



Getting Started Guide for Online Activity Director Classes at Ridgewater College

Welcome to the World of Online Learning!

This *Getting Started* guide will provide tips and suggestions on things you need to know about online learning and how to be successful in your online class. First time taking an online class? It will be important for you to read this information very carefully and get any questions you might have answered before jumping in or considering taking an online class.

Important Information for Online Learners

Online Course Time Scheduling Suggestions

When taking an online course, you must plan and organize your time and tasks carefully. **Online classes are not independent study. There are due dates and timelines to be met.** At the beginning of each semester, mark a calendar with every assignment due date so you can keep track of all of your classes. Online classes are not easier than traditional on campus classes. They may actually take more of your time as you are required to provide written assignments, participate in discussion topics, conduct web searches, etc. You must take the initiative in planning for your course work. Students are often working full time and need to organize course work studies around job and family obligations. This makes it even more important to set up a schedule. Online courses require you to read and comprehend assignments with little assistance. Therefore, if you do need assistance, make sure you are asking for it with enough advance time to get a response from the instructor before the assignment is due. It is always in your best interest to NOT leave assignments until the last minute. For example:

- *It is 9 pm at night and you are working on a web search assignment that is due at 11:59pm. You discover that you do not understand one of the questions and need clarification from your instructor. You email your instructor asking for help but the instructor is not checking email at that late hour. You are unable to complete the assignment without further clarification.*
- *You have all of your work almost done and are going to finish it right before it is due. A family emergency comes up and you must be with your family. You do not have time to finish your assignment before the time it is due.*
- *You have left a discussion topic until the last minute because you know exactly what you want to say and are sure it will only take 15 minutes or so. When you sit at your computer, you realize the Internet server is down or your computer is acting strange and you have no way to post your entry before the required timeframe.*

Setting up a schedule will not necessarily make you an efficient person. Even with a schedule, realize that sometimes things get in the way of completing your tasks.

Communication with the Instructor

One of the most important factors in being successful in online learning is staying in touch with your instructor. If you are having problems or do not understand the requirements of an assignment, you need to let your instructor know immediately.

Once you have decided to register for the online activity program classes, you will need to communicate to the instructor, via email, your name, mailing address and email so more detailed information can be sent to you.

Instructor email: Julie.reginek@ridgewater.edu

A little about Desire2Learn...

Desire2Learn (D2L) is the program used by Ridgewater College to deliver classes and information online. D2L will be used in this class to store course related information, assignments, handouts, readings, and other material. You will be able to access this information at anytime, anywhere, as long as you have connection to the internet. D2L will also be used to take quizzes, submit assignments, participate in discussion topic, and view your grades.

Some of the D2L tools we will be using in the online class are;

News: Located on the course home page, news will be used for class announcements, updates, and other forms of communication from your instructor.

Course Home: This link on the navigation bar will bring you back to the course home page form anywhere in D2L.

Content: This link on the navigation bar is where you will access all assignments, handouts, readings, and other course related material.

Discussion: Discussion topics, case studies and other activities that are part of the class will be conducted in the discussion room. There is also a discussion room available for you to post questions or concerns about the class at anytime. An Activity Room will also be available for you to share activity ideas or ask questions not related to the course topics of your virtual classmates. This is a fun room.... No school work allowed in this discussion room!

Chat Room: Chat rooms are a way for people to communicate synchronously (at the same time). This can be difficult to find a day and time that is convenient because of everyone's busy schedule and geographic location. Occasionally a chat session will be scheduled for students to ask questions or just communicate with other class members or the instructor, but the chat sessions are optional and not part of the grade. When group work is part of an assignment, a chat room will be available for each group to use to communicate.

Classlist: Students enrolled in the class are listed in the classlist. You can also email students in the class directly from the classlist, however, this email is outgoing only. To view incoming emails, you will need to log in to the college's email system.

Dropbox: All assignments will be submitted using the Dropbox tool. Each assignment has a corresponding folder and due date in which you will put your assignment. Once the submission deadline has passed, you will not be able to submit your assignment. Assignments will not be accepted by email.

Quizzes: This tool will be used to administer quizzes. When the time comes to take a quiz, specific information on how to access and take the quiz will be posted in the News section on the course home page.

Grades: You will be able to view your ongoing grades at anytime in this area. Please allow a minimum of one week turnaround for assignments and quizzes to be graded and posted.

