Tips for Academic Success in Online Study (from University of Missouri)

Taking an all-online course may be a new experience for you. We hope that the following suggestions will help you adapt to the distance learning environment, maximize its strengths for your learning, and find ways to become a successful online student.

Study Habits

- **Develop a study plan.** Each student has a different learning style. Some people like to work on difficult tasks first to get them over with. Some people like to start with easy problems to build up their confidence. Some like to work for several hours and then take a break. Others like to break their work into smaller chunks of time. Think about your own preferences; then record how long it takes you to complete the first lesson or two. You can use this information to prepare your own study plan for completing the entire course.

- **Set goals for yourself.** List the most important goals first and make sure they are specific and realistic. Then, reward yourself as you make progress toward your goals. Examples of goals you might set for yourself include (1) work for at least one hour on a lesson before you take a break, (2) spend enough time on each lesson so that you understand all the concepts before going on to the next lesson, (3) try to answer all the questions on a progress evaluation without looking in the book first, and (4) try to improve your scores each time you take a progress evaluation.

- **Establish your study habits.** Establish a specific time and space for studying. Focusing on your work for an hour is more effective than studying for several hours with interruptions. Inform your friends and family about your scheduled study time so they won't disrupt you. Studying in a familiar place can help you make better progress as you are more comfortable and less distracted.

At home, you may use the computer for games or while you are doing something else like eating, talking on the telephone, etc. You may pay attention only intermittently. Participating in an all-online course is not like that. You need to stay focused on the content and participate fully in the learning activities presented. Try to pay attention to one task at a time. Avoid talking on the telephone, playing games, surfing the Internet, or any other activity that will take you away from the information that you should be focusing on.

Time Management

- **Read the syllabus and create a list of priorities.** Writing down your responsibilities emphasizes their importance.

- **Create a course calendar.** A calendar can help you keep track of assignments, tests, and projects. It can help you see the big picture and chart your progress. You can also keep
track of other activities such as work and family commitments, leisure activities, and study time.

- **Don't fall behind.** It is important that you log into your online course on the first day of classes. You should continue to log in often to keep up with course announcements and assignments. This not only helps you to stay caught up, but it also allows your instructor to verify your participation and investigate potential login problems.

**Academic Responsibility**

- **Take responsibility for your learning.** Without a teacher present, you must make a special effort to understand the course content. The commentary in the online course is designed to take the place of class lectures. Most online courses include discussions of important points and additional examples to supplement the material you will read in the textbook. You will need to do more than simply read the course commentary in order to understand the concepts fully.

- **Think critically about Web sources.** The Web offers many wonderful educational tools for students and instructors. However, there is so much information available and not all sites are of excellent quality. Therefore, critical thinking and evaluation skills become important as you explore different sites. It's important to ask questions like—Is it accurate? current? meaningful? researched? supported by people knowledgeable in the field? thorough?

The following are links to some excellent resources that survey a variety of website evaluation criteria for students:

- "[Evaluating Sources of Information](#)" from the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL)
- "[The Internet Detective](#)" from the University of Bristol’s Virtual Training Suite