

How to Be a Successful Online Learner

Whether they are synchronous or asynchronous, online courses are a convenient way to earn a degree or certificate. However, having more freedom and flexibility with the course format also means assuming more responsibility. This handout will provide tips for being successful while taking online courses and will include the following topics:

[Familiarize Yourself with Canvas](#)

[Stay Engaged with Your Class](#)

[Create a Study Space](#)

[Discover How You Learn Best](#)

[Organize and Plan Your Schedule](#)

[Communicate with Your Instructor](#)

[Participate in Discussions and Group Assignments](#)

[Build a Network](#)

[Use Available Student Resources](#)

[Stay Motivated](#)

[Canvas: Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[Google Docs and Canvas: Frequently Asked Questions](#)

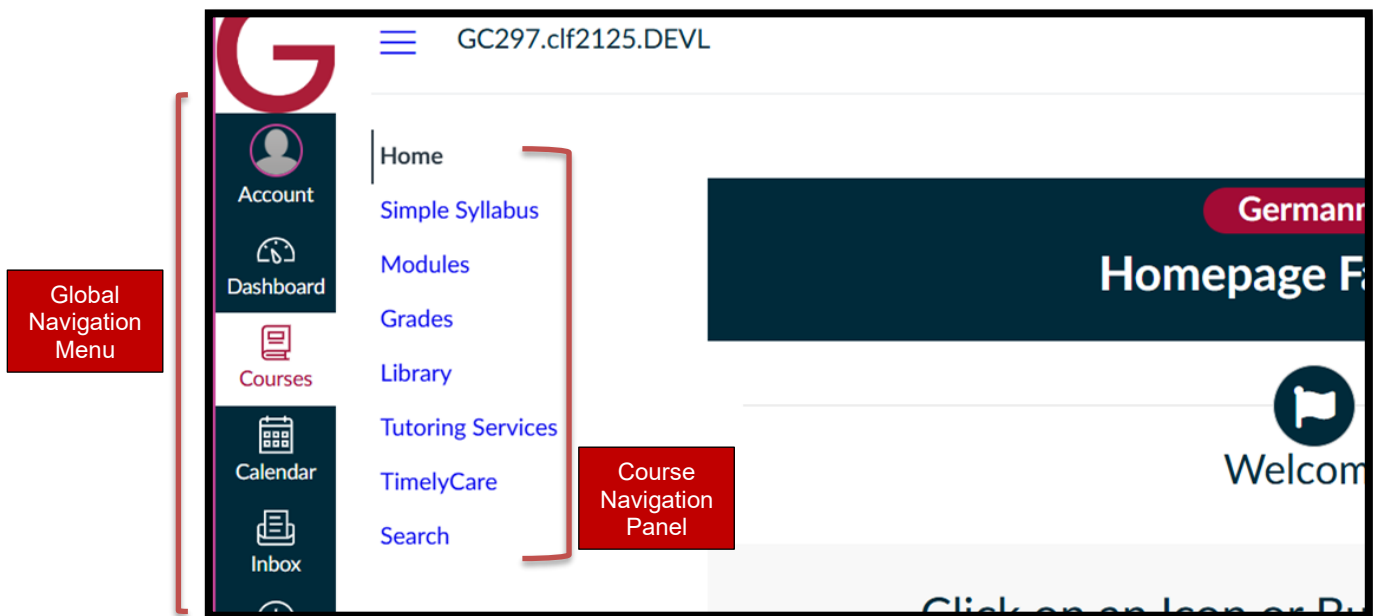
[Google Suite Tutorials](#)

[Zoom Tutorials](#)

Familiarize Yourself with Canvas

All Germanna courses use the Canvas learning management system to deliver online instruction to students. The following terms will appear on the Canvas Global Navigation Menu, which is the navigation panel that appears when you log into Canvas, or within your online course.

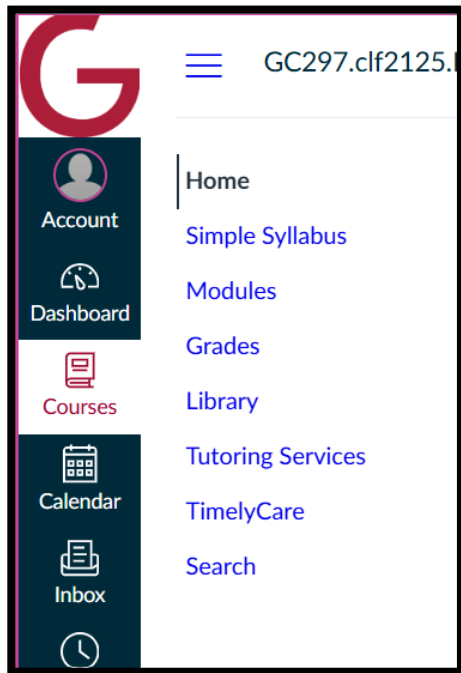
Direct links to [Canvas tutorials](#) are listed at the end of this handout.



