opinion and style. Welcome disagreement and alternative explanations because they provide opportunities to learn. Try to promote clear communication by being specific, giving examples and asking questions. Most importantly, seek to understand first before trying to be understood.

Remove Distractions: It is so easy to pull yourself away from your focus for phone call, email, door bell, or even the television. A key success tip will be to make the time commitment. Tell your family, friends, or anyone that will listen, this is your class time. Promise yourself you will keep focus and reduce the possibilities for distractions around you. You must build the habits of study, and controlling your distractions will assist in your success.

Use HELP Opportunities: You have many many help opportunities at CVTC with online learning. First and foremost your instructors want you to be successful and will go out of your way.....if you ask. They are not mind readers...they often don't know if your stuck or just not participating. Ask....and we are confident they will help. In addition we have multiple website tools to assist with technology, learning strategies, and even online help from academic services. The HELP button in your blackboard course is a great start. In addition you will find help on the CVTC E-Learning Page, CVTC Flex, and the 100% Online pages. In addition there is the help desk that you can call day or night. 877-241-1823