



Orientation to AU Online: Strategies for Academic Success

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Introduction

In this tutorial, you'll learn some best practices to aid you in your journey as a student at AU Online. Reviewing and implementing these helpful tips and strategies will prepare you for academic success!

Upon completion of this lesson, you will be able to recall best practices and tips to prepare you for academic success.

Preparing for Class

Before you take an online class (whether it's your first class or your tenth), review and implement the following tactics to make sure you are prepared.

- ✓ Order your books at least one week before class begins so you'll be ready to begin on the first day of class and won't fall behind.
- ✓ AU Online courses begin on Mondays at 12 a.m. Central time. However, each course is available the Friday before the official start date (three days early). Use this time to explore and familiarize yourself with the course—everything from the syllabus, topics that will be covered, layout, expectations, and more.
- ✓ Log in to your online course shell by 3:00 p.m. Central time on the first Friday of the course (Friday of Week 1). This confirms your intent to participate in the class, and failure to do so will result in an administrative drop from the course.
- ✓ Print and read the syllabus for every course to understand the expectations for each class.
- ✓ Locate your instructor's contact information in the course and contact your instructor if you have questions.
- ✓ Check that your computer meets the technological requirements for your online classes.

Technological Requirements for Online Courses

The following are the technical requirements for online learning:

Hardware or Software Component	Recommendation
Operating System	Windows XP or Mac OS X 10.4 (or higher)
Memory	512 MB
CPU	1.6 GHz
Free Disk Space	256 MB or more
Other	Sound card and speakers (microphone recommended)
Browser	Mozilla Firefox 1.5 or higher (IE 6.0+ or Safari 1.2+ will also work.)
Browser Settings	Java, JavaScript, and cookies enabled; popup blocker disabled

Internet Connection	DSL or broadband strongly recommended (56K or greater will work)
Productivity Software	Microsoft Office (Open Office is a free alternative.)

Browser Versions

Moodle, which is used for the AU Online classroom, will work with just about any browser. However, AU ITS recommends the use of Firefox. If you use Microsoft Internet Explorer, you may encounter problems downloading files (such as Word or PowerPoint files) placed in the course by your instructor. Because of certain security weaknesses in IE, Microsoft uses a default setting that blocks the automatic downloading of files. The result will be a blank white frame and an error message from IE.

Below are the minimum and recommended versions of major Web browsers.

Browser	Minimum Version	Recommended Version
Google Chrome	30.0	Latest
Mozilla Firefox*	25.0	Latest
Apple Safari	6	Latest
Microsoft Internet Explorer	9	Latest (Note: Version 10 is required for drag-and-drop upload of content from outside the browser into Moodle.)

* Mozilla Firefox is the recommended Web browser for accessing AU Online courses.

Troubleshooting and Technical Support

AU Online offers two services for technological support:

- Are you having problems logging in? Contact ITS Help at itshelp@aurora.edu or 630-844-5790.
- For all other technical problems with Moodle, use the 24/7 Help Center located in Moodle. You can visit kb.learninghouse.com for phone, chat, or e-mail support, and to read helpful articles in the knowledge base.

Daily Habits

By incorporating these tasks into your daily routine, you will be setting yourself up for success in your online courses.

- ✓ **Check your Aurora e-mail account daily.** Important notifications from the university, your instructor, your academic advisor, and your classmates will be sent to your Aurora e-mail account, so by checking it daily, you won't miss anything.
- ✓ **Log in to class often.** This keeps you abreast of any updates and upcoming assignments that are due.
- ✓ **Keep in contact with your professor** so that he or she understands how you are doing in the course.
- ✓ **Check the Class News and Announcements forum each time you log in to class.** Your instructor will use this space to share important course updates, such as clarification on an assignment or changes to due dates. You will also benefit from checking in on active discussion forums daily, such as those within the collaboration corner or the current week of the class. Reviewing frequently and participating often will keep you abreast of important updates in the course or ongoing conversations with your classmates and instructor.

Time Management

Effectively managing your time is one of the best ways to make yourself successful, not only in your AU Online courses, but also throughout other aspects of your life.

- ✓ **Plan!** Create your own study schedule so that you will have time to devote to your classes. Use a planner or online calendar to keep track of assignment due dates, and check that calendar every day.
- ✓ **Stay organized!** Create your own school space at home so that your documents and assignments don't get misplaced.
- ✓ **Forecast!** Look ahead at the assignments and activities due in future weeks. For example, if you are planning a vacation while your course is in session, you can look ahead and create a plan to complete your assignments ahead of schedule or speak with your instructor about alternative due dates so your work is submitted on time.

Course Assignment Strategies

The requirements may differ from course to course. However, you can employ the strategies below to every online course to make sure you understand what's expected of you.

- ✓ Always read the course syllabus very carefully. Often, many students find that their questions can be answered in the syllabus.
- ✓ Type your replies to discussion forum posts in a separate document and save it to your computer. This allows you to review, revise, and run spell-checker for consistency before you post your reply in Moodle.
- ✓ Run spell-check and proofread your work for grammar and spelling errors before submitting forum posts and written assignments. By proofreading after you run spell-check, you can catch and correct any errors that spell-check did not find. (Hint: Read your work out loud. Doing this slows down your reading just enough that you will often be able to more clearly see editing errors you've overlooked.)
- ✓ Save files to a file-sharing site such as Google Drive, OneDrive, or Dropbox. The file will be available anywhere (which is helpful if your primary computer isn't working and you have to

use a different computer) and it is automatically backed up. Plus, you'll be able to refer to your work even after the course ends.