Dashboard: Your Canvas Dashboard will list tiles for all the classes you are enrolled in at Germanna. To enter a specific course, click on the corresponding tile.

Syllabus: The syllabus is the course schedule. All coursework and assignment due dates will be listed on the syllabus. It will also contain contact information for your instructor, as well as office hours and the course objectives.

Announcements: One mode of communication instructors will use is announcements. These will appear on the homepage of the course's Canvas shell and will provide information for the entire class.



Modules: Modules are the primary way instructors will organize course content and instruction. Modules may be organized by weeks, units, or topics. They will include various modes of instruction, including videos, discussions, quizzes, assignments, and readings.

Grades: You can review your grades at any time by clicking on the “Grades” link within a Canvas course shell. You can even view potential grades based on “What-if” scores to see how upcoming assignments will affect your current grade.

Calendar: The Calendar in Canvas will include assignment due dates for all your classes. Each one will be color coded, so you will know for which class the assignment is due. In addition, some instructors may post office hours on the Calendar, allowing you to be able to sign up for meetings with them in one convenient place.

Studio: Some instructors may assign a presentation video. Videos can be created and saved within Studio. The videos can be made with a webcam, or if a visual element is required, the video can be made with screen capture.

Inbox: All course communication with instructors should take place within the Inbox. This feature provides easy access to email communication with both instructors and other students in your class.

Groups: Some of your instructors may assign students into smaller, collaborative groups. When this occurs, Canvas will add “Groups” to the Global Navigation Menu to provide you quick access to all group assignments in one place. Furthermore, you will be able to participate with specific groups from within the course’s Canvas shell.

Collaborations: If enabled by your instructor, Collaborations is a tool that allows students to work on a project together using the Google Suite or Microsoft 365. A link to Collaborations will appear within the Course Navigation or within Groups in the course's Canvas shell.

Stay Engaged with Your Class

When taking an online course, it is important to stay connected with your class. There are two ways you can do this. It is recommended that you log into the course each day. You can also download the Canvas Student App to your mobile device. The application will send you alerts about course announcements, updates, and emails in real-time.

Create a Study Space

Selecting a dedicated space in which to complete coursework will help you establish a routine and stay organized. The room should house all your course material, such as books, folders, files, etc., for easy access. It is recommended that the study space has access to the internet.

The environment should also be free of distractions. Consider turning off your cell phone during study sessions or dedicated class times. This will eliminate the temptation to check notifications and messages as you study. It is also possible to install a website blocker on your computer or laptop if you find that you cannot resist web surfing during dedicated study time.

Discover How You Learn Best

Once you know where you will study, you will need to decide how you will study. Each person learns differently, so you will want to figure out how you learn best. For instance, if you are a morning person, scheduling your study time in the morning may be a good idea. If you are a night-owl, scheduling your study time at night may be best for you.

It would also be beneficial for you to know what type of learner you are, so you can study more effectively. For example, if you are an auditory learner, listening to lecture videos more than once may be useful. If you are a kinesthetic learner, printing out readings and annotating them

on paper may help you understand the material faster and more thoroughly than reading on a computer screen.

Organize and Plan Your Schedule

It is important to utilize time management strategies when enrolled in online courses. Taking classes online requires independence; do not expect an instructor to remind you when assignments are due. The following tips and tools will help you stay organized:

- Refer to the Canvas Calendar each day. Remember, it will include due dates for your upcoming assignments for all your classes.
- If you prefer to use a paper calendar, refer to the Academic Center for Excellence's "[Student Schedule Worksheet](#)" for both weekly and/or daily planning calendars. This may help you organize how much time you spend for each class per week.
- Dedicate a specific amount of time to your course. Many students find that if they designate a specific day and time to complete coursework, it is easier to stay on top of assignments.
- Spend approximately 5 to 10 hours per week on each course.
- Do not procrastinate. Some assignments require more time than others. You will want to give yourself an adequate amount of time to complete assignment before the due date. For example, writing assignments will need to be brainstormed, outlined, drafted, revised, and if needed, the topic will need to be researched. These steps should not be completed the day before the assignment is due. It is important that you look ahead and plan when you will work on assignments.
- Try not to fall behind in the course because it can be difficult to catch up. There will be times when unplanned events happen that get in the way of you being able to turn in an assignment on time. When this occurs, communicate with your instructor as early as possible.

