



LEARNING ONLINE

AN INTRODUCTION TO ONLINE
EDUCATION FOR THE HEALTH
DISCIPLINES

**Kristin Petrovic, Lynn Corcoran,
Emily Doyle, and Terra Murray**

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ONLINE EDUCATION FOR
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Welcome to *Learning Online*

This resource will guide you through your journey as an online learner. You will begin with three core parts.

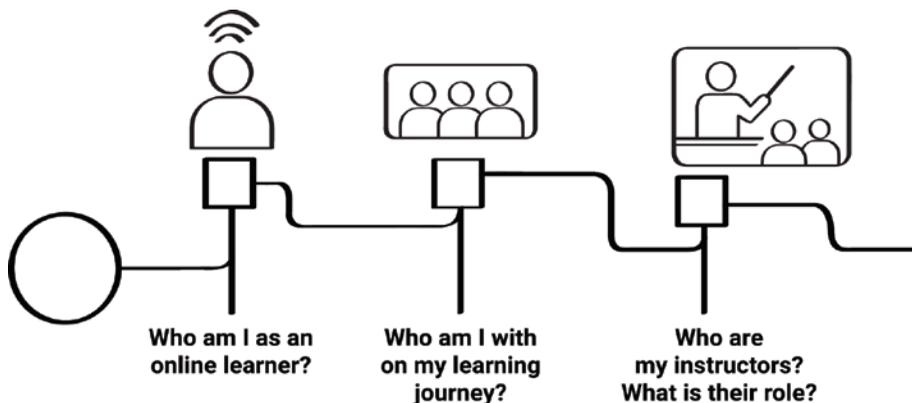


Figure i:1: Three core parts of *Learning Online*. Illustration by Jessica Tang.

Who Am I as an Online Learner?

Becoming a self-directed learner is key to the online learning environment. In part 1, you will apply the plan-monitor-evaluate cycle to identify learning goals, select strategies, and monitor your progress.

Who Am I with on My Learning Journey?

Part 2 focuses on becoming a member of a community of inquiry. The community of inquiry model provides an excellent framework for you to explore your role in creating an effective learning community and develop strategies for working successfully in a team.

Who Are My Instructors? What Is Their Role?

Instructor-student relationships in online learning are different than in traditional classes. In part 3, you will understand the role of your instructors and explore ways to create effective relationships with them.

Complete these three core parts first. As you complete them, you should be able to do the following:

- define your role as an online learner by developing a mindset for independent learning
- prepare for your role as a team member in an online environment
- relate to online instructors in a way that supports your learning and growth

After completing these core parts, you may select additional content that supports your skill development.

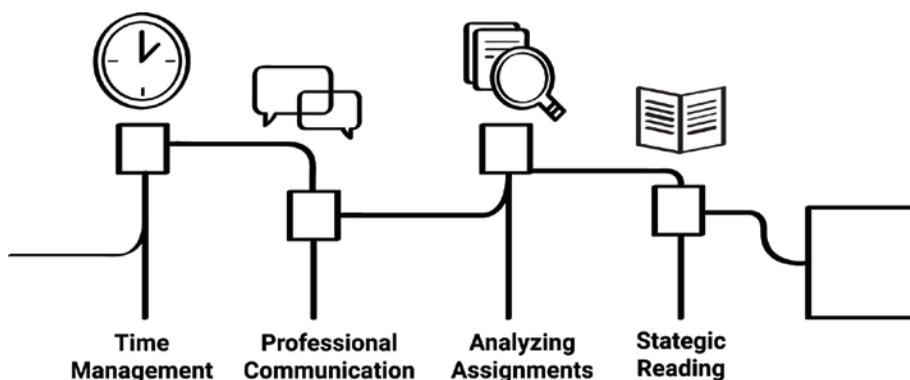


Figure i:2: Additional content in *Learning Online*. Illustration by Jessica Tang.

Learning to Manage Your Time

Online learning requires strong time management skills. In part 4, you will learn about the process of planning your term, developing a workable daily schedule, and managing daily tasks.

Professional Communication

Professional communication is a key workplace skill. Online learning allows you many opportunities to develop skills in clear, effective, and professional written communication. Part 5 introduces you to strategies for communicating in email and other online settings.

Analyzing Online Assignments

Your online courses may include new and unfamiliar types of assignments. Part 6 introduces you to strategies for systematically analyzing your assignments so that you can achieve the learning goals set out in your course.

Strategic Reading

How do you manage online reading without suffering from information overload? Part 7 introduces strategies for reading strategically and taking notes on nonprint resources.

You may complete these four parts in any order. To navigate to the part of your choice, move to the chapter that corresponds to your chosen topic.

Before beginning these parts, review the following descriptions of asynchronous, synchronous, paced, and self-paced learning. These terms will be used throughout the book to describe the learning environment.

Online Learning

Online learning allows people to study in exciting and new ways often not offered at more traditional universities. It is quite different from other, more traditional universities in several important ways. For example, at Athabasca University (AU), there are multiple delivery modes, including individualized study, grouped study, practicum, and paced online. You may also hear the terms *synchronous*, *asynchronous*, *paced*, or *self-paced*.

What Is the Difference Between Synchronous and Asynchronous?

Synchronous refers to a learning environment where learners and the instructor are engaged in the environment at the same time, and feedback can be given immediately. This is often the model at traditional universities, where learners attend their classes at a given time every day with their instructors and other classmates. Some courses or components of courses may also be synchronous or have synchronous components to them.

Asynchronous refers to a learning environment where learners and the instructor are engaged in the environment more independently and at different times. There is often little to no real-time engagement with others that is planned or intentional. Learners in this environment often learn on their own time and schedule. While some courses may overall be asynchronous in nature, there may be some synchronous elements to them, such as Microsoft Teams virtual meetings.

What Is the Difference Between Paced and Self-Paced?

Self-paced refers to an individualized learning environment where the learner sets their overall schedule within a specific time period (e.g., four months) to complete the learning associated with a given course. For example, in a self-paced, individualized learning environment, learners may all start and complete the course on a different day than their classmates. Though learners may be given a suggested schedule of how to navigate learning activities and assessments, it is up to each learner to complete them within their contract dates. For example, at AU, most undergraduate courses are asynchronous and self-paced or individualized study.

Paced refers to a study environment where learners all start and end on the same day and follow a predetermined schedule of assignments, exams, and discussion forums together with their instructor. For example, most graduate courses at AU are asynchronous and paced, meaning that learning is offered typically in weekly units, and learners participate at a time of their choosing each week in various discussion and learning activities, both independently and with their peers.

What Is Grouped Study?

Grouped study refers to learning that occurs in a physical classroom setting, in a face-to-face environment. This model is very infrequent at AU.

What Is Practicum?

Many programs have practicum components. These are courses that include a field placement at varied locations and times that are in person, within a designated time frame. For example, the FHD at AU offers several programs that have practicum requirements for learners, including the undergraduate bachelor of nursing program, the nurse practitioner program, and the master of counselling program.

PART 1

Who Am I as an Online Learner?

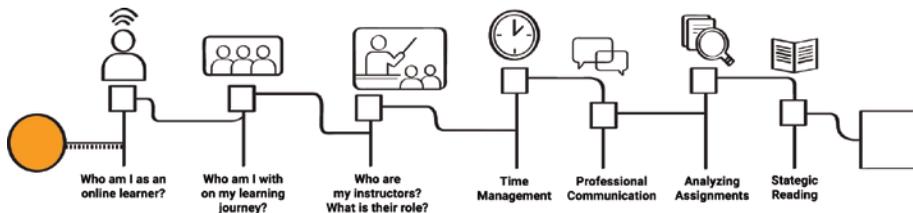


Figure p1:1: Navigating your journey. Illustration by Jessica Tang.

In this part of the *Learning Online* resource, you will explore your role as an online learner. By the end of this part, you will be able to do the following:

- describe the characteristics of a self-directed learner
- use the plan-monitor-evaluate strategy to organize and evaluate your learning
- apply critical questioning and reflective strategies to assess your learning at each stage in your course

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1

Identifying Skills for Self-Directed Learning

Though all university courses ask students to apply independent learning strategies, online learning requires an even higher level of self-directed learning skills. Many students have experience in teacher-directed classrooms. In these classrooms, the teacher is the central figure, and the students take directions from the instructor about what to learn. In these environments, students might take notes on an instructor's lecture and might focus much of their learning time on memorizing concepts in preparation for recalling them on an exam.

Online university courses are different. The instructor is no longer the central figure in the learning environment. You, the student, become central in your own learning journey. As you undertake this journey, you are supported by your community of fellow students. Your instructor serves as your guide, using their knowledge and experience to direct you to learning experiences that will lead you to your learning goals.

As you begin to learn about how to learn online, reflect on your current self-directed learning skills. Think of a time when you had to learn something new to complete a task and ask yourself the following questions: How did I determine what I didn't know? How did I identify what I needed to do to complete the task? How did I actualize that learning plan and determine if I successfully gained competency in that area? What could I have done if I was not quite as successful as I would have liked?

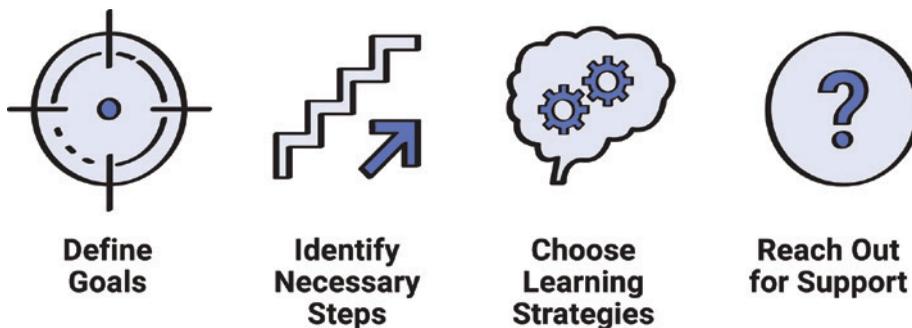


Figure 1.1: Visualizing independent learning skills. Illustration by Jessica Tang.

Independent learning requires the following skills:

- defining your learning goals for your program, each course, and each assignment you complete
- identifying the steps you must take to move toward your goals (What content do you need to know? How will you learn it?)
- choosing strategies that will support your own learning
- reaching out for the support you need from your instructor, classmates, and university support services

In the next chapter, you will explore the ways that a skill called metacognition supports you in becoming an independent learner.

2

Applying the Plan-Monitor-Evaluate Model for Assessing Your Learning Progress

What Is Metacognition?

Have you ever wondered what the most successful students do differently from other learners? People who have developed effective ways of learning have mastered a skill called *metacognition*. In simple terms, metacognition is understanding your own thinking and learning processes. In other words, it is “thinking about your thinking.” Metacognitive skills include planning your learning, monitoring whether your current learning strategies are successful, and evaluating the results of your learning. Improving your metacognitive skills is associated with increased success in all aspects of your academic life. To learn more about how metacognition applies to student life, watch Video 2.1: Metacognition.

TIP: At several points in this resource, you will have the opportunity to learn key skills by watching a short video. If you prefer reading to watching videos, you will find a written summary located directly after each video. Scroll past the video to read if this is your learning preference.

Video 2.1: Metacognition (<https://oer.aupress.ca/oer-202504/2.1>)**Metacognition**

How do you gain the skill of metacognition? One way to think about developing metacognition is gaining the ability to plan, monitor, and evaluate your learning.

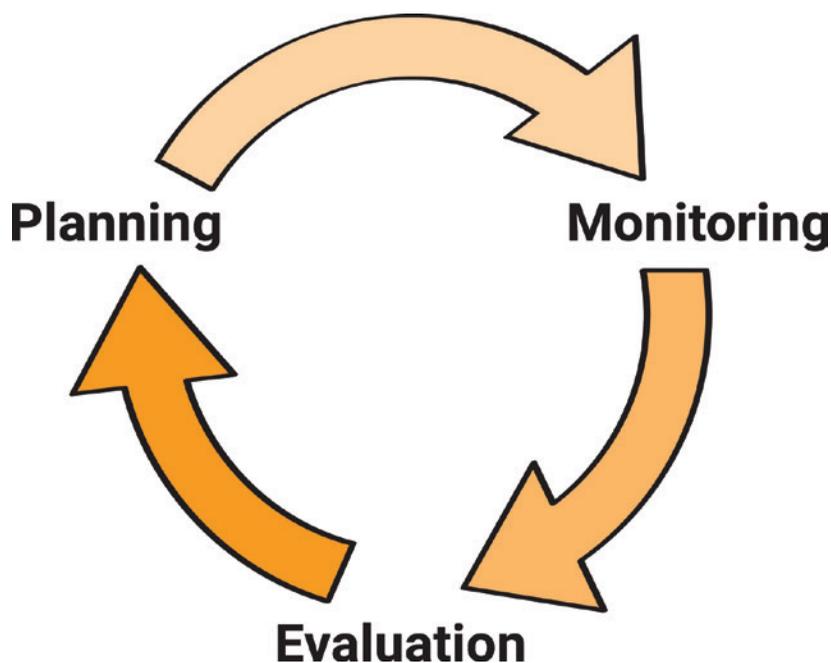


Figure 2.1: The learning cycle. Illustration by Jessica Tang.

