THINGS EVERY ONLINE STUDENT OUGHT TO KNOW

Do you think this handout is too much to read? Well, guess what? Taking an online course, just like any traditionally delivered college course, is going to require you to complete a significant amount of reading. If you're not prepared to do that, then you may want to reconsider…..

Follow the hot links for more information on highlighted topics.

Generally speaking….

- Your online course is accessible any time, and anywhere that you have an internet connection; you decide when to access your course (asynchronous). However, some courses require synchronous activities, i.e. participant interaction at a specific time.
- Your grade for an online course is not identified on your official transcript any differently than your grades for traditional courses
- Your online course has specific dates for dropping for a refund and student-initiated withdraw, the same as a traditional course
- Yavapai College offers technical support to online students through the Help Desk. Call them at 928-776-2168 or send them an e-mail.

Access….

- Your Yavapai College user name & password will be used to access your online course. NEVER share this information with others.
- Mozilla Foxfire is the best browser to use in conjunction with Blackboard. Download it for free.
- You will be able to access your course any time, day or night. You should schedule a *regular time* each week to complete the assignments for your course.
- Make sure your computer meets the hardware & software configuration standards of the college & course.

Preparation….

- Are you sure you're ready to take an online course? Take an online assessment or paper & pencil assessment to see where you stand.
- To be a successful online student you must be a motivated self-learner
- Start off strong by knowing what it takes to be successful in an online course
- You must have some basic computer literacy. You can't learn how to use the computer and expect to keep up with the course work at the same time.
- There is a learning curve for using Blackboard, the online course software. Use the video tutorials & FAQs on the YC web site, or attend a workshop.
- You will need to learn many new words and phrases that are special to online learning. Check out this Glossary of terms to see how many you already know.
- Make sure you get the textbook and other required course materials *before* the first week of class
- Schedule times on your calendar (9-12 hours per week) for *each* 3-credit course in which you're enrolled in if you want to do well.
- READ THE SYLLABUS! You are responsible for knowing the course requirements and due dates contained therein. This also gives you an opportunity to get a feel for the overall content and expectations of the course before you begin, and to see how the pieces fall together.

Communication….

- You will most likely need to learn how to use discussion boards and how to thread correctly in discussion boards (if you don't know what this means, check the Glossary of Terms under the Preparation heading).
- Participation and inter-activity are vital to success in most online classes, just like in a traditional classroom.
- Keep your e-mail messages organized; save all messages in folders so you'll be able to refer back to them as needed.
- Make sure you're familiar with basic e-mail etiquette and protocol, since a professional style of communication is important.
- Draft communications using a word processor to catch basic spelling & grammar errors, then paste into your e-mail or assignment submission in Blackboard.
- Use your draft folder to save messages written when you're angry or upset. Cool off, then reread & edit before sending.
- All official college communication is done through YC e-mail accounts. Check your YC e-mail through the portal **daily**!
- When you send e-mail messages, you will seldom receive responses instantaneously.
- Make sure you know how assignments are to be submitted (e-mail, drop box, or Blackboard assignment or assessment)
- Do not alienate your classmates or instructor by making insensitive comments, degrading others, or complaining. Reread the 4th & 6th bullet points above.

Study Strategies….

- You need to commit time both to access your course and for off-line reading and assignments. Make a weekly schedule and stick to it as much as possible.
- Most of your learning will be done through reading.   If you need to improve your reading speed and/or your reading comprehension, use these links for working on your own, or consider taking a reading improvement class such as ENG140.
- Study reading is a crucial skill and very different from other types of reading. Make sure you know how to do it.
- Online course assignments also require writing skills. Don't hesitate to use the Yavapai College Learning Center for assistance or submit writing assignments to the Online Writing Tutor through the portal to have them reviewed before turning them in.
- Online does not mean self-paced. Keep track of assignment and test deadlines and submit them on time to avoid penalties. DON"T PROCRASTINATE!
- Make sure you carefully *read and follow* all directions for your course assignments.
- Visit the Learning Center to find handouts on improving your study skills, or work with a tutor to develop more effective study techniques.
- Consider forming a study group with some of your classmates. Groups can meet in the Learning Center with a tutor facilitator (on request) or you can create online chat sessions.
- Tutors are available on a drop-in basis in the Learning Center for most academic subjects.
- Know and understand Yavapai College's expectations in regard to academic integrity & plagiarism (pg. 32 of 12/13 catalog).
- When using websites for research, know how to distinguish websites that have academic credibility.
- There are no dumb questions, so don't be afraid to ask an instructor about anything you don't understand, whether it be related to using Blackboard or course content. If you don't want to ask your instructor, then Ask-A-Tutor.
- Stay focused while working on your course work. It's easy to get distracted online so don't forget your purpose for being at the computer.
- The internet should never be your only research tool for completing assignments.