Communicate with Your Instructor

Your instructors will not know that you have questions unless you communicate with them. It is important to reach out to them for clarification regarding assignments and course material; however, almost all communication with your instructor will be written. Ensure that you review what you have written carefully before you send it to your instructor.

Another mode of communication with your instructor is through Zoom video conferencing. Your instructor may use Zoom for class lectures and office hours. All Germanna students have access to Zoom and can access it through myGCC. For more information on how to use Zoom, watch this [Zoom Conferencing Tutorial](#) or reference the Academic Center for Excellence's [Technology Resources for Students](#) webpage. A full list of all the [Zoom tutorials](#) will be listed at the end of this handout.

Participate in Discussions and Group Assignments

Because you won't be sitting in a classroom, participation in your online class is very important. Your instructor may assign students into smaller groups and/or discussions to invite participation. For all assignments, make sure to read the instructor's guidelines and rubrics, so you know what is expected of you. Often, the discussions will require you to do some reading and critical thinking before responding to your classmates' posts. In addition, be polite and respectful. You may not see the other students in the course, but they are learning as well. It is important to maintain a positive online environment. Finally, don't expect immediate responses. Because schedules vary, other students may not respond immediately to you.

Build a Network

Although your class is online, you are not alone. Introduce yourself and engage with your classmates. Don't be afraid to ask them questions or to answer their questions to the best of your ability in discussions. Create virtual study groups using Zoom to study for exams or create peer-review groups for upcoming writing assignments. Your fellow students are your greatest resource, and you are theirs.

Use All Available Student Resources

When enrolled in online classes, students may not physically walk by student service offices on campus. As a result, it is important to become familiar with the resources that are available to students. Take the time to click on the link to “[GCC Policies and Student Resources](#)” in each Canvas course shell, and research them further on the Germanna website as well. An important part of your education is learning how to use [library resources](#), being involved in student activities, and getting to know your instructors. However, there are many other [student support services](#) on campus, and Germanna [advisors](#) and [counselors](#) can connect you to them.

The [Academic Center for Excellence](#) is here to help you gain a better understanding of difficult course concepts; we can review your writing assignments with you, or we can answer any questions you might have regarding instructional technology. The following academic resources are available to you from the Academic Center for Excellence:

- [Tutoring Appointments](#) are a fantastic way to work through course content with another person. Germanna’s Academic Center for Excellence provides tutoring for all credit courses taught at the college.
- [The Math Center](#) is where you can go for immediate answers to math questions. No appointment is required.
- [The Writing Center](#) will assist you with writing assignments from across the curriculum. No appointment is required, and we welcome any writing concerns you may have.
- [Helpful Handouts](#) are guides that supplement academic content taught in Germanna classes.
- [Video tutorials](#) may be helpful if you are a visual or auditory learner to master key topics.
- [Interactive, online modules](#) are a great way to ensure understanding of the academic content if you need to practice what you learned.
- [Academic Links](#) lead to reputable websites with valuable information that will supplement content taught in Germanna classes.

- [Focused study sessions](#) are also provided by ACE to help students in the same course work together to understand the academic content.

Stay Motivated

When taking online courses, self-motivation is key. The following strategies will help you stay on task:

- [Remember Why You Are in School](#): You enrolled in classes for a reason, whether it was for a credential, a better job, or intellectual curiosity. Thinking about your personal goals will help you stay on track. It may even be helpful for you to visit [Germannna's Career and Transfer Center](#) to stay focused on your career goals.
- [Create a Realistic Schedule](#): Online classes are great, especially if you need flexibility due to other obligations, such as work and family responsibilities. It is important that the study schedule you create is realistic.
- [Be Introspective](#): The more you do something, the better you get. If this is the first time you have taken an online class, it will take a few weeks to become confident. Learn from your mistakes and discover what works for you.
- [Reward Yourself](#): When you finish a project or accomplish a goal, reward yourself! It is always important to acknowledge your accomplishments.

Watch this [Navigating Online Learning](#) video to listen to how one Germanna student stayed motivated while taking online classes.