Planning involves two key tasks: deciding what you need to learn and then deciding how you are going to learn that material.

Monitoring requires you to ask, “How am I doing at learning this?” In monitoring, you are constantly tracking what you have learned, what you don’t yet know, and whether your study strategies are helping you learn effectively.

Evaluation involves reflection on how well you met your learning objectives after completing a unit of study or receiving feedback (such as a test or assignment).

Key Questions to Improve Your Learning

At each stage in the learning cycle, there are key questions that you will ask yourself to support your learning process. In table 2.1, you will identify the key question for each stage in the cycle, along with the other questions you will want to consider. To use these questions in your courses, download a printable worksheet version (<https://oer.aupress.ca/oer-202504/dr2.1>).

Table 2.1: Learning Cycle Key Questions

Key questions	Other questions to ask yourself
What do I need to learn? (Planning)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the learning objectives for this class? • What do I already know about this topic? • What are the concepts I need to master before my next learning assessment? • What do I want to learn about this topic? • How do I distinguish important information from the details?
How am I going to learn the material? (Planning)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can I integrate textbook reading with lecture notes? • What active learning strategies will support my learning? • Will I study alone or with a study group? • What charts or visuals will help me reorganize or process this material? • What memory strategies can I use to remember key words and concepts? • How can I connect with my instructor?
How am I doing at learning this material? (Monitoring)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What concepts do I understand well? • What concepts are still confusing for me? • Can I explain the material to someone else without referring to notes? • Can I create and answer self-testing questions about these concepts? • What other strategies could I use to learn this material? • Am I using the supports available to me? • How can I make this material more personally relevant to me?
Did I learn the material effectively? (Evaluation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent did I meet the learning objectives for this unit? • What in my preparation worked well? • What in my preparation did not go well? What do I want to change? • What key components did I miss? • How will what I have learned help me in my next courses?

Sources: Education Endowment Foundation, “Metacognition and Self-Regulated Learning: Apply Metacognitive Strategies in the Classroom,” accessed May 2, 2025, <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/metacognition>; K. D. Tanner, “Promoting Student Metacognition,” *Cell Biology Education* 11, no. 2 (2012): 113–20. <https://doi.org/10.1187/cbe.12-03-0033>.

Reflect

One key metacognitive skill is assessing what you already know about a course topic and identifying what you want to learn through your reading, discussions, assignments, and other class activities.

PLANNING-MONITORING-EVALUATION CYCLE ACTIVITY

In this exercise, you will apply the following two questions to your knowledge about learning strategies. Two key questions in the Planning phase of learning are:

1. What do I already know about learning strategies for university?
2. What do I want to know about learning strategies?

To complete the exercise, download the printable worksheet (<https://oer.aupress.ca/oer-202504/dr2.2>).

3

Using Critical Questioning to Support Your Learning

Learning in an online environment requires you to move beyond simple memorization of course concepts. To gain knowledge that will support you in your growth as a lifelong learner and in your future career, you will want to interact with course concepts deeply and in ways that are personally relevant to you.

One way of picturing deeper learning is Bloom's taxonomy.

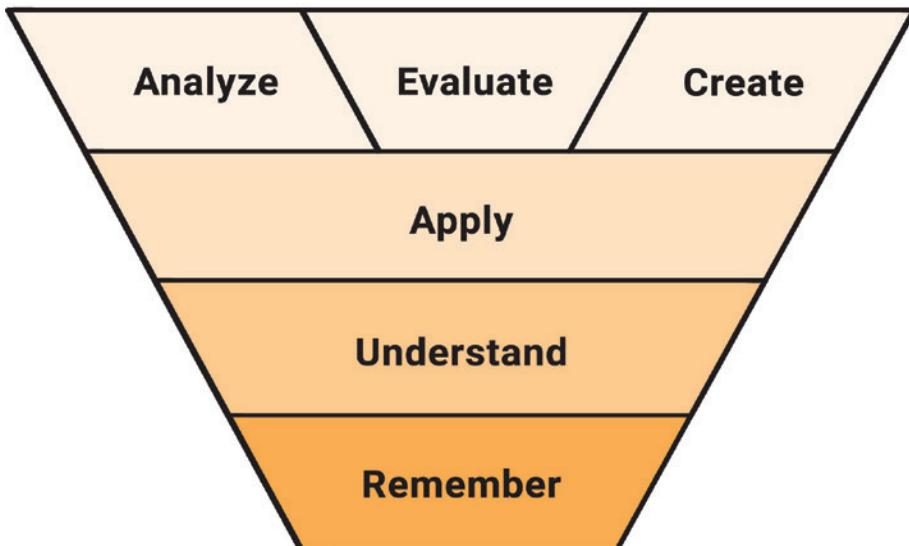


Figure 3.1: Bloom's taxonomy. Illustration by Jessica Tang.

The levels of Bloom's taxonomy build upon each other. While you need to be able to remember key concepts, learning in your courses will also develop your ability to apply, analyze, evaluate, and create using this knowledge. As you encounter new concepts, you will want to use critical questioning to understand the concepts at all levels, moving from surface to deeper knowledge. Table 3.1 includes some questions that might be relevant at each level.

Table 3.1: Levels of Questions for Studying

Level	Question stems
<p>Remember (knowledge recall)— Retrieving relevant knowledge from long-term memory.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the definition of . . . ? • Who did . . . ? • When did . . . occur? • How much/many . . . ?
<p>Understand (comprehension)— Interpreting the meaning of information; being able to “translate” knowledge into one’s own words; linking new information to what you already know.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are types of . . . ? • How does . . . function? • How does the process occur? • What are my own examples of . . . ?
<p>Apply—Using what you know to do required tasks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is a case study where this might apply? • How would I perform _____ task using this information? • What problems can I use this information to solve? • What does theory x predict will happen? • How does . . . affect or apply to . . . ?
<p>Analyze—Taking things apart; dissecting; asking why; seeing relationships and how things work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the relationship between . . . and . . . ? • How is . . . similar to / different from . . . ? • What is the best solution to the problem, conflict, issue? • How do I distinguish between . . . and . . . ? • What hypothesis or theory explains this data or given information?

(continued)

Level	Question stems
Evaluate —Appraising, judging, and critiquing the outcomes of any of the other levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this information . . . <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Correct or incorrect? Why? ◦ Effective or ineffective? Why? ◦ Relevant or irrelevant? Why? ◦ Logical or illogical? Why? ◦ Applicable or not applicable? Why? ◦ Proven or not proven? Why? ◦ Ethical or unethical? Why? • What are the advantages or disadvantages of . . . ? Why? • What is the best solution to the problem, conflict, or issue? Why is it the best?
Create (synthesis)—Putting things together; building on what you know to create something new; seeing new relationships or making new connections.*†	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does this new information change my understanding of . . . ? • Can I create a paragraph/journal/video/portfolio page that demonstrates how I integrate this information with my other knowledge?

* L. W. Anderson and D. Krathwohl, eds., *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing: A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* (New York: Longman, 2001).

† F. Salustri, "Four Levels of Questions," DesignWIKI, 2015, accessed July 4, 2025, https://web.archive.org/web/20210120092718/http://deseng.ryerson.ca/dokuwiki/design:four_levels_of_questions.

One method for creating study questions or planning active learning activities is to move step by step through each level of Bloom's taxonomy. Begin with a few questions at the Remembering level. If you don't yet know the technical language of the subject and what it means, it will be difficult for you to apply, evaluate, analyze, or be creative. Then go deeper into your subject as you move through the levels. Learning at university requires you to learn the basics of your discipline by remembering and understanding; however, you will spend much more of your time applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating.

Figure 3.2 is an example of what this might look like. What questions can you create for your topic?

Topic: Global Warming

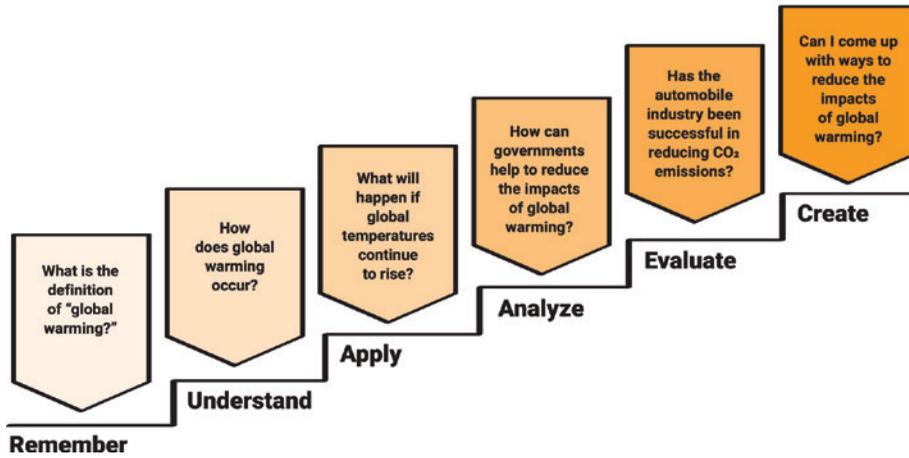


Figure 3.2: Using Bloom's taxonomy to study. Illustration by Jessica Tang.

CREATE STUDY QUESTIONS USING BLOOM'S COGNITIVE TAXONOMY

Pick a subject area in which you are working. For each level of Bloom's taxonomy, do the following:

- Develop a question and answer it to show that you can think about the material at that level. Use the example questions in the Levels of Questions for Studying table as a guide.
- Think about how your questions would allow you to assess how much you know and what level you are working at.

Download a printable worksheet to complete this activity (<https://oer.aupress.ca/oer-202504/dr3.1>).

4

Managing Information for Online Learning

As you develop your identity as an online learner, you will want to consider the role of information management in your learning process. Strong independent learners actively read, evaluate, and use information for current course tasks, but more importantly, they use it to develop a resource file of information that will support professional growth.

Many online learners feel overwhelmed at the volume of reading and the wealth of online resources available to them. Managing information well requires you to develop skills in identifying the purpose for your reading (what you need to learn from this reading, why it is important to you personally and professionally) and the strategy that will help you achieve your purpose (skimming, reading key portions, a close reading). In Part 7—Strategic Reading, you will discover additional ways to manage the reading process.

Early in your learning journey, you will want to select a system for managing information. As you will frequently work with electronic texts and articles, you will need a system that allows you to store, search, and retrieve readings and notes from current and past courses. Online note systems are highly effective for this purpose.

Benefits of Using an Online Notebook

Online notebook platforms allow you to do the following:

- create individual notebooks for courses or assignments with additional sections or pages for weekly topics
- create flexible notes that include text, images, audio, and video files
- store PDFs and other course documents for your own records

- clip and store relevant information from the web
- search stored content to quickly find relevant information, making connections between courses and your previous learning
- sync notes across your devices

Choose a Notebook

There are various online notebooks available to you—for example, OneNote and Evernote. Consider what the school offers, what you have used in the past successfully, and what features you find helpful. To evaluate which platform best serves your needs, you may wish to investigate by trying them out on your preferred devices.

TIP: After investigating and installing your preferred digital notebook, create a notebook for each course you are taking and save important information, such as the course outline, syllabus, calendar, and assessment overview.

PART 2

Who Am I with on My Learning Journey?