- ✓ Ask your instructor for clarification well in advance of assignment due dates. If you wait until the last minute to contact your instructor with a question, he or she may not be able to reply in time to assist you.
- ✓ Feedback is one of the critical elements for student success in distance learning. This is particularly true in online courses, where the pace is often accelerated. For this reason, you can expect your instructor to respond to your e-mails within 48 hours.
- ✓ Tutoring is available through the [Academic Support Center \(ASC\)](#) for many subjects, as well as writing, research, time management, test taking, and study skills.
- ✓ The [Phillips Library](#) has an extensive collection of books, journals, multimedia resources, and databases for your research. The library staff is available to help you with your research; remember to [ask a librarian](#) if you have questions or would like assistance.

Netiquette

To maintain a positive online environment for yourself and your peers, review and follow the netiquette (online etiquette) guidelines summarized below. This creates a positive learning environment where everyone feels comfortable participating and contributing.

Do:

- Show respect for the instructor and for other learners in the class.
- Respect the privacy of other learners.
- Express differences of opinion in a polite and rational way.
- Maintain an environment of constructive criticism when commenting on the work of other learners.
- Use appropriate subject lines in e-mail messages and new discussion board posts so others can clearly identify the topic without having to open the message.
- Use appropriate grammar and structure in online communication, including proper capitalization and spelling.
- Wait at least 48 hours before contacting the instructor a second time about the same problem. AU Online instructors are dedicated to providing you feedback and support and will reply to e-mails within 48 hours.

There are certain unacceptable behaviors in the online class as well. The following list summarizes the kind of behavior you should avoid.

Do not:

- Bring up irrelevant topics when involved in group discussions or other collaborative activities.
- Use all caps, because this is the equivalent of yelling in the online environment.
- Type in all lowercase letters.
- Show disrespect for the instructor or for other learners in the class.
- Send messages or comments that are threatening, harassing, or offensive.

- Use inappropriate or offensive language.
- Convey a hostile or confrontational tone when communicating or working collaboratively with other learners.

Ask for Help

If you have any trouble at all, please ask for help. Every online student has questions at some point, and it is often a question that your peers are asking as well, so please reach out to your instructor with those concerns.

Questions?

Contact your academic advisor with any questions! He or she is happy to help.

Visit the [Your Academic Advisor link](#) under School Resources in Moodle or e-mail onlineadvising@aurora.edu.

Check Your Understanding

Complete the following practice questions to review and apply what you've learned in this lesson.

Question #1

1. When should you order your textbooks?
 - a. At least one week before class begins
 - b. The day before class begins
 - c. The first day of class
 - d. Sometime during the first week of class

Correct Answer: Order your books at least one week before each class begins so you'll be prepared on the first day of class.

Question #2

2. To confirm your intent to participate in an online class, you must login to each course on Friday of Week 1 by _____

Correct Answer: You must log in to each of your online course shells by 3:00 p.m. Central Time on the first Friday of the course (Friday of Week 1). This confirms your intent to participate in the class. Failure to do so will result in an administrative drop from the course.

Question #3

3. Which of the following is the recommended web browser for accessing AU Online courses in Moodle?
 - a. Mozilla Firefox
 - b. Google Chrome
 - c. Apple Safari
 - d. Microsoft Internet Explorer

Correct Answer: Mozilla Firefox is the recommended web browser to use when accessing your AU Online courses in Moodle.

Question #4

4. AU Online offers two services for technological support. Read the scenarios below and identify the correct technological support service to contact in each situation.

A. It is your last week of class. You are trying to submit your presentation of your research project to a discussion forum, but are running into trouble. What should you do?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Contact ITS Help for support.
B. It is the Friday before class begins and you can't login to Moodle. What should you do?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Contact the 24/7 Help Center for support.

Correct Answer: Contact the ITS Help when you have trouble logging into Moodle. For all other technical problems with Moodle, such as uploading assignments, completing discussion activities, and viewing your grades, contact the [24/7 Help Center](#).

Question #5

5. How often should you check your Aurora email account?
- Daily
 - Every other day
 - Twice per week
 - Once per week
 - Biweekly

Correct Answer: Important notifications from the university, your instructor, and your classmates will be sent to your Aurora e-mail account, so by checking it **daily**, you won't miss anything.

Question #6

6. You can expect your instructor to respond to your emails within 24 hours.
- True
 - False

Correct Answer: Your AU Online instructors recognize how critical timely replies and feedback are for ensuring your success. However, like you, your instructors may have additional commitments and obligations in addition to your course. For this reason, you can expect your instructor to respond to your e-mails within **48 hours**.

Question #7

7. In accordance with netiquette guidelines, which of the following behaviors should you do in your online courses?
- Be respectful and express differences of opinion in a polite and rationale way.
 - Use appropriate grammar, spelling, punctuation, and structure in all of your online communications (such as emails and discussion forum posts).
 - Send messages or make comments that are threatening, harassing, or offensive.
 - Use inappropriate or offensive language.
 - Type in all caps or all lowercase when sending emails or commenting on the discussion forum.

- f. Use appropriate subject lines in emails, messages, and discussion forum posts.

Correct Answer: Some important netiquette guidelines to follow (e.g., things you should do) in your online classes include: be respectful and express differences of opinion in a polite and rationale way; use appropriate grammar, spelling, punctuation, and structure in all of your online communications; and use appropriate subject lines in emails, messages, and discussion forum posts.

Summary

Now that you have reviewed the tips for success, you are prepared to begin your adventure as a student of AU Online. Remember, your motivation, participation, and interactivity in your online courses are keys to your achievement in online courses. The more you interact with your instructors and engage with your classmates, explore the course learning materials, and give effort to your assignments and projects, the more you will benefit from the learning experiences!