Practices for Learning Online

Being a good student in online courses and programs requires more than technology skills. In F2F courses, regular class meeting times in classrooms serve to pace your work and remind you about deadlines and other important upcoming things. In online classes you need to pace yourself and plan your participation to a greater extent. Here’s some expectations you should set for yourself:

- As soon as possible, familiarize yourself with the basic technologies required for coursework at Canisius: MyCanisius, email, and D2L.
- Log in to each course to participate, complete assignments, and generally follow along at least four to seven times a week.
- Carefully read course syllabi, guidelines, and assignment instructions as soon as you can.
- Keep a personal work calendar, and enter all relevant course dates and deadlines there as soon as they are made available to you.
- Familiarize yourself with any additional technology required for a particular course, such as Microsoft Excel, or video recording applications. Give yourself plenty of time to learn these before having to use them for assignments or activities.
- Complete assignments on time. Do not assume deadline extensions are available. Only ask for deadline extensions in cases of real need or emergency. (If you haven’t asked for an extension before, and you do good work, a professor is more likely to grant it.)
- Attend synchronous class meetings whether on campus (as in a hybrid course) or a web meeting. If you must miss one, correspond with the professor to determine what that will mean for your grade and ability to complete the course.

Netiquette Requirements

In many online and hybrid courses there is a lot of communication between students. Much of it is in asynchronous discussions, but you might also speak with students through (for example) video or audio posts, or web conferencing. On the web it can sometimes be difficult to gauge each other’s tone. Here are guidelines for communicating online:

1. Consider what you wrote before posting. Is your post off topic? Is it in the appropriate space for that topic? Is it really meant for the entire class, or just the instructor? Discussions, like meetings, should be kept solely on-topic, to keep workloads manageable for everyone.
2. If you are upset about an issue, type it into a document, and save it to your drive. Come back to it after some time and re-read it. Is it insightful, and likely to inform or persuade? Will it really contribute to discussion?
3. Be courteous on the web (too). Online correspondence or conversation, like traditional varieties, benefits from courteousness and basic mutual respect. Learn and check spelling of others’ names. Remember that everyone is a newbie at some point, and deserves patience from more experienced or skilled participants.
4. Be brief but not too brief. Be an efficient writer, but write more than the bare minimum just to “get it done.”
5. Mind your font. Internet conventions have developed where text formatting signals tone, volume, and emphasis. Writing in all caps represents SHOUTING or severe emphasis. **Bold** and *italics* can too, although perhaps less “loudly.” *Red dictates anger!* Extra punctuation (???? or !!!!) can do likewise. In all cases these are overused, distracting, and needlessly dramatic. Save them for when you really need them.
6. Obey copyright laws. Do not steal original work by reposting it without investigating the terms of use established or requested by the author.

Be mindful of sensitive information. Consider carefully what you are sharing about yourself or others on the web. Remember that the web rarely, if ever, “forgets” anything. There are obviously dangerous examples of inappropriate posting, but other information can be inadvertent, or seem trivial at the moment. In general, review everything you are about to post, before you post.

A Typical Asynchronous Discussion Scenario

This short video clip shows a typical way that Asynchronous Discussions might be used in a course at Canisius College.

Last Step: Additional Resources