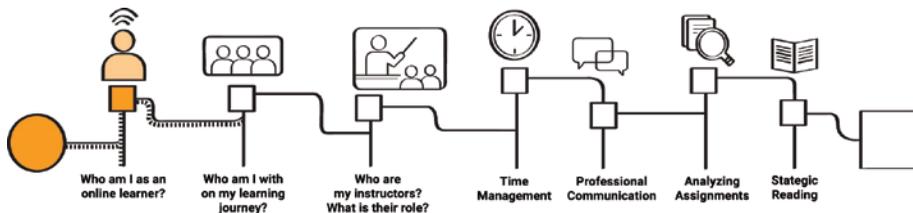


Figure p2.1: Navigating your journey. Illustration by Jessica Tang.

While you are on your own unique learning journey, much of your learning will come through your interactions with your fellow students. In preparation for your future career in a collaborative professional context, some of your learning will take place in groups. In some disciplines, this process is called becoming part of a community of inquiry or practice.

By the end of this part, you will be able to do the following:

- define the role of the learning community in your online program
- understand processes that shape effective team interactions
- plan your strategy for working effectively in teams

Go to the next chapter to move on in the learning resource.

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5

Defining Your Learning Community

When you join an online course, you become part of what is known as a community of inquiry.¹ In the community of inquiry, you will have an instructor, content to process, and a peer learning community in which to grow.

This is a learning community that fosters your learning (cognitive growth) in a way that allows you to apply new insights to your life and work. Within a community of inquiry, learners have two key roles:

1. Maintaining a cognitive presence in the community. This requires a continual process of critical thinking.
2. Developing a social presence in the learning community. This involves creating open and mutual relationships that allow for learning and collaboration to occur.

Cognitive Presence and Critical Thinking

How does learning happen? Is it the result of reading, memorizing, and taking exams? While many learning experiences have these components, the best kind of learning involves constructing new knowledge in a learning community. This requires interacting with new information (for example, from readings, discussions, videos, and lectures). You may receive this information from instructors or fellow students, or you may search it out to solve questions or problems. Then, together with your learning community, you make connections between this new knowledge and your prior experiences. You also determine

1 D. R. Garrison, T. Anderson, and W. Archer, "Critical Inquiry in a Text-Based Environment: Computer Conferencing in Higher Education," *The Internet and Higher Education* 2, nos. 2–3 (1999): 87–105, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1096-7516\(00\)00016-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1096-7516(00)00016-6).

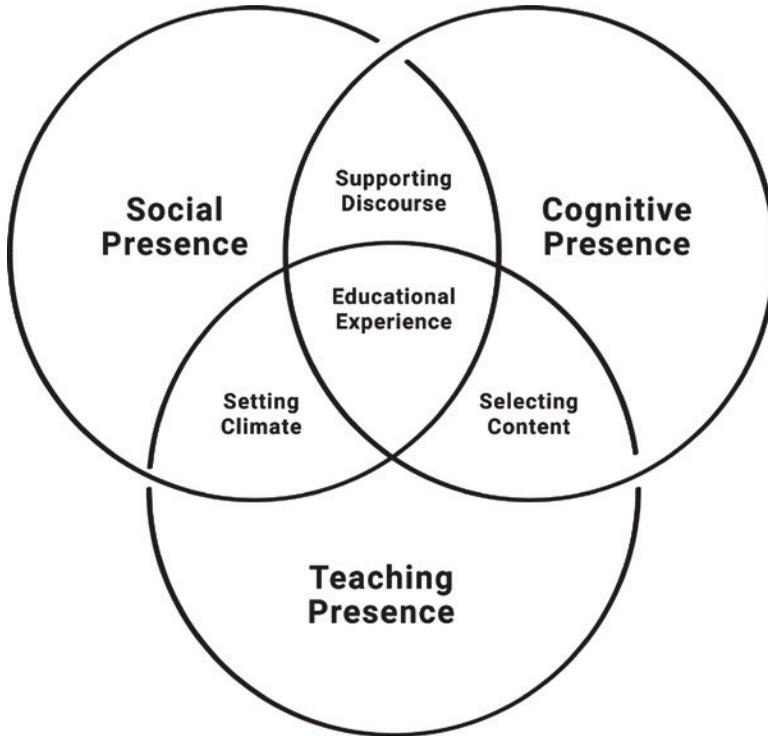


Figure 5.1: The community of inquiry framework. Illustration by Jessica Tang.

how this new knowledge will shape your professional practice. The community of inquiry supports this process through the exchange of ideas, supporting one another in exploring connections and challenging ways of thinking through thoughtful questioning.

Social Presence

If learning occurs in a collaborative community, how does this take place online? Maintaining a social presence in an online environment involves allowing for open communication. Social presence allows you to risk expressing your ideas online based on the knowledge that your classmates will be respectful and supportive. All members of the community commit to supporting each other in their learning. Though it may be difficult to express some nuances and emotions online, using emoticons or emojis can help.²

² D. R. Garrison, T. Anderson, and W. Archer, "Critical Inquiry in a Text-Based Environment: Computer Conferencing in Higher Education," *The Internet and Higher Education* 2, nos. 2–3 (1999): 87–105, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1096-7516\(00\)00016-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1096-7516(00)00016-6).

Group work is also a key part of the community of inquiry experience. The best online learning experiences happen when you form connections within a team as you work toward your common goals. The next chapters of this resource provide strategies for developing your learning community in the context of group work and team development.

Interactive Element 5.1

Before continuing, answer the interactive summary questions online (<https://oer.aupress.ca/oer-202504/5.1>).

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6

Understanding the Principles of Effective Teamwork

Now that you have identified what you hope to achieve through teamwork in your learning community, consider how you will form effective teams.

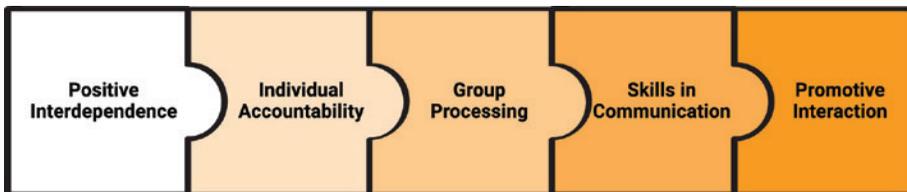


Figure 6.1: Elements of effective teams. Illustration by Jessica Tang.

Effective teams share the five key characteristics outlined in table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Effective Team Characteristics

Positive interdependence	Members believe they are linked together; they cannot succeed unless the other members of the group succeed (and vice versa). They sink or swim together.
Individual accountability	The performance of each individual member is assessed and the results given back to the group and the individual.
Group processing	At the end of its working period, the group processes its functioning by answering two questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did each member do that was helpful for the group? • What can each member do to make the group work better?
Skills in communication	These are necessary for effective group functioning. Members must have—and use—the needed leadership, decision-making, trust-building, communication, and conflict-management skills.
Promotive interaction	Members help, assist, encourage, and support each other's efforts to learn.*

* R. T. Johnson and D. W. Johnson, "Active Learning: Cooperation in the Classroom," *The Annual Report of Educational Psychology in Japan* 47 (2008): 29–30, https://doi.org/10.5926/arepj1962.47.0_29.

Complete the following quiz to strengthen your knowledge of the five elements of effective teams.

Interactive Element 6.1

Before continuing, answer the interactive summary questions online (<https://oer.aupress.ca/oer-202504/6.1>).

Now that you understand the characteristics of effective teams, move to the next chapter to discover how good teams develop and grow through their life cycle.

7

Planning for Successful Teamwork

Bruce W. Tuckman suggested that teams move through stages in their life cycle: forming, storming, norming, and performing.¹ At each stage, the group will work through a series of interpersonal tasks as well as a series of project-related tasks.

Table 7.1: Tuckman's Team Development Model

Stage	Task behaviours	Interpersonal behaviours
Forming	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• establishing base-level expectations• identifying similarities• agreeing on common goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• making contact / bonding• developing trust• members depending on others
Storming	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• identifying power and control issues• gaining skills in communication• Identifying resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• expressing differences of ideas, feelings, and opinions• reacting to leadership• members forming independence/counterdependence
Norming	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• agreeing about roles and processes for problem solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• making decisions through negotiation and consensus building
Performing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• achieving effective and satisfying results• finding solutions to problems using appropriate controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• working collaboratively• caring about other members• establishing a unique group identity

1 B. W. Tuckman, "Developmental Sequence in Small Groups," *Psychological Bulletin* 63 (1965): 384–99, reprinted in *Group Facilitation: A Research and Applications Journal* 3 (Spring 2001).

REMEMBER

- Each stage builds on the previous one.
- Each stage prepares for the performing stage.
- Attempting to skip any step affects performance negatively.
- With every new challenge, the process repeats.

In chapter 5, you explored the components of a community of inquiry. Both cognitive presence and social presence are required in the online learning community. Tuckman's model of team development also indicates that both components are needed. In a class-based team, it may be easy to focus only on the cognitive output of the group—the creation of the project, paper, or presentation. However, as you can observe from Tuckman's model, a well-functioning team requires its members to exhibit social presence throughout, communicating well in interpersonal interactions.

In the days ahead, you will likely find yourself on a newly forming team in an online environment. Consider the strategies you plan to use to demonstrate social presence and form a strong interpersonal foundation for your newly forming team.

8

Progressing Through the Stages of Team Development

As your group moves through these stages, stay aware of the patterns that tend to occur at each stage. For example, many teams falsely assume that their group cannot function when they find themselves at the storming stage. However, this stage is a normal part of team development like the others. Table 8.1 indicates what steps you and your group members can take to move to the next stage in your work together. Ultimately, you want to achieve a performing team that supports your learning in community.

Table 8.1: Stages and Steps of Team Development

Stage	Action steps
Forming <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Individuals are not clear on what they're supposed to do.• The mission isn't owned by the group.• The group wonders where this is going.• No trust is established yet.• Extensive information gathering about team, task, and context taking place.• The group has no history; members are unfamiliar.• The norms of the team are not established.• People check one another out.• People are not committed to the team.	Forming to Storming <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Set a mission and goals.• Establish roles within the group.• Recognize the need to move out of "forming" stage.• Identify the team and its tools and resources.• Leader(s) give direction.• Figure out ways to build trust (not demand it).• Create a reward structure.• Take risks.• Bring group together periodically to work on common tasks.• Assert individual power.• Decide once and for all to be on the team.

(continued)

Stage	Action steps
<p>Storming</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roles and responsibilities are articulated. • Agendas are displayed. • Problem solving doesn't work well. • People bring emotions that don't align with the team's mission. • The group tries new ideas. • Others step on group ideas. • People set boundaries. • Members feel anxiety about bonds. • People push for position and power. • Competition is high. • Cliques may form. • Little team spirit is displayed. • There are lots of personal attacks. 	<p>Storming to Norming</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team leader(s) actively support and reinforce positive team behaviour and reinforce team wins. • Leader(s) ask for and expect results. • Recognize and publicize team wins. • Agree on individuals' roles and responsibilities. • Buy into objectives and activities. • Listen actively to each other. • Set and take team time together. • Work together actively to set a supportive environment. • Have the vision "We can succeed." • Request and accept feedback. • Build trust by honouring commitments.
<p>Norming</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Success occurs. • The team has all the resources for doing the job. • Appreciation and trust build. • Purpose is well defined. • Feedback is high, well received, and objective. • Team confidence is high. • Leader(s) reinforce team behaviours. • Members self-reinforce team norms. • Hidden agendas become open. • The team is creative. • There is more individual motivation. • The team gains commitment from all members on goals. 	<p>Norming to Performing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep up the team wins. • Maintain traditions. • Praise and support each other. • Undergo regular self-evaluation as member practice. • Recognize and reinforce "synergy" team behaviour. • Share leadership roles based on who does what best. • Share rewards for success. • Communicate all the time. • Share responsibility. • Delegate freely within the team. • Commit time to the team. • Keep raising the bar; set new, higher goals. • Be selective of new team members; train to maintain team spirit.
<p>Performing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team members feel very motivated. • Individuals defer to team needs. • There are no surprises. • The team is very efficient; there is little waste. • Team members have objective outlooks. • People take pleasure in the success of the team. • A "we" versus "I" orientation emerges. • Team pride is high. • Openness and support are high. • Empathy and trust are high. • Team performance is superior. • It's OK to risk confrontation. 	

Now that you have reviewed the ways that a team can move on in their development, apply your knowledge to team dilemmas in the following quiz. When you have finished the quiz, go to the next chapter to move on in the resource.

Interactive Element 8.1

Before continuing, answer the interactive summary questions online (<https://oer.aupress.ca/oer-202504/8.1>).

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Making Commitments That Support Teamwork

In this chapter, you will review some key concepts about becoming an effective team, presented in figure 9.1.

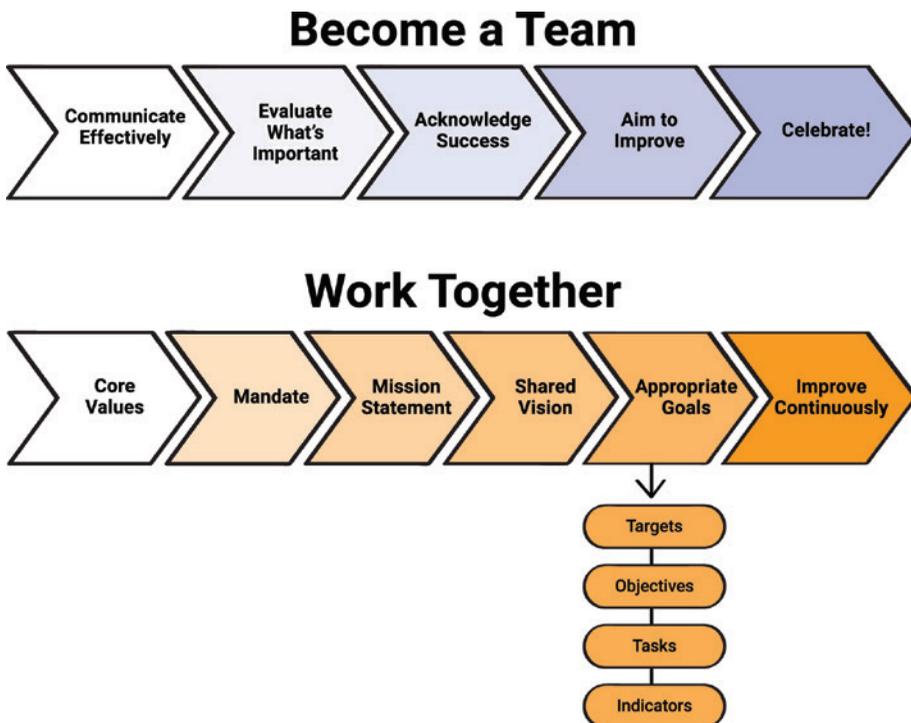


Figure 9.1: Becoming a team. Illustration by Jessica Tang.

Becoming a Team

A team is two or more people working together on a common goal (or goals). Groups become teams if the common goals are clear and attention is paid to both interpersonal and task functions.

The Team Must Decide How to Communicate Effectively (Interpersonal)

Each team must set up their own guidelines for good communication and a team charter. Through discussion and negotiation the members choose the items that are most important for their clear communication as a team. These often include a commitment to the following:

- respect and listen to others
- avoid blame (work hard on the problem, not on the person)
- group members and project process
- supportive and constructive feedback
- agreed-upon goals and clear timelines
- positive interdependence (sink or swim together)
- individual accountability (say what you will do and do it)
- analysis of work done and planning for next steps
- a process for conflict and problem management

The Team Must Decide What Is Important and Measure This (Task)

Early in the formation of the group, the members must decide what will be measured in the process. These items are generally critical to success and for the group to become an effective team. The members of successful teams share the following characteristics:

- came prepared
- offered ideas and suggestions and provided information
- asked for clarification/feedback
- identified resources
- solicited others' participation
- kept the group on task
- were easy to work with
- prepared materials
- made presentations
- participated in discussions
- managed group conflict

The Team Must Acknowledge Success and Aim for Improvement

Ask yourselves: What have we done (individually and collectively) to meet our goals and keep the team charter? How can we do better for next time? What might this change look like in the next steps?

The Team Celebrates

Celebrate what you have accomplished and then refocus your efforts for greater success!

Framework for Working Together

Core Values

Your personal beliefs are the core values that affect and drive how you look at the world, your behaviour in the world, and your interaction with others. They are how you do “business” with the rest of the world. In other words, they are the basis for everything that you are and do. These beliefs about appropriate behaviours, attitudes, and strategies also guide every working group and need to be explicit and understood.

Mandate

It is useful to know what you are expected to do in a group situation. This is often delivered or requested from an administrative or political level and appears in the form of a “job description.” The group that is mandated may not be able to effect the general outline of the mandate. The context in which the group operates has critical effects on what can be done.

Identifying a Mission Statement

A mission statement embodies the group’s current purpose and intent and answers (within the mandate of the group) questions such as the following: What are we about? Why are we working together? What do we want to achieve? It describes the business you are in. This may be a statement developed by the whole organization, or it may be more localized in a department, program, class, or work group or individually. It gives direction to actions. Without knowing your mission, you may not be able to get started.

Developing Shared Vision

A vision statement is a future-oriented declaration of a group’s purpose in a task, project, or work team. Having the members share a vision that aligns with their personal values and aspirations is a solid basis for production. Time spent

at the beginning dreaming and discussing what the final result will be is time well spent. If it is not possible to have a shared vision of the end product and the goals and milestones that must be reached, then the team may also have difficulty identifying whether they have accomplished their purpose.

Sometimes, when the project is open ended or ongoing, the final product cannot be totally “visioned” at the beginning. A shared vision will then be one that all team members agree on, with an understanding of the expected destination and direction needed to get there. Visions should be revisited and refined over time. If the team is not heading in the same direction, then it may not get anywhere.

Determining Appropriate Goals

What are the individual tasks and goals that will build toward making your vision manifest? Goals lead toward the realization of the vision. It is important to develop appropriate goals, make them explicit, and share an understanding of each one. Goals have the following:

- targets—where we expect to go, realistically balanced with time and resources
- objectives—identifiable, measurable, and achievable steps
- tasks—ways of reaching the objectives
- indicators—ways of measuring progress

Like our vision statement, goals need to be realigned with reality on a regular basis. Evaluation and adjustment drive this process.

Improving Continuously

Knowing where you are going and how you intend to get there is a good start. The final step is continuous improvement. Planning, implementation, and verification are tools for analysis and change as the process unfolds. Improvement is continual, but the steps are small. Pick changes that can be made now that will have a positive effect—1 percent is enough each time.

PART 3

Who Are My Instructors? What Is Their Role?

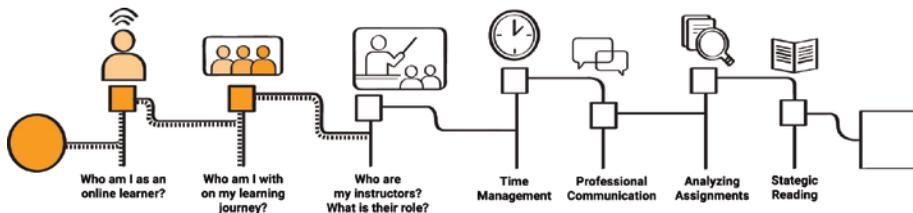


Figure p3.1: Navigating your journey. Illustration by Jessica Tang.

The online learning journey requires a different relationship to instructors than you may have experienced in the past. You will not see your instructors as regularly face-to-face, yet you can still develop effective relationships with instructors who support you in your learning. By the end of this part, you will be able to do the following:

- describe the role of an online instructor
- develop an effective student-instructor connection

Go to the next chapter to move on in the resource.

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Describing the Role of an Online Instructor

As you have already learned, when you join an online course, you become part of what is known as a community of inquiry, and you take on an important role in this online learning environment.

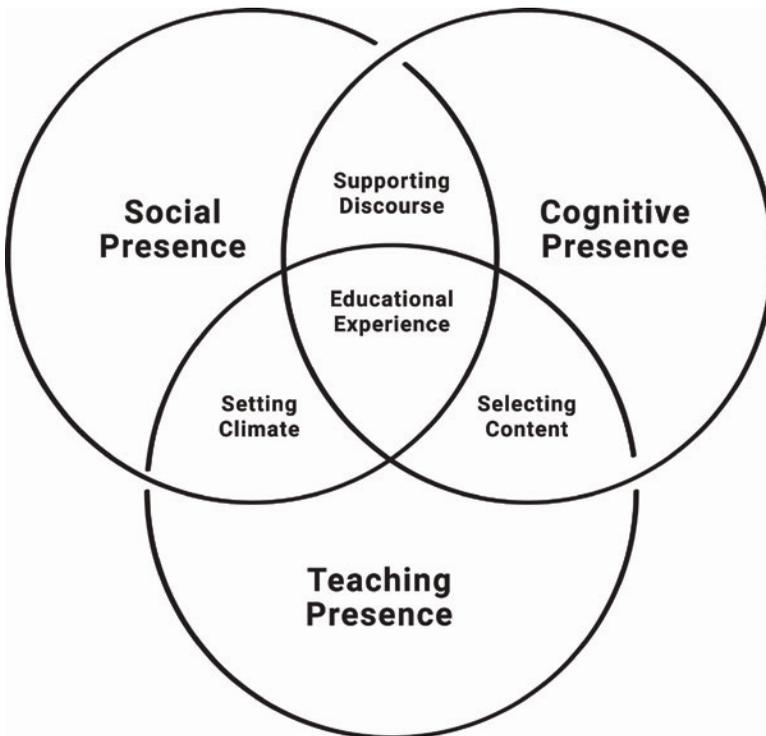


Figure 10.1: The community of inquiry framework. Illustration by Jessica Tang.

Because of the way courses are set up and delivered, they are not necessarily developed by your instructor. For example, at AU, courses are developed by a team of academic experts, including academic coordinators and professors, as well as learning designers. This model helps ensure overall course quality and consistency. So what is the role of your instructor in this learning environment? Your online instructor provides the teaching presence to foster significant learning experiences for you and your fellow learners. Instructors also thoughtfully facilitate the content that will support your learning in the class. They also direct you by answering questions and challenging your assumptions to help you grow in your knowledge and skills.

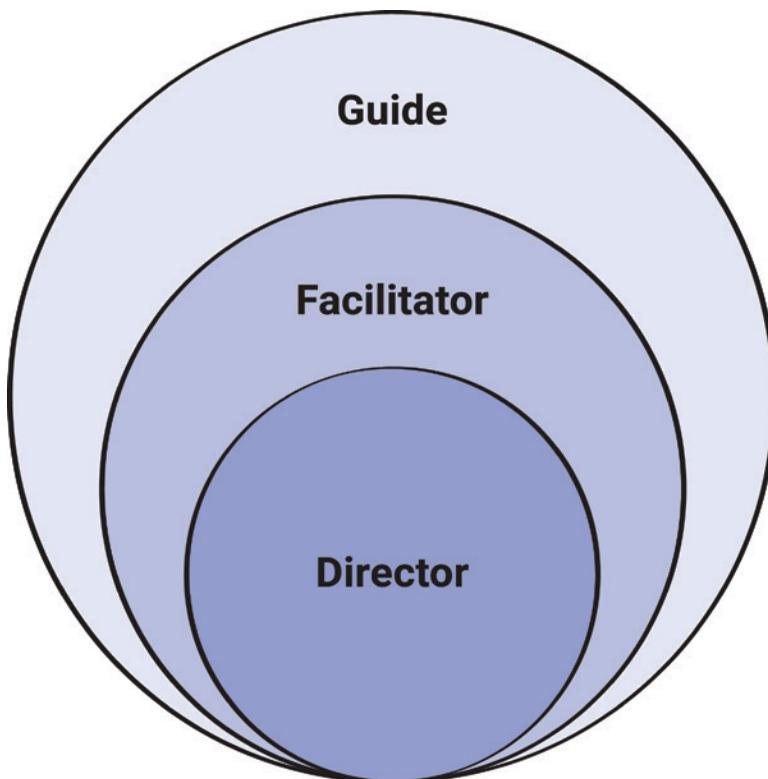


Figure 10.2: Instructor roles. Illustration by Jessica Tang.

In online classrooms, your instructor takes on the following roles:

- **Guide:** The instructor will help guide you toward readings and other learning materials that will serve your learning goals. Based on their experience in their field, they are able to help you focus your attention on learning resources that are accurate and relevant.

- **Facilitator:** Your instructor carefully facilitates opportunities for you to learn the skills you need for your future career and supports you by interpreting assignments and learning activities to lead you toward intellectual, personal, and professional growth. As you review the course, consider each of the learning activities and assignments. Think about the reasons why your program may have selected these course components to contribute to your development.
- **Director:** Online instructors are available to answer questions along the way. As you learn, you will inevitably find areas that are unclear to you, related to either the course content or your learning process. By communicating with your instructor effectively, you will take full advantage of their role in guiding you on your journey.¹

1 D. R. Garrison and N. D. Vaughan, *Blended Learning in Higher Education: Framework, Principles, and Guidelines*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008).

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11

Developing an Effective Student-Instructor Connection

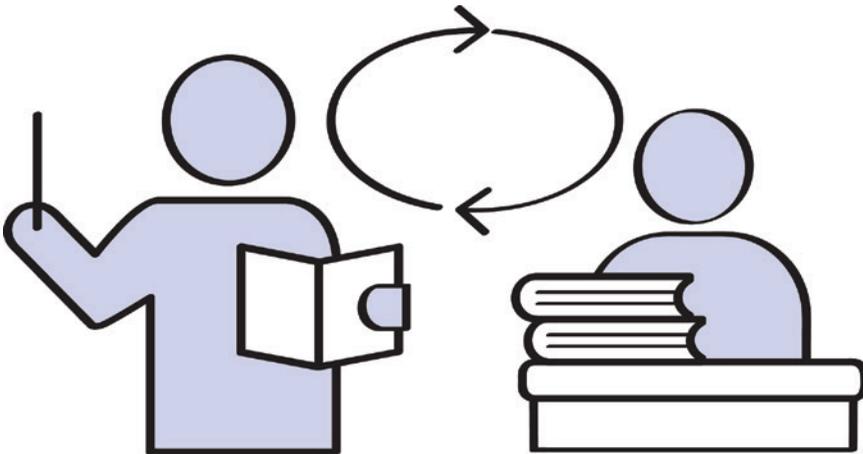


Figure 11.1: The student-instructor connection. Illustration by Jessica Tang.

Now that you have developed an idea of the role that your instructors will have in your online learning journey, how might you develop an effective relationship with them? Consider the following suggestions:

1. When you look at a course reading, activity, or assignment, try to put yourself inside the mind of an instructor and consider the goals of your program. Why do you think the program chose this particular learning experience for you? What do you think they intend for you to learn? Understanding the purpose of a learning activity can increase your motivation and help you stay on track in your work.

2. Take advantage of opportunities to connect with your instructor, through either messages in the learning management system, messages in the course forums, or video conferencing. You can connect with your instructor to clarify course difficulties but also simply to build your relationship with your instructor and demonstrate your interest in the course material.
3. Check the course site regularly. Your instructor may post key messages for the class. This provides another point of frequent contact.
4. Use email effectively to connect. You will learn more about how to construct an effective email in part 5, Professional Communication—but if you are curious, you may choose to view the chapter on how to email an instructor now.
5. When you receive feedback on an assignment, consider it carefully. How does your instructor want to see you grow in your academic or professional skills? If you are unhappy about a mark, consider waiting twenty-four hours before sending an email to your instructor—then review their feedback again. It can help to have a cooling-off period, especially if you are quite distressed.

DEVELOPING INSTRUCTOR RELATIONSHIPS ONLINE

Reflect on the following two questions to guide the process of developing relationships with online instructors. If you wish, you may print out a downloadable version of this activity (<https://oer.aupress.ca/oer-202504/dr11.1>).

1. How would you define an effective relationship with an online instructor?
2. What is one step you will take to develop a relationship with each of your course instructors?

PART 4

Learning to Manage Your Time

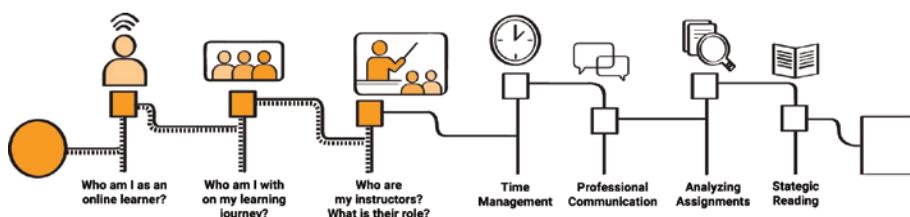


Figure p4.1: Navigating your journey. Illustration by Jessica Tang.

Online learning requires effective time management skills. You may not have the structure of a weekly class to help you organize your time and prioritize your assignments. If you are in a self-paced online course, you will be responsible for creating and sticking to your schedule for studying and assignments. In review, *self-paced* means you are given a suggested schedule and study guide, but it is up to you to make choices and alter it to work for your life within your contract dates. You will notice in a self-paced online classroom that you and your classmates are on different parts of the course at different times. For example, students will complete a forum discussion where they participate based on when they have self-scheduled their coverage of the content. As you may recall, there are also *paced* online courses, which means you have a set schedule to follow where you and your classmates work through the online content within the same contract dates. For example, forum discussions will have set weeks to participate.

You may also remember that, within the FHD, learning takes place asynchronously and synchronously. Asynchronous examples include forum discussions and written assessments. Asynchronous means you and your classmates are not required to be online and in conversation at the same time. Synchronous learning opportunities include online learning opportunities such as Microsoft Teams sessions, seminars, and labs. Some programs also require in-person clinical experiences. Synchronous learning requires the learner to be present at a specific date and time to engage with educators or classmates. Synchronous learning has high and immediate engagement with instructors, preceptors, or classmates but requires learners to adhere to set times and dates. Asynchronous learning is more flexible around the learner's schedule and is designed with high engagement with the course content but requires the learner to have independent self-study skills. Thus, it is important to know how your courses are set up so that you can be an effective learner.

How will you manage your time? In this part, you will explore strategies for organizing work throughout your courses, developing a realistic study schedule, and balancing your online learning with your work or other commitments.

Move to the next chapter to get started.

Using Your Course Schedules to Organize Your Learning

Online courses often provide you with a great deal of flexibility in organizing your time. This can be a tremendous asset, particularly if you are balancing study with work, family, or other commitments. However, this also requires you to accurately determine how much work you must complete to finish the course and to develop a plan that allows you to complete this work effectively.

Many learners find it helpful to develop a schedule that provides an “overview at a glance” of what will be required. You will find the information you need for this in your course schedule and assessment overview.

Creating a Master Schedule

A master schedule gives you a visual picture of the course readings, learning activities, assignments, exams, presentations, and practicum requirements that will happen during your course contract. If you are taking several courses, this is a tool to see what is coming next.

By having the “big picture” in view, you will be able to proactively manage busy periods during your course contract. If you have flexible due dates, you can schedule assignments for the optimal time for you. For example, you may notice that you have a larger than typical number of major assignments due in week 6. This allows you to schedule work on some of these projects earlier and then work on other ones later.

Look at the following example master schedule. What do you notice about what the student chose to include? What will you include in your master schedule? After viewing the example schedule, download the master schedule

template to create your own schedule (<https://oer.aupress.ca/oer-202504/dr12.1>). When you have completed your schedule, go to the next chapter to move ahead.

EXAMPLE MASTER SCHEDULE

To create your master schedule, gather the course schedules and study guides from all your courses. These will tell you the dates (or suggested dates for self-paced courses) of examinations, assignments, presentations, learning activities, course readings, and practicum requirements. Add all these dates to your master schedule. Use colour to distinguish different courses if you wish.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Week 1				Class 2 Post	Class 1 Post		
Week 2	Class 1 Assignment 1		Class 2 Assignment 1	Class 2 Post	Class 1 Post		
Week 3				Class 2 Post	Class 1 Post	No social commitments to work on Class 2 Assignment 2 and week 4 posts	
Week 4	Family vacation to Mexico						
Week 5	Class 1 and Class 2 posts for week 4		Class 2 Assignment 2	Class 2 Post	Class 1 Post and midterm self-eval	No social commitments to work on Class 1 Assignment 2	
Week 6	Class 1 Assignment 2			Class 2 Post	Class 1 Post		
Week 7				Class 2 Post	Class 1 Post		Daughter dance recital
Week 8	Class 1 Assignment 3a	Parents visiting			Class 1 and Class 2 Post	No social commitments to work on Class 2 Assignment 3	
Week 9				Class 2 Post	Class 1 Post	Soccer tournament, both kids	
Week 10			Class 2 Assignment 3	Class 2 Post	Class 1 Post		
Week 11				Class 2 Post	Class 1 Post	Paint night with friends	No social commitments to work on Class 1 Assignment 3b
Week 12	Class 1 Assignment 3b			Class 2 Post	Class 1 Post and final self-eval	Class 1 and Class 2 farewell posts	Class 1 and Class 2 course surveys
Week 13							
Week 14							
Week 15							
Week 16							

Developing a Weekly Schedule That Works for You

Scheduling can also be taken into further detail by creating a weekly schedule. This will include your study time, work commitments, volunteer roles, and practicum placements, as well as any other regular events in your week. A weekly schedule is a good tool to evaluate whether your time use allows you to meet your overall goals. Do you have enough time to study? Is there time to maintain a healthy lifestyle? Analyze the following example weekly student schedule. What do you notice about how this student has planned their week?

EXAMPLE WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
8:00 a.m.	Wake up + breakfast						
8:30 a.m.							
9:00 a.m.	Free time						
9:30 a.m.	Class 1 study	Class 2 study	Class 3 study	Travel to work	Class 4 study	Free study	Free study
10:00 a.m.				Work			
10:30 a.m.	Break	Break	Break	Work	Break	Free study	Free study
11:00 a.m.	Class 1 study	Class 2 study	Class 3 study	Work	Class 4 study		
11:30 a.m.				Work		Break	Break
12:00 p.m.	Break	Break	Break	Work	Break	Free study	Free study
12:30 p.m.	Class 1 study	Class 2 study	Class 3 study	Work	Class 4 study		
1:00 p.m.				Work		Break	Break
1:30 p.m.	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Work	Lunch	Free study	Free study
2:00 p.m.	Class 1 study	Class 2 study	Class 3 study	Work	Class 4 study		
2:30 p.m.				Work		Break	Break
3:00 p.m.	Break	Break	Break	Work	Break	Free study	Free study
3:30 p.m.	Class 1 study	Class 2 study	Class 3 study	Work	Class 4 study		
4:00 p.m.				Work		Break	Break
4:30 p.m.	Break	Break	Break	Work	Break	Free time	Free time
5:00 p.m.	Class 1 study	Class 2 study	Class 3 study	Work	Class 4 study		
5:30 p.m.				Work		Break	Break
6:00 p.m.	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Travel home	Dinner	Free time	Free time
6:30 p.m.	Class 1 study	Class 2 study	Class 3 study	Travel home	Class 4 study		
7:00 p.m.				Travel home		Break	Break
7:30 p.m.	Break	Break	Break	Free time	Class 4 study	Free time	Free time
8:00 p.m.	Class 1 study	Class 2 study	Class 3 study				
8:30 p.m.				Free time	Break	Break	
9:00 p.m.	Break	Break	Break	Free time	Class 4 study	Free time	Free time
9:30 p.m.	Class 1 study	Class 2 study	Class 3 study				
10:00 p.m.				Free time	Break	Break	
10:30 p.m.	Read / free time						
11:00 p.m.	Sleep						
KEY	Self-care	Study	Free time	Travel	Work		

Download the weekly schedule template (<https://oer.aupress.ca/oer-202504/dr13.1>). The following principles will guide you as you create your weekly schedule:

1. Designate regular study blocks for each of your classes. Remember that university courses typically require at least nine to twelve hours of weekly study. Remember that it is more effective to study for multiple shorter blocks of time during the week than to plan for one extended study block. Shorter study periods will allow for greater focus. Regular review will help you retain information well.
2. Record mealtimes, social activities, physical activity, rest/relaxation, and so on.
3. Record all regularly scheduled personal activities such as meetings, employment, and athletics.
4. Record any special activities you need to do or want to do on a regular basis.
5. Schedule to start your study period with the courses you like least or that you're not doing well in. If you are able, try to study the same subjects at the same time each study day. Although this seems to be a mechanical way of scheduling, you will find that such a routine can help you develop a pattern for efficient and effective learning.
6. Schedule a weekly review (WR) for each course. Do it at the end of the week if possible. This weekly review gives you an opportunity to go over the past week's notes along with the reading assignments to see what you have been learning in the past week during class and study time for each course. You can also look ahead to plan the next week and determine how much reading you need to do, what projects are due, and if any tests are scheduled.
7. Keep some time open for daily physical activity. Remember, research indicates that regular exercise not only will give you a general sense of well-being but can reduce tension and help you accomplish a tough class, study, and work schedule.
8. Label some empty blocks of time as "Open" for academic or personal needs.
9. Schedule some time during your week for you to play, relax, or do whatever you want to do. This is your reward for sticking to your schedule. In addition, you'll enjoy your free time more. Because it is scheduled, you do not need to feel guilty.

CREATE A WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Download the weekly schedule template (<https://oer.aupress.ca/oer-202504/dr13.1>). Create your weekly schedule based on the principles you have explored in this chapter. Follow your schedule for a two-week period. Then evaluate and make adjustments.

14

Managing Daily Tasks

Now that you can see the big picture of your schedule and weekly priorities, the next step is to create a daily to-do list to prioritize your tasks. Some learners prefer paper-based task management systems, while others prefer to use technology to manage daily tasks. As you make your decision, keep in mind what scheduling tools the school offers to you as a student. Furthermore, consider the advantages and disadvantages of systems you might choose, as presented in table 14.1.

Table 14.1: Choose a Daily Task Management System

System	Advantages	Disadvantages
Paper planner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • User is not required to learn new technology. • Eliminates possible distraction with apps. • Flexible and adaptable to user preferences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to share tasks with team members in group projects. • May require time to create effective calendar and task list layouts.
Online calendar (e.g., Outlook Calendar, Google Calendar)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tasks and other life commitments are integrated in a single view. • Information is easily viewable on multiple devices. • Easy to schedule meetings with team members or share events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be difficult to integrate smaller tasks into the work plan. • May be difficult to move incomplete tasks to a new time slot on a later date.
Time management app (e.g., Wunderlist, Remember the Milk, Microsoft To-Do)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information can be viewed on multiple devices. • Most apps allow project lists to be shared between team members. • Easy to integrate small tasks into the daily task list. • Easy to mark task completion. • Incomplete tasks can be rescheduled simply. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May require time to learn the platform. • Apps may become obsolete. • Some apps require payment.

Making Use of Small Blocks of Time

By using smaller blocks of time, you can cover material in chunks (more on the next page) and not have to worry about the larger whole. A mistake that many people make is to cram information into their minds in one large session. This isn't a successful strategy for most students.

Look for smaller blocks of time to study. If you are a public transit user, you can likely spend twenty minutes on your bus ride reading or reviewing for your upcoming unit learning activities or exam. You could even listen to an audio recording of your notes. In the evening, instead of watching three episodes of your favourite TV show, you could watch one and spend the remaining time preparing for your studies. Are you going out to eat often? Consider making something simple at home that you could put in the oven to cook and will still leave you time for other activities once dinner is done.

Making time for your studies can be overwhelming. Review the following tips and tricks for taking advantage of small blocks of time:

- Do you commute by transit? Though it wouldn't be ideal to try to master detailed or complicated reading material on the bus, perhaps you can do some initial scanning or skimming while in transit to prepare yourself for class or deeper reading later.
- Consider creating flash cards for material that you need to learn. You can take a set of flash cards with you and work whenever a few minutes become available. If you use one of the many flash card or self-testing apps available on your phone, you'll be able to easily pull out your phone and make use of those small blocks of time.
- Self-testing is one of the most effective ways to learn. Create a list of study questions for your course. Pull out the list when you have time

available and review a few questions. Keep track of those you answer correctly and those you need to study more.

- Does your course include access to online videos that explain and review key concepts? Watch a video or two to review or to improve your understanding of a key course idea.
- Some courses also include access to online self-study questions. Try answering a few review questions in your spare moments. These online assessments usually provide immediate feedback on what you understand and what you should study further.
- Do you like to learn by listening? Make an audio recording of the important points you want to remember, and listen while you commute or exercise. Maybe audiobooks are for you—are any of your course materials available in this format?

PART 5

Professional Communication

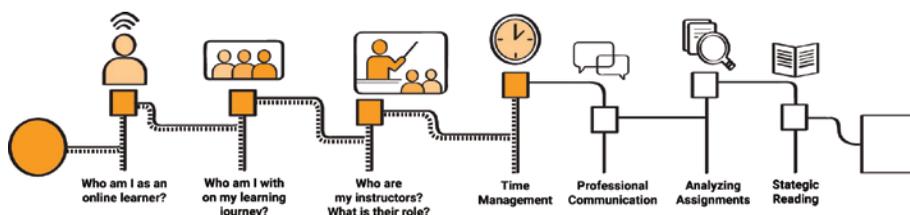


Figure p5.1: Navigating your journey. Illustration by Jessica Tang.

Online learning requires you to communicate effectively, often in writing, with instructors and learners in your online class. The skills you practise in these courses support your growth as an effective communicator in professional environments.

When you finish this part, you will be able to do the following:

- write clear and professional emails
- communicate effectively in online forums
- give and receive feedback to fellow learners

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Communicating by Email in the Online Learning Environment

In an online learning environment, communicating by email is important. Initially, for many students, emailing instructors can be intimidating. However, communicating with your instructor throughout your course is an important part of being an active and engaged postsecondary student. Email is by far the most popular means by which this type of communication takes place. For students, emailing instructors is particularly appealing because it is familiar, easy, and convenient. But messages sent via email can easily be misunderstood unless special care is taken in their composition.

To avoid confusion and to make it as easy as possible for your busy instructors to read and understand your email, there are a few basic principles to keep in mind when sending an email message to your instructor. There are five principles for clear, effective, and professional emails:

1. It is important to use a formal, professional tone when emailing your instructor. Include an informative subject, and avoid simply saying “hey” or “hello.” For example, if your instructor’s name is Parminder Singh, an email to them might begin with something like “Dear Professor Singh.” You may wish to conclude with a closing like “Best Regards.” Think of your email as a professional business communication.
2. Make sure that your email is grammatically correct. You should think about your email as a chance to show your instructor that you care about the class and that you are willing to take the time to proofread your message before sending it. It is also a good idea to

break your message up into multiple paragraphs with appropriate punctuation. This makes your email easier to read, and it helps avoid unnecessary confusion. Remember, your instructor is much more likely to help you if they are able to understand what you are saying.

3. It is helpful to keep your message brief. Avoid long emails that go into too many unnecessary details. Keep your tone professional and respectful; keep your emails concise and to the point. With that said, it is also not a good idea to be too short with your message, as shortness can sometimes be misinterpreted as rudeness.
4. It is a good idea to make sure that you actually need to send the email in the first place. Sometimes, simply reading through your syllabus, calendar, assignment description, class website, or class notes can answer many of the questions you might have.
5. It is important not to expect that your instructor will respond to you immediately. Unlike instant messaging, email responses can take anywhere from one to three business days. Your instructors have a lot of email to respond to along with their other responsibilities, so patience is advisable. Moreover, it is important to only resend an email after at least five days have passed.

Following these five key principles when writing an email to your instructor will help ensure that you communicate clearly, effectively, and professionally.

Communicating in Online Discussion Forums

Many online courses include discussion forums either as a required assignment or to support your learning process. How can you use discussion forums to support your learning in the best way possible?

In chapter 5, you were introduced to **social presence** and **cognitive presence**, elements of the community of inquiry you are building in your course. Forums are a tool for creating collaborative learning relationships. They can also be a low-stakes way to express your developing ideas and get feedback on how you are learning the course material as you work toward development and completion of larger assignments.

The rubric in table 17.1 outlines what distinguishes unsuccessful, successful, and the most successful discussion forum posts. What do you notice in the rubric? If your instructor has provided a rubric for online posts, read the rubric and identify the criteria for successful discussion forum posts.

Table 17.1: What Makes a Good Discussion Forum Post?

Level	Criteria
3—Most successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postings demonstrate that you have completed and reflected well on course readings. • Postings demonstrate that you have read and reflected on colleagues' postings before posting a response. • Postings contribute to the class's understanding of the course content. • Posting is very regular and consistent throughout the whole course. • Writing style is engaging, well organized, and professional.
2—Successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postings generally incorporate ideas from course readings. • Postings usually show reflection on and response to others' ideas and questions. • Postings are usually relevant to the current discussion. • Postings usually help others understand class content. • Postings are posted to the forum somewhat consistently. • Writing quality is sufficiently clear and professional to be easily understood by others.
1—Unsuccessful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postings do not demonstrate an understanding of course readings. • Postings fail to engage with other classmates' postings. • Postings are not relevant to course learning outcomes. • Postings do not help others learn. • Posting is inconsistent throughout the course. • Postings contain multiple writing errors or are poorly structured.

TIPS FOR PARTICIPATING IN DISCUSSION FORUMS

1. Develop a clear understanding of the expectations and ground rules for the forum. Review your course outline for guidance on how often to post, the type of content to include in each post, and the best way to respond to others' posts.
2. Make connections between your posts and the content you are learning in the course. A forum post is often an excellent place to engage in critical reflection. Make connections between the course content and the ways your growing understanding is shaping your present and future practice.
3. Set a regular schedule for posting and commenting on forums. This prevents the amount of content from becoming overwhelming and allows you to develop stronger relationships in the course by regularly engaging with classmates.
4. Include resources that might be useful to other classmates or your instructor in your posts.
5. Use language that is appropriate for an academic environment. Avoid writing in a way that is too informal (i.e., writing that resembles a text message).
6. Make sure that each post is clearly written and well structured. Take time to clarify the message you want to communicate in your post and organize your content into clear and concise paragraphs. This is easier for your reader than a long or disorganized post.
7. Respond to others' posts in a supportive and challenging way. In writing, messages may be unintentionally misinterpreted. Be sure that your responses to others are respectful, are positive in tone, and do not appear angry, even when you wish to disagree or present an alternative viewpoint.
8. Participate in the community discussion by furthering, not repeating, ideas. To do this, read others' comments before posting, and connect your ideas with what you are hearing from your classmates.¹

1 C. Pappas, "10 Netiquette Tips for Online Discussions," eLearning Industry, June 6, 2015, accessed August 7, 2018, <https://elearningindustry.com/10-netiquette-tips-online-discussions>; C. Pappas, "7 Tips on How to Use Forums in eLearning," eLearning Industry, August 16, 2015, accessed August 7, 2018, <https://elearningindustry.com/7-tips-use-forums-in-elearning>.

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18

Giving and Receiving Feedback

Good communication and learning in an online environment require giving and receiving feedback. You might give feedback to classmates in a group project or receive feedback from your classmates and instructors. What strategies can help you use feedback most effectively? Effective feedback must include the following:

- what is being done well
- how it might be improved
- what the next steps might be

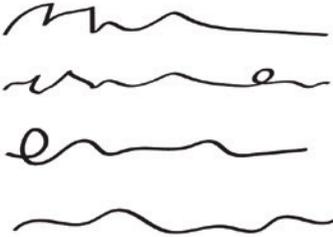
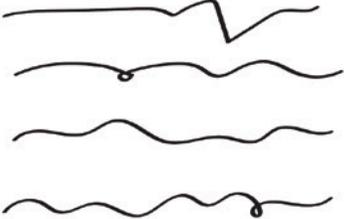
What you did well	How you can improve
	

Figure 18.1: Effective feedback. Illustration by Jessica Tang.

Receiving Feedback

A feedback loop involves a sender and a receiver of information. During this process there are many factors that can enhance and deter feedback reception. Sometimes feedback can feel like *criticism*. The sender may have intended to be positive but had challenges providing feedback in a positive manner. Sometimes, if you have had an experience in the past of feeling criticized, your first response as the receiver is to go on the defence. If feedback feels like criticism, we suggest working through the following steps to better process the information given while deconstructing where the feelings of criticism come from.

First, attempt to suspend your reaction until you understand the information that is being given. Then paraphrase what you hear. If the feedback given seems unclear, ask for clarification. See this as an opportunity to grow and improve, ask questions, and be curious. Having feedback presented in other words or from another point of view may increase your understanding about what is being said.

Explore and discover the reasons for the comments:

- Is a change being suggested?
- Is it an evaluation of the past or a suggestion for the future?

Think about and cope with your possible defensive reaction:

- Do you see suggestions as demands?
- Do you feel guilty or obligated to address the feedback?
- Are you hearing more than is being said?

Ideally, listen to feedback with an open mind. Then explain your position or point of view. Determine the importance of the feedback to you. You may choose not to change.

