

Inver Hills Community College

B.R.E.A.T.H.E.

Success Tips for Online Learning

Students of Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society
Alpha Omicron Beta Chapter
Inver Hills College, www.ihptk.org



B.R.E.A.T.H.E.: Success Tips for Online Learning

Phi Theta Kappa – Alpha Omicron Beta Chapter 8 Dec. 2010 (rev. 8-'14)

Be on top of readings.
Remember deadlines.
Expect the unexpected.
Ask questions.
Time your schedule.
Help yourself to assistance.
Engage in discussions.

Online learning can be a leap for many people.
Here are some quick tips to help you through your online classes!

Be on Top of Readings: Most teachers will have a unique schedule:

- One tip is to learn your schedule and start readings as soon as possible.
- By reading early you are allowing time for the information to sink in, as well as encouraging a period to reflect and relate.
- Reading the material *is* the main source of content in an online course.

Remember Deadlines: The easiest things to do to remember deadlines are:

- Keep a planner or use Google Calendar.
- Update phone calendar and set task alarms.
- The first week of class check syllabus and place homework deadlines on calendar. (The syllabus is often found under content on your course software program (such as D2L, Blackboard, or whatever your school uses). Wherever your syllabus is, make sure to thoroughly review it, as its contents are extremely important.
- Do not turn homework in 5 minutes before a deadline. Your internet may go down, and teachers usually don't give you credit for late work.
- Check your course software program regularly for changes or updates in the schedule.

Expect the unexpected: Make sure to expect the unexpected. Do not go into an online class thinking it will be easier than a "brick and mortar" class. Think about the type of course you are taking and assess two things:

- How comfortable you are with this subject or how well you did on a previous class of the same nature? If you did not do well in person, this may be even harder.
- What is the best way to learn *this specific material*? An "interpersonal communications class" might be best suited in person rather than on-line, for example.

Ask Questions: Teachers and facilitators are there for *YOU*.

- Their contact information is usually labeled in the beginning of the syllabus.
- Do not be afraid to send a brief e-mail asking for clarification, or stop in during office hours.
- Teachers also often have an online DISCUSSION board where students will be asked to post any questions they may have, because often if you are wondering about something related to the class, other people are too. Then the posted answer is available for everyone.
- If it is a question of a personal nature, email the teacher who will respond privately.
- They want to see you succeed just as much as you do.

Time your schedule: Schedule time for each day to do readings, research, postings, studying, etc. It is easier to make something a requirement for the day rather than to hope for time after everything else is done. In addition:

- Identify your most productive time of the day to do *mental tasks* and if possible set that time of day to do homework.
- Identify your own ideal study habit, make time for study breaks, but do not use them as a distraction. For example, learn when study breaks add to versus detract from your studying.
- A tip for parents with children is to set up an amount of time to play, help with homework, etc. prior to working on material; this will limit distractions. It can also ease a parent's worry about taking time away from family; all needs can still be fulfilled.

Help yourself to assistance: There are many places online and on campus to get help:

- Tutoring Centers: Many colleges' tutoring centers offer a wide variety of tutoring services
- Online tutoring: Check with your college's tutoring center to see if online tutoring is possible.
- Google Docs: Interactive document in which group members can all work online at the same time.
- Computer lab: Almost all colleges have computer labs open and free for use by all of its students. Most libraries offer some kind of free computer use and/or free wireless Internet service.
- Make sure before your classes start to log into your college's online courseware system—such as D2L, Blackboard, and others—and learn how it works.
- Form in person or online peer study groups. An instructor is generally more than willing to open a discussion board for students who show an interest in further or more in-depth learning.
- Don't be afraid to network with your classmates! If it will help you to study with at least one person from your class, exchange phone numbers.

Engage in Discussions: Posting early in the week will give you the option of choosing the posts to which you want to respond through the rest of the week.

- Most teachers do not accept the "11:59" discussion post as participation.
- Plus, being the last student to post makes it difficult to find something new to discuss.

Additional Tips:

- There are many forms of procrastination; such as cleaning or working out when you are supposed to be studying. Be sure to do your homework, instead of procrastinating.
- Libraries are great for getting away from distractions at home such as noisy roommates, significant others, kids, or laundry/dishes piling up. Most libraries are equipped with private study rooms. Coffee shops can be a second choice when libraries are closed. Both usually offer free Wi-Fi.
- Set up rewards for yourself once you complete a task. For example, after taking a test plan something fun to do afterward.
- Be disciplined. If you want success, the truth is that you have to work at it. You generally get back whatever you put into it.
- Most colleges offer courses that will help develop your individual study skills and abilities. Check these out if further assistance is needed or if you are unsure if an online class is right for you. These classes will engage students in exploring their own study habits, learning styles, and personalities to create a personalized approach to success.
- And remember the three key ingredients to success in all areas of life: sleep well, exercise, and eat well!
- See your way through life, and **don't forget to B.R.E.A.T.H.E.** :-)

Student Experiences:

~ "I have to force myself to do the most unpleasant homework assignment(s) first. Then I have the rest of the time to work on easy or more enjoyable assignments. If I put that one off and do it at the last minute, not only do I still dislike it, now I am under stress to get it finished on time."

- *Wanda Ortmann*

~ "Professor participation has been on both sides of the spectrum for me. I took one class where the professor had all of the tests open from day one, the power-points were in the content section, and he never spoke to us again. I have also had professors who will email you each week to let you know what is due, when they have finished grading something, and if they are running late with your paper."

- *Margarette Foley*

~ "I wasn't sure whether to take online or in-person classes. During my first semester at college I decided to try out both. I soon discovered that an online class worked well with my learning style and personality. However, I noticed that an online class would hold me back from developing further communication skills and overcoming public speaking anxieties. I think an individual should examine the impact a class setting will have on them and relate this to their future career plans".

- *Erica McNearney*

~ "Time management was a hard one for me to get.... I had so much going on already, and the online classes were difficult to fit in sometimes. I ended up checking the new content on Monday, reading and posting discussions on Tuesday, and then checking every night for other posts to reply to in order to keep myself engaged in the class."

- *Stacey Skillings*

~ "I had this online communications class, and we had a huge group project. None of us could meet at the same time, and I suggested this tool on Google called Google Docs. We each chose a different color to work in and each time we logged in to write some of the paper we could tell who added and changed what. It was interesting to work with more than one person at a time because it updated regularly.

- *Maggie Marquez*

~ "I took three online classes at once. I loved it! I got to do my assignments on my own time. It fit into my life. Classes were harder but I feel that I got more out of it. I would love to take more online classes."

- *Jeff Anderson*

Credits & Purpose:

B.R.E.A.T.H.E. is a project founded by member Margarette Foley of the Alpha Omicron Beta chapter of Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society at Inver Hills College and further developed by the entire chapter as its 2010 Honors Project. It has been used at over a dozen colleges and universities by hundreds of faculty members for thousands of students.

The main goal of B.R.E.A.T.H.E. is to give students the skills necessary to succeed in online education. Many students who sign up for online courses are not aware of the challenges that the courses present over traditional in-class courses. There are courses devoted to online class taking, and success therein; however, they are imperfect. This project is an attempt to better educate students who are considering moving into the realm of online courses.