

## Online Learning Guidelines

While much of what follows may seem obvious, new ways of doing things can pose challenges on a number of levels, including comfort, participating and staying focussed. We hope these guidelines will be helpful in enhancing your online learning so that you can get the best from them.

### Approaching Online Learning

1. The learning experience of computer-based training in a virtual classroom is entirely different from traditional classroom and face-to-face training. It can be a challenge to embrace the change and to adapt to the online learning environment which is different to traditional classroom settings. It is helpful to join the virtual classroom with an open mind and heart. Understanding the benefits of e-learning and even discussing these and the challenges with your peers may be useful and better prepare you for online classes.
2. Understand what kind of technology is required (e.g. to access Zoom) and equip yourself. If you are unsure how to use equipment/software seek help – there are basic courses in computer literacy to enhance your skills. Having a fundamental knowledge of ICT will help you participate in online classes without interruptions and hindrances and will be useful when you go on to teach yourself.
3. Raise a hand – either physically or using the raise hand icon – when you want to answer questions to avoid speaking over others (refer to the 'Online Etiquette Guide').
4. Make use of the Chat Function. Use the Chat to everyone to ask general questions. Use the tutor's personal chat if you have a question or comment you are not comfortable sharing with the whole group.
5. During the lesson if you do not feel comfortable leave the virtual classroom and come back as soon as you feel better.
6. Consider your e-learning environment and ensure good lighting, a comfortable chair (or other support) and a seated position that allows good body posture. Bad body posture causes bad concentration, headaches, and inability to perceive information. Sit upright, which allows you to breathe better and focus more on the information comprehension. If you have a chair with a back support be sure that your legs are comfortably reaching the floor and you don't have to figure out where to place them (you can also opt for a [135° leaning back position](#) which can prevent you from straining your back).
7. Place your laptop on a higher surface that almost levels with your chest while sitting. It will cause less straining with a reduced slouching position. Or if you are using a PC adjust the monitor to be at a point where your neck is neutral and relaxed. If there is likely to be a practice try out placement of your mat with the camera prior to the session so that you have a good view and the teacher has as clear a view of you as possible.
8. Move around during the session. Rocking back and forth will release the pressure on your spine and will enhance your focus. Change position, stand; if you are using a laptop or table move to the floor. Try a 'fidget toy'. Regularly take your eyes away from the screen. When listening you do not need to gaze at the screen.
9. Move around during the lunch break and other breaks and get outside if you can.
10. Practice Yoga before or after the session (or both).



## Online Learning Etiquette

- 1. Be on time.** Punctuality is especially important for online meetings as we are working in the absence of traditional ways to ensure that everyone can be gathered on time.
- 2. Wear suitable clothing.** Learning from the comfort of our homes can make it feel desirable to dress down, but we want to make sure we are looking presentable and professional for each other. Expect to be visible and dress appropriately.
- 3. Choose a good location.** Aim for a clean and non-distracting background. Consider background noise and either try to be away from this or use a headset. As much as possible try to make sure nothing from your location becomes a distraction to others in the class.
- 4. Mute yourself if you experience unavoidable background noise.** If for reasons beyond your control noise becomes a problem in what you thought was a quiet space, please mute your audio. Try to do this sooner rather than later. If it's impossible to find a quiet place in your current scenario just mute yourself for the whole time, except when called on, and let your tutor know by a private chat message what the situation is.
- 5. Give your full, focused attention.** It goes without saying that giving your focused attention is one of the best things you can do to learn efficiently. Avoid using another device or engaging with someone or something else in your surroundings rather than the meeting that you are a participant in.
- 6. Participate fully.** The nature of an online format may increase our tendency to sit back and observe. When there is a glowing screen in front of us, we can default to passive spectator mode. Be aware of this and do contribute to group discussions. Remember to raise a hand (physical or virtual) so you don't speak out over others.



Asking questions during an online meeting is important. Your teachers are there to support and help you, and it makes it easier on everyone if you can ask a question while together in an online meeting. If you are experiencing some confusion or have a question about something, it's likely that someone else has that same question. Speak up!

Of course, if a teacher is in the middle of an explanation or a thought, then you may want to jot the question down as a reminder to yourself or type it into the chat box for the teacher to see. It's always possible the teacher is about to address your question, so we don't want to go to the extreme of constant interruptions.



- 7. Don't dominate the discussion.** For some of us our natural talkativeness/willingness to contribute may lead us to participate too much. In this case be aware to make sure you give others, who may need more of a pause in between comments, a chance to discuss. It's okay for there to be a little bit of silence in an online class; you don't have to fill every void with a comment or a thought just because it comes to you.

A strategy that may be helpful is counting how many people have spoken since the last comment you shared. If that number seems to average in the 4-5 range or higher, you're probably doing fine, even if you're still sharing more than others. However, if your number is averaging in the 2-3 range, or even as low as 1, you should definitely hold your thoughts more and let others share before contributing again. Obviously, if the teacher or another student asks you a follow-up question right after your comment, that doesn't need to count, but the point still stands.

- 8. Be more careful with your words.** So much of our communication is built on presence with a person, including our truly incredible ability to read facial expressions and other non-verbal communication. We can't always articulate what we are reading in another person's countenance, but it informs the tone and temperature of our interactions with others in ways we don't even realize.

While online meetings with video do allow for some facial recognition, it may be delayed or affected in strange ways by the interposition of a screen. People don't converse in the same way through a device as they would face to face and this may mean that comments that would have been considered funny before are now offensive. We need to relearn some of our social interactions to avoid any misunderstandings and hurt feelings.

- 9. Keep up with all assignments.** It can be tempting to put off assignments which can feel you leaving under pressure to meet a deadline and result in rushed work. To avoid the panic and the feeling of being behind the ball, set up routines for yourself that ensures you are always on top of your assignments.

The reason this is such a crucial piece of etiquette is that your preparation may impact the learning experience of others. If the next online meeting is a discussion of reading, which you have failed to complete, you deprive the class and yourself of the learning that could have occurred through your thoughtful, informed comments on the text. This experience can't be recreated or made up if it is lost due to your lack of preparation. Respect the learning of the whole class by planning your work times well and keeping up with all assignments.

- 10. Apologise for any accidental breach of etiquette.** As human beings we all make mistakes, and mistakes are even more likely when a new set of experiences and challenges interrupt our normal routine. Online learning is going to involve that sort of interruption, and no one is expected to be perfect. However, if you do break one of these etiquette guidelines – whether it's not being on time, loud background noise, dominating the discussion, or not being prepared – come right out and apologise sooner rather than later.



Apologising shows respect to your peers and your teacher and indicates that you are aware of the problem and not oblivious.