Any discussion will benefit from more information. You can wall yourself away from information and change by being defensive. You may open new lines of communication by being receptive.

Giving Positive Feedback

It is easy to criticize and think that we are helping a person deal with a situation. To give the right commentary, at the right time, to the right person, with the right reasons, in the right way, and to the right degree can be challenging.

You first need agreement to interact. If the other person is not ready to hear your comments, you set up a negative interaction that will cause them to dismiss your feedback. If you do not have permission to provide feedback, you may be seen as aggressive, and the other person may respond by being aggressive or defensive toward you.

Always ask the other person if they want your feedback. If they say no, then you will have to discuss or problem-solve that before you say anything more, or you will say nothing at all.

Search out all the facts you can prior to giving your feedback. Ask the people involved about what they feel is happening and how they see the situation. This may solve or help solve the problem.

Time the discussion so that you are all reasonably unstressed. Leave time so there is another chance to talk before parting ways. This will help avoid or clear misunderstanding or confusion.

Be positive. Try to begin and end your feedback with comments about what is working well.

Avoid using absolutes or negative words, like *always* or *never* or *don't*. Each situation tends to be many shades of grey rather than black and white. Actions taken are seen by each person in the light of their experiences and perceptions. Use alternative positive words and phrases. Avoid comparing the person involved to other people in other situations. The context of each situation is different. Comparisons tend to produce resentment and frustration.

Be specific in your description of the problem. Avoid vague or misleading statements. Address one point at a time so as not to overload or overwhelm the other person. Make sure that it is something that can be changed.

Focus on actions when sharing your feedback. Think about how to word your feedback so that it is about the action or behaviour, not the person who is receiving it.

When you tell someone that you feel they could improve or change, then also make suggestions on how you think they might go about making those changes and what behaviour would be observed if the changes were made. Be prepared for no change. Feedback can be positive if it:

- is offered at the right time and place
- is offered with comments on good points as well as possible changes

- is connected to facts and not rumours
- is directed to behaviour that can be changed
- is specific and given one point at a time
- is focused on behaviours or actions not the person
- gives information and possible solutions to change the situation

You will not use all of these items in all circumstances, but all of them can be used in some situations.

PART 6

Analyzing Online Assignments

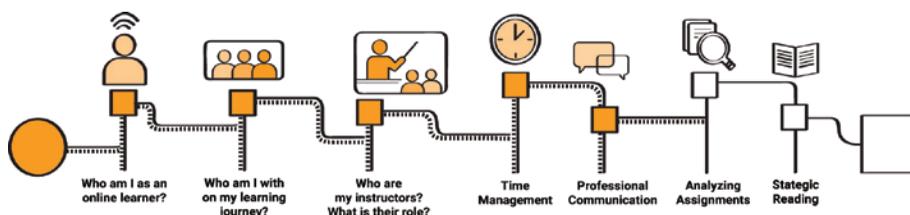


Figure p6.1: Navigating your journey. Illustration by Jessica Tang.

Assignments are a key part of your online journey. As you work toward independent learning, you will develop strategies to support you in completing projects effectively. When you finish this part, you will be able to do the following:

- identify learning goals for your assignments
- use the provided rubric / assignment marking guide / assignment criteria to structure and organize your work
- create an assignment plan
- use feedback to move forward

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Identifying Learning Goals for Assignments

Start with a clear understanding of what is being asked of you for the assignment. You want to translate assignment terms and instructions into useful clues as to what is expected from you. When you are not sure, remember to ask the instructor. The first step is to read the assignment instructions carefully and well ahead of when the assignment is due. The following is an example.

ASSIGNMENT 1—CONTEMPORARY HEALTH TREND ANALYSIS

Choose a trend that you have developed an interest in over the last four weeks of class and write an analytical discussion.

- In your analytical discussion, consider two viewpoints and present corresponding evidence.
- Length: 1,500–2,500 words.
- Format as per APA with a title page, body of paper, and reference page.

Interpreting the Assignment

Ask yourself a few basic questions as you read and jot down the answers on the assignment sheet:

- What is the competency you are being asked to demonstrate with the assignment tasks?

- Why do you think you are being asked to do this particular task?
- Who is your audience?
- What kind of evidence do you need to support your ideas?
- If formal references are required, what referencing style must be used?

Terms That Might Be Used to Determine the Tasks

- **Identification terms:** cite, define, enumerate, give, identify, indicate, list, mention, name, state
- **Description terms:** describe, discuss, review, summarize, diagram, illustrate, sketch, develop, outline, trace
- **Relation terms:** analyze, compare, contrast, differentiate, distinguish, relate
- **Demonstration terms:** demonstrate, explain why, justify, prove, show, support
- **Evaluation terms:** assess, comment, criticize, evaluate, interpret, propose

Begin with Background Content

Most assignments will be related to the material you have studied within the course and are an opportunity to demonstrate your understanding and application of what you've been learning, identifying which theories, philosophies, concepts, and graphics relate. Consider what further studying you will need to do to complete the project.

Using a Rubric / Marking Guide to Structure Your Work

What Is a Rubric / Marking Guide?

For some course assignments, you may also receive a copy of the rubric / marking guide that will be used to grade your work. The rubric/marking guide provides information on what criteria shape a highly successful assignment.

How to Use Rubrics / Marking Guides

Your assignment instructions and rubric / marking guide (if provided) are two of your key tools throughout the process of completing the assignment. These provide an outline of the criteria that have been set out for a successful assignment. There are two key times to use the rubric / marking guide and assignment instructions:

1. Before you start writing, take time to read both the assignment instructions and the rubric/marking guide carefully. Clarify any areas of confusion with your instructor to avoid losing time by preparing work that does not meet the guidelines you need to follow.
2. After you have written a draft but before you submit the assignment, self-evaluate your work according to the rubric / marking guide / assignment instructions. Think carefully and critically. Are there areas where you may not have met the criteria well? If so, edit your work accordingly, and make the needed revisions before submitting the assignment.

Video 20.1 provides additional strategies for using rubrics. When you have finished the video, scroll to the bottom of the page for a reflective activity. Then go to the next chapter.

Video 20.1: Making Rubrics / Marking Guides Work for You (<https://oer.aupress.ca/oer-202504/20.1>)

Making Rubrics / Marking Guides Work for You

When you receive an assignment, you will have assignment instructions, and you may also have a rubric or marking guide that indicates more specifically how your instructor will mark your work. See how these can be powerful learning tools for you.

In this video, you'll learn how to use the assignment instructions and rubric / marking guide to their maximum potential to support your learning.

When you first begin working on your assignment, look at the assignment instructions or rubric / marking guide. You want to avoid making the unfortunate mistake of putting a lot of time and effort into an assignment only to miss an important element of the assignment requirements.

Analyze the instructions and rubric / marking guide carefully. What is your instructor looking for? Which sections are emphasized and receive more marks? What elements are less emphasized and worth fewer marks? Use this information to determine how you want to focus your efforts.

Not sure what a term in the instructions or rubric / guide means? Now is a great time to ask!

Now imagine that you've finished writing the first draft of your assignment. How do the assignment instructions and rubric/guide help now? As it turns out, there are some powerful things you can do at this stage in your work.

One secret to learner success is learning to accurately understand how your work meets the expectations of your course. One way that you can do this is to put yourself into the place of your instructor and try to grade your own assignment according to the assignment instructions and rubric/guide.

Does your assignment meet expectations? If it doesn't quite yet, you still have time to consider what changes you want to make.

After you receive the marked assignment from your instructor, compare your self-evaluation with how your instructor graded your work. Where did you notice differences?

As you continue to use this process, you will work toward using assignment instructions and a rubric/guide to self-evaluate accurately—so that your self-evaluation closely matches your instructor’s evaluation of your work.

So as you can see, assignment instructions and a rubric/guide can be powerful tools for learning. By using them effectively, you will be able to produce work that accurately meets the expectations of your course. Make the rubrics work for you!

USE A RUBRIC / MARKING GUIDE

Take out your assignment instructions and rubric / marking guide. Use them to answer the following questions:

- Describe in one sentence your task on this assignment: What do you need to do?
- What resources will you use to complete this assignment? Review any textbook materials, handouts, or class notes that relate to this assignment.
- How many additional resources do you need to find to complete the assignment task? Consider books, peer-reviewed articles, websites, or other resources.
- What content do you need to create for this assignment?
- What guidelines do you need to follow related to the format of the assignment?
- What aspects of APA do you need to pay attention to for this assignment? What have you learned in your previous courses that you can apply here?

Download a printable version of this reflection exercise (<https://oer.aupress.ca/oer-202504/dr20.1>).

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Creating an Assignment Plan

Now that you have a clear idea of what you need to do, the next step is to break down the assignment into manageable “chunks.” The idea of completing a major scholarly paper may seem overwhelming, but if you can divide the task into achievable steps, you will be on your way to success.

Use the following chart to break your assignment into smaller steps. You will want to create steps that can be done easily in one day, and preferably in a single work period. Consider the following example breakdown for a scholarly paper.

EXAMPLE ASSIGNMENT PLANNER

Assignment task	Target completion date	Complete?
Read assignment instructions and rubric / marking guide (if applicable)	October 2	Y
Review course materials and choose topic	October 3	Y
Research at the library—find five peer-reviewed articles and two books	October 5	
Read and take notes on two articles	October 7	
Read and take notes on final article and books	October 8	
Organize notes; write thesis and outline	October 9	
Write body paragraph 1	October 10	

(continued)

Assignment task	Target completion date	Complete?
Write body paragraph 2	October 10	
Write body paragraph 3	October 11	
Write body paragraph 4	October 11	
Write conclusion	October 12	
Write introduction	October 12	
Self-edit content and paper organization (use the rubric / marking guide)	October 14	
Attend writing tutor appointment	October 15	
Edit and proofread assignment	October 16	
Submit final assignment	October 18	

In the preceding example, the assignment is divided into smaller pieces, with a manageable amount to complete each day. It is also clear when each task has been completed. A daily work goal like “work on scholarly paper” is not well defined and can seem overwhelming. This can make it easy to procrastinate. By choosing specific and achievable goals, you may become more motivated to get started, and you will be able to measure your progress each day. Remember to reward yourself for meeting your goals along the way.

CREATE AN ASSIGNMENT PLANNER

Choose one of your upcoming assignments and create a work plan that includes a clear target completion date modelled on the preceding example. Download the assignment planner worksheet (<https://oer.aupress.ca/oer-202504/dr21.1>).

Using Feedback to Move Forward

We all need people who will give us feedback. That's how we improve.

—Bill Gates

During the learning process, we have many opportunities to receive feedback about the quality of our learning and work. In the university environment, this often comes in the form of grades and instructor comments on assignments and exams. By using this feedback to evaluate your learning strategies in light of your goals, you will be able to make adjustments to move you toward your goals in current and future courses.

Consider the Purpose of Feedback

Many people find feedback difficult to receive, particularly when it indicates areas for improvement. Shifting your mindset as you receive feedback can be a catalyst for personal growth. View feedback as a gift that is intended to allow personal growth, stronger future academic performance, and professional development. When you receive feedback, take time to reflect on the comments given. Direct the feedback toward future assignments; rather than considering what you might do differently on the current assignment, use the feedback to inform your future goals and work on subsequent projects.

Reflecting Midcourse

An excellent time for self-evaluation is after you have received feedback on your first major assignment or exam. Consider the following reflection questions at this stage in your course:

- What grade do I hope to achieve in this course?
- To what extent am I meeting my goal for the course at this point?
- What about my exam/assignment preparation worked well?
- What about my exam/assignment preparation did not work well? What do I want to change?
- How will what I have learned help me in the second half of the course?

If you have identified an area for growth that requires change, consider new learning strategies and the resources available to you. At AU, these include the AU Write Site, AU Learning Support and Accessibility Services, tutoring, support from classmates, and support from your instructor. Identify the people on your “team” that can help you respond to feedback and move toward your new goals.

Reflecting at the End of a Course

The completion of a course is also an excellent time for reflection and evaluation. Consider the following:

1. How will what I have learned help me in my next courses?
2. How will I use what I have learned in my future career and other aspects of my life?