Canvas: Frequently Asked Questions

Navigating a Canvas Course

[How do I view my grades in a current course?](#)

[How do I use the Syllabus as a student?](#)

[How do I use the Course Home Page as a student?](#)

[How do I view Announcements as a student?](#)

[How do I reply to an announcement as a student?](#)

Assignments

[Submitting an Online Assignment in Canvas](#)

[How do I submit a media file as an assignment submission?](#)

[How do I view the rubric for my assignment?](#)

[How do I upload a file as an assignment submission in Canvas?](#)

Discussions

[How do I view Discussions as a student?](#)

[How do I reply to a discussion as a student?](#)

[How do I edit or delete discussion replies as a student?](#)

Modules

[How do I view Modules as a student?](#)

[How do I mark a module item as done for a module requirement?](#)

Profile and User Settings

[How do I add an additional email address as a contact method in Canvas as a student?](#)

Working in Groups

[How do I join a group as a student?](#)

[How do I leave a group as a student?](#)

[How do I create a group as a student?](#)

[How do I upload a file to a group?](#)

[How do I create a discussion in a group?](#)

[How do I submit an assignment on behalf of a group?](#)

Quizzes

[How to take a Quiz/Test in Canvas](#)

[How do I know if I can retake a quiz?](#)

[How do I resume a quiz that I already started taking?](#)

[How do I view quiz results as a student?](#)

Audio and Video

[How do I access Canvas Studio?](#)

[How do I record a Canvas Studio video with a webcam in a course?](#)

[How do I submit Canvas Studio media as a file upload assignment as a student?](#)

[How do I record a video Using the Rich Content Editor as a Student](#)

[How do I view captions in a video as a student?](#)

[How do I add captions to new or uploaded videos in Canvas as a student?](#)

Google Docs and Canvas

[How do I submit a cloud assignment with Google Drive?](#)

[How do I create a Google Doc collaboration as a student?](#)

[How do I connect to Google Drive as a web service in Canvas as a student?](#)

[How to create a hyperlink or embed a file from Google Drive into the Rich Content Editor as a student?](#)

Google Suite Tutorials

Google Apps for Education

[How to Access the Apps with myGCC](#)

[G Suite Learning Center](#)

[The Apps Show](#)

Gmail

[Gmail Tips and Tricks](#)

[Gmail Video Tutorial for Germanna Students](#)

[How to Access Your VCCS email on the Gmail App](#)

Google Bookmarks

[How to Use Bookmarks on a Computer and Mobile Devices](#)

[How to Sign into Chrome Browsers and Extensions](#)

Google Drive

[How to Access Your Google Account through myGCC](#)

[Google Drive Video Tutorial for Germanna Students](#)

[Google Drive: Tips, Tricks, and Collaborations](#)

[Google Drive Tutorial](#)

[Google Drive Cheat Sheet](#)

Google Docs

[Google Docs Video Tutorial for Germanna Students](#)

[Google Docs Tutorial](#)

[Google Docs Cheat Sheet](#)

[Google Docs: Instructions for Formatting and Academic Paper](#)

Google Sheets

[Google Sheets Tutorial](#)

[Google Sheets Cheat Sheet](#)

Google Slides

[Google Slides Video Tutorial for Germanna Students](#)

[Google Slides Tutorial](#)

[Google Slides Cheat Sheet](#)

Google Forms

[Google Forms Tutorial](#)

[Google Forms Cheat Sheet](#)

Google Sites

[Google Sites Tutorial](#)

[Google Sites Cheat Sheet](#)

Google Hangouts

[Google Meet Tutorial](#)

Google Search

[How to Search on Google](#)

YouTube

[How to Access Your VCCS YouTube Account](#)

Zoom Tutorials

[Zoom Video Conferencing Tutorial](#)

[Zoom Terminology](#)

[Using Zoom on a Mobile Device](#)

[Joining a Meeting \(video\)](#)

[Joining, Starting, and Leaving a Zoom Meeting](#)

[Screen Share \(video\)](#)

[Screen Sharing and Whiteboard](#)

[Mute All and Unmute All](#)

[In-Meeting Chat](#)

[Scheduling a Meeting \(video\)](#)

[Joining & Configuring Audio and Video \(video\)](#)

[Audio Settings in Zoom](#)

[Video Settings in Zoom](#)

[My Audio is Not Working on IOS or Android](#)

[How to Record and Save a Zoom Meeting](#)