Links: Be sure to check out the websites listed in the Links tool on the navigation bar. If you have a favorite website that you would like to share, let me know and I will add it to the list.

Course Schedule/Calendar: Assignment, project, and quiz dues dates and other course related information are listed on the schedule/calendar along with college related information. You can also use the schedule/calendar to include your personal events and reminders that only you see.

Email: The email used in D2L is an outgoing email only. Messages sent to the instructor and other students in the class will go to the Ridgewater email account. It is the student's responsibility to check their college email account regularly.



Checklist for Technical Consideration

Hardware and Software Availability

- √ Do you have access to a computer that is no more than 4 years old and is it capable of accessing the Internet?
- √ Do you have access to the Internet on a regular basis?
- √ Do you have FireFox 1.0, Netscape 4.7 or Microsoft Internet Explorer 5.5 or later?
- √ Are you able to disable firewalls or security blockers?
- √ Do you have a word processing program that has spell checker and can save documents in a .doc or .rtf format?

Comfort Level With Computers

- √ Can you run the programs you need to use on a computer such as word processor, email and web browser programs?
- √ Can you create, save, and manage (copy/move/delete/rename) files on your computer?

Internet Skills

- √ Can you access e-mail and the Internet daily?
- √ Do you know how to send and receive email messages?
- √ Do you know how to attach a file to an email message?
- √ Do you know how receive a file attachment from an incoming email message?
- √ Do you know how to paste text from a word processor into an email message?
- √ Do you know how to locate websites?

Learning Style Considerations

- √ Do you stay on task without direct supervision?
- √ Can you prioritize your own workload, or do you procrastinate?
- √ Can you learn from reading source material and completing activities?
- √ Do you usually understand written instructions?
- √ Are you good at assessing your own progress?
- √ Do you enjoy learning new computer or technology skills?
- √ Can you solve problems and work through difficulties independently?
- √ Are you planning to allocate as much time in your schedule for an online class as you would for a face to face class?
- √ Will you have time every week to work on assignments?
- √ Do you have support and understanding from family, friends, and coworkers while you are taking an online class?

Communication Skills

- √ Are you able to communicate your thoughts and ideas in written format?
- √ Are you able to communicate using proper grammar, spelling, and sentence structure?
- √ Do you know how to use spell check?



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Can I start classes at anytime during the semester?

No. The classes are designed to deliver specific course content (modules) on a weekly basis. In each module, there are a variety of learning opportunities that happen such as web searches, discussion topics, idea sharing, or group work that require student interaction and collaboration. This provides students the opportunity to network, communicate and collaborate with their classmates from all over and be part of a class.

Do I have to be online at a certain time each week?

No. Because students in the class are from different geographic locations, it becomes a challenge to accommodate time zones. Class participation is done in the Discussions room and allows for students to “post” comments and replies at anytime.

How do I submit assignments? Can I email them to the instructor?

Assignments for online classes are submitted in the Dropbox folders and will not be accepted by email.

How much time will I be required to put in a week for the online class?

You can expect to spend a minimum of five to ten hours a week completing assignments, doing the required reading, participating in discussion topics, and doing web searches. Everyone has a different learning rate and style. Your computer skills will also determine how much time you will need.

What kind of programs do I need on my computer?

Microsoft Office is the preferred word processing program. Assignments are required to be submitted in a .doc or .rtf format. Some of the documents provided in the class are .pdf format. You may need to download a free Adobe Reader plug-in to view those documents.

What about firewalls or blockers on my computer?

Students who access D2L or open documents on computers at their work settings often experience problems due to firewalls. If you are planning on using a computer at your work, you will need to check with your organizations I.T. person for any security issues.

Do I need high speed internet connection?

Yes, it is highly recommended. There are some modules where you will be required to watch a video. With dial-up connected, you will not be able to access the videos. If dial-up is your only option, you may need to find an alternative option such as a library or family/friends computer.

Do I need to be good at using the computer?

Basic skills are essential. See the checklist above for specific requirements.

What if I am a procrastinator? Will I be successful?

Probably not! Online classes are not an independent study format that you can put off. There will be due dates and other course requirements that you will need to stay on top of. Online learning requires motivation, self-discipline and being self-directed. Good time management skills are also important.

How do I get the books I need for the class?

Books can be ordered online from the campus bookstore. There is further information about getting your books later in this document. The thing to remember is not to wait until the last minute to order your textbooks. Often you will need to begin reading or participate in a discussion topic from the textbook at the start of the class.