By reflecting on feedback and evaluating your learning regularly, you will avoid getting stuck in unproductive patterns. You will contribute to your own ongoing personal growth and development, supporting your success in future courses and other life endeavours.^{1,2} One key strategy to consider is the Start-Stop-Continue method as a means of reflecting on and integrating feedback. The Start-Stop-Continue method simply asks you to reflect on (1) what you can start doing to help you learn, (2) what you can stop doing that is getting in the way of learning, and (3) what you should continue doing that is already working well. See this quick review by K. Brillinger that introduces the technique.³ A work plan to use the Start-Stop-Continue method is provided in the following exercise.

1 P. Chen, O. Chavez, D. C. Ong, and B. Gunderson, “Strategic Resource Use for Learning: A Self-Administered Intervention That Guides Self-Reflection on Effective Resource Use Enhances Academic Performance,” *Psychological Science* 28, no. 6 (2017): 774–85, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797617696456>.

2 K. D. Tanner, “Promoting Student Metacognition,” *Cell Biology Education* 11, no. 2 (2012): 113–20, <https://doi.org/10.1187/cbe.12-03-0033>.

3 K. Brillinger, “Start, Stop, Continue,” Faculty Learning Hub, accessed May 5, 2025, <https://tlconestoga.ca/start-stop-continue/>.

USE EVALUATION TO SUPPORT PLANNING

Consider your use of learning resources. Use the Start-Stop-Continue method to make your plan. If any of your current strategies are ineffective, you may wish to stop them and replace them with other study methods. Continue strategies that are currently effective and start new strategies that you feel will support your success. Download the evaluation template to support you in the process of reflecting and moving ahead (<https://oer.aupress.ca/oer-202504/dr22.1>).

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PART 7

Strategic Reading

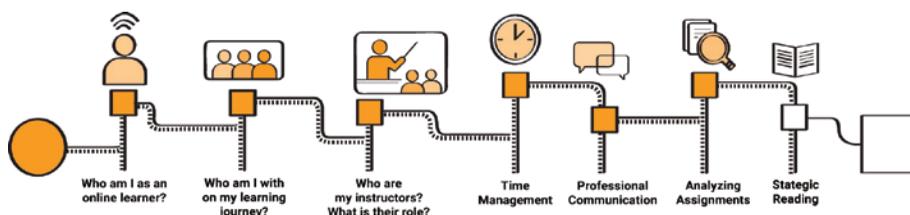


Figure p7.1: Navigating your journey. Illustration by Jessica Tang.

One of the challenges that many learners in online environments face is learning how to read and process large amounts of text—textbooks, articles, and other reading material. The materials in this part provide information on how to become a more strategic reader. These skills allow you to read with a purpose, selecting the most important material to support your growth and reading it strategically. By the end of this part, you will be able to do the following:

- assess the place of reading in your learning journey
- evaluate your reading skills
- review and apply the SQ3R method for reading
- read journal articles strategically
- take effective notes on online readings

Go to the next chapter to begin this part on strategic reading.

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Understanding the Emphasis of Reading in Your Online Learning Journey



Figure 23.1: Stacked textbooks. Photograph by Emily Tan.

Online learning typically requires you to interact with a larger amount of written material than traditional classroom courses. This can benefit your growth as a lifelong learner by developing your skills in selecting relevant reading material, approaching it purposefully, and managing the information you read. Consider the following principles as a guide as you approach reading:

1. Not all reading material requires equal time or attention. Unlike a novel, where you might give most pages equal time to understand the story, much of your professional reading is focused on finding and using relevant information. This means that you may not read every word in the readings. Some information may require close and careful reading, while other information may be skimmed to find key points.
2. Before you begin reading, identify your purpose for reading. What do you need to learn from this reading? This will determine how you approach the reading material.
3. Use questions to guide your reading. In the next chapters of this module, you will learn a strategy called SQ3R that can guide you by using questions to focus your reading.
4. Develop a system for identifying important information and taking notes. You have already explored systems for online information management. Consider how you will mark key learning in the texts that you read and organize this information in a format that allows you to easily access it again.

Go to the next chapter to explore reading strategies in more detail.

Evaluating Your Reading Skills

Now that you have identified the place of reading in your online learning journey, the next step is to explore your current reading strategies. What do you do now?

Complete the following quiz. You will receive feedback about the effectiveness of your current preferred reading strategy. In the next chapters, you will learn some additional strategies to make your reading more effective.

After you complete the quiz, go to the next chapter to move on.

Interactive Element 24.1

Before continuing, answer the interactive summary questions online (<https://oer.aupress.ca/oer-202504/24.1>).

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Strategic Reading with the SQ3R Method

In this chapter, you will watch a short video that describes a method called SQ3R that provides a way to read efficiently and purposefully. After the video, you will complete a quiz that tests your knowledge of the content you learned. If you prefer reading to watching a video, scroll after the video to find a transcript.

Video 25.1: Read with a Purpose (<https://oer.aupress.ca/oer-202504/27.1>)

Read with a Purpose

Now that you've thought about your personal reasons for reading textbooks, how can you read them effectively? One of the barriers to reading for many students is the time it takes. So what strategies can help you read more effectively and efficiently?

First, it's important to know that you can approach a textbook very differently than a novel. You don't need to read everything in order. You will also pay more attention to some sections and less attention to others. Here's a process to guide you in your reading. It's called the SQ3R strategy. What does that stand for?

- Survey
- Question
- Read
- Recite
- Review

Let's talk about each step.

S—The *S* in SQ3R stands for **Survey**. This step allows you to get an overview of the chapter as a whole. What will you learn by reading? In this step, you will do the following:

- read the learning objectives or chapter introduction
- read the chapter summary and the end (you don't have to wait until you're finished with the chapter to read the summary)
- skim the study questions at the end of the chapter
- skim the chapter headings and any important diagrams or charts

At the end of this step, you should know how this chapter is organized and what you will learn by reading. You might find it helpful to end this step by making an outline of the chapter on a separate page.

Q—The *Q* in SQ3R stands for **Question**. This is a key step in reading for a purpose; you need to know what you hope to learn by reading each part of the chapter. Look at the first chapter heading. Now make up a question that you will answer by reading. Use who, what, where, when, and why questions.

R—The first *R* stands for **Read**. You will read to answer the questions you just created. This will help you stay focused on your purpose for reading.

R—The second *R* stands for **Recite**. After reading each section, say the answer out loud. Now write this down in your notes. This step helps you summarize the material in your own words, which will support your learning and remembering. Explaining a concept in your own words demonstrates that you understand it.

R—The last *R* stands for **Review**. Look at your notes from the whole chapter. Think about how different concepts fit together, and fill in any gaps.

Now that you know the steps in the method, it's time to think more deeply about how this method supports your learning. You'll do that by completing the quiz in the next chapter of the resource. The real test will be applying the method to your actual reading—try it out and see how it works for you.

Identifying the Purpose of SQ3R Steps

In the previous chapter, you watched a video or read about a reading method called SQ3R. To strengthen your knowledge of what you learned in the video, take the following quiz. To complete the quiz, drag the words to the correct places in the paragraph. When you have finished the quiz, move on to the next chapter.

Interactive Element 26.1

Before continuing, answer the interactive summary questions online (<https://oer.aupress.ca/oer-202504/26.1>).

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Applying the SQ3R Method

Now that you are familiar with the steps of the SQ3R method, you may want to apply them to a text you are reading this week. To see how the steps are applied to an actual reading activity, watch Video 27.1: Applying the SQ3R Method. At several points in the video, you will have the opportunity to pause and try the steps in the method. When you have finished the video or reading, go to the next chapter to move on.

Video 27.1: Applying the SQ3R Method (<https://oer.aupress.ca/oer-202504/27.1>)

Applying the SQ3R Method

Now that you have learned the five steps in the SQ3R method, how will you apply them as you read? In this video, you will view a demonstration of how this method is applied to the type of reading you might encounter in a course textbook. I'll focus on the first three steps in the method: surveying the chapter, formulating questions, and reading to find key information. Today I'm going to read a chapter in an organizational behaviour textbook on need-based theories of motivation—the same principles would apply to reading in other courses. My first step is to survey. I'll skim the chapter quickly to get the main idea.

The first place I will begin is the learning objectives. I notice that in this textbook, they are located at the beginning of the chapter. I read these carefully to discover the main concepts that I will learn by reading. The next part of the chapter I'll review is the key takeaways at the end of the chapter. Remember—there's no rule that says that I need to read each page in order. By reading the key takeaways, I gain a

sense of the most important information in the chapter. This will help me to focus my reading later.

Now I'll go back to the beginning of the chapter and briefly skim the contents. I'll pay particular attention to the headings and to any key diagrams. I'm noticing a key diagram for both Maslow's hierarchy of needs and the ERG theory. I also notice two other key headings as I skim: I now know I will read about two-factor theory and acquired needs theory. From the information I've gained in the survey step, I've determined that my goals for reading are:

- to be able to describe the four theories of motivation
- to identify how these theories are similar and different
- to understand how each theory explains employee behaviour

My next step is to begin questioning and reading. I'll base my questions on key headings I notice. The first heading I read is *Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*. What questions can I ask about this? You may want to pause this video here and try to create three to four questions you might want to ask. Then resume the video to see how the questioning process works.

Here are the questions I've developed:

1. What is Maslow's hierarchy of needs?
2. What are the levels in Maslow's hierarchy? (I remember that there are levels from my survey step.)
3. Why are there different levels in the hierarchy?
4. How does Maslow's theory explain employee behaviour?

I've added my questions to my note-taking page. I begin reading, looking for the answer to my first question. I find the answer here, in the first paragraph: *The theory is based on a simple premise: Human beings have needs that are hierarchically ranked. There are some needs that are basic to all human beings, and in their absence nothing else matters. As we satisfy these basic needs, we start looking to satisfy higher-order needs.*

Now I want to add this information to my notes. To get the most benefit from this step, I will recite the information in my own words, then write it down. The step of putting information into my own words ensures that I understand it clearly.

I pause and think about how I can express what I've read in my own words. I can say it like this: *Maslow's theory states that everyone has levels*

(a hierarchy) of needs. When our basic needs are met, we move to fulfill our higher levels of need. I'll now add this information to my notes.

You will notice that I have left a wide margin on my note-taking page. This space allows me to add additional thoughts, images, and questions about the material later on. I may want to add additional information I learn in class.

I'll move through the same steps to answer my other three questions. You may want to pause this video here and try these steps out for yourself.

As I'm reading, I will also take note of key terms in bold letters. For example, I see that *physiological needs* is a key term in this chapter. These are words that I want to be able to define, as they are important to my understanding of the course material.

I will work through the chapter, following the same steps for each main chapter section: create questions, read to find the answers, recite my answer, and write it in my notes in my own words.

Now that you have seen how the SQ3R method might be applied to a textbook chapter, try it! Notice how this changes your reading process. How do you want to use this information to read in the future?

TRY THE SQ3R METHOD

Commit to trying the SQ3R method once this week as you complete your course readings. As you do, consider the following questions:

1. How does the SQ3R method change how you approach your reading?
2. How will you adapt and personalize this process to your own learning strengths and the specific requirements of your courses?

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Reading Journal Articles Strategically

Throughout your academic career, you will read a variety of journal articles as you complete coursework and conduct research for assignments. Journal articles may seem daunting, but by understanding how journal articles are organized and written, you will be able to choose relevant articles and find the information you need.

Table 28.1: Parts of a Journal Article

Abstracts and keywords	This is a concise summary of the article. Read this first to decide whether the article is relevant to your current research topic. Below the abstract you will find four to five keywords. These indicate the subject area of the article.
Literature review	Most articles will have a literature review early in the paper. This summarizes the past research done on the topic. Note that this is not a discussion of the research in the current article. However, the literature review may point you to other material relevant to your project.
Research methodology	This section describes the way in which the research was conducted. Who are the participants? Is the study qualitative or quantitative? How was the data gathered? Where was the study conducted?
Results	This section discusses the findings of the study in detail. It often includes statistical information, charts, and graphs.
Discussion	In this section, the researchers discuss the significance of the results. What do the results mean? Are they significant? What are the implications of what was found? The authors might also indicate areas for further study.
References	Skim the reference list. This may lead you to other key articles that are related to your topic.

1. Begin by reading the abstract and keywords. Decide if this article relates to your current research project. If the article does not fit well with your research, stop reading.
2. If the article seems relevant, scan the article briefly. Look at the headings as well as terms in bold and italics. Also, look at charts and graphs.
3. Before you begin reading the article, note the bibliographic information. You will need this for your Works Cited or References page