What if I need help?

Your instructor is there to help you. If you do not communicate with the instructor, they will not know that you are having problems or are frustrated. Quickstart guides are also available to assist you with using the different D2L tools.

What if I will be gone on vacation and an assignment is due during that time?

Arrangements can be made with the instructor for alternative options.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

All students in this program are required to have an email account and have access to a computer and the Internet. A Ridgewater email account will be assigned to you and will be the official form of communication between student, the college and the instructor.

Students will be required to interact throughout the semester using the discussion room, chat rooms and email for peer and instructor communication. Although the course is taught online, students may need to research relevant topics in a nearby library, the internet, and other community resources.

Assignments and projects are required to be submitted on or before the due date. Dropbox folders for assignments will have the due date on them along with the name of the assignment as indicated in the content area. Assignments will receive a deduction of 5 points for each day beyond the due date. After one week, the assignment will no longer be accepted. The exception to this is if there are technical difficulties with D2L or Ridgewater College's server or the student has made prior arrangements for special circumstances. Do not wait until the last minute to submit assignments.

Course Assignments and Participation

Assignments and Projects (50% of final grade)

There will be assignments for each module or unit. These assignments will require a variety of different methods of work such as interviews, community research, writing papers and web searches. All assignments are required to be submitted via the Dropbox in the appropriate folder. Assignments will not be accepted as email attachments. Documents will only be accepted in a .doc or .rtf format.

Class Participation/Discussion (30% of final grade)

Your success in the online class is based on active, continued class participation. You need to read assigned chapters, articles, content pages and other relevant information in order to be prepared for the discussion of the topic. You also need to participate in weekly activities, assignments and discussions.

Quizzes (20% of final grade)

Quizzes given in the program are simply another method of assessment of the student. Quizzes are conducted online, are timed and will have a designated time in which they will be available to the student. It is the student's responsibility to set aside uninterrupted time to take the quiz.

How in this class set up and taught?

Each Monday morning at 6:00 am a module/unit will be released. This module will focus on a particular topic(s) that we will cover for the week. Along with the content in the modules, there is reading from the textbooks, supplemental reading material provided in Desire2Learn (D2L) and internet resources to visit. The units released every Monday morning may contain the following information:

- Study guide for each chapter
- Assignments
- Projects and activities
- Checklist for assignments and activities to be completed for the week
- Discussion topics

Assignments are generally due by the following Monday night at 11:59 pm, however assignments that are larger and require more time to complete will have extended due dates. Each assignment has a Dropbox folder in which you will submit your documents. The Dropbox folders will also show the due date. Assignments due dates and other important dates can also be found on in the schedule/calendar tool.

Course Offering Schedule

The Basic Activity Program consists of four classes/units with each class 8 weeks in length. There are two options available to students for completing the program.

Option 1

If you choose to do the full program in one semester, that is all four classes (4 credits total), you will be doing two classes parallel throughout the semester. For example:

1st half of the semester: Unit 1 Intro to Activities and Aging Services and
and
Unit 4 Activity Calendar Planning and Program Delivery

2nd half of the semester: Unit 2 Health and Social Issues in Aging
and
Unit 3 Care Planning and Documentation

Option 2

If you choose to complete the program over two semesters, that is 2 classes (2 credits), you would complete two classes each semester. For example:

Semester 1

1st half of the semester: Unit 1 Intro to Activities and Aging Services
2nd half of the semester: Unit 2 Health and Social Issues in Aging

Semester 2

1st half of the semester: Unit 4 Activity Calendar Planning and Program Delivery
2nd half of the semester: Unit 3 Activity Care Planning and Documentation

This option is recommended for those who have busy schedules with family/community commitments and/or responsibilities.

What Should I Do Next?

After reading this information, be sure to contact Julie with any questions you might have about participating in an online class. If you are feeling comfortable with the information and requirements and would like to register, here's what you need to do:

1. Go to <http://inside.ridgewater.edu/PHD>
2. Locate the registration information on the website
3. Call Ridgewater College registration office at 1-800-722-1151, ext. 8593 to register
4. Arrange for tuition payment
5. Obtain your student ID number from the registrar
6. Email instructor with your name, mailing address, and email address so additional information can be sent to you
7. Get the required textbooks
8. Communicate with the instructor with any questions you might have
9. Start thinking about how you will manage your time and schedule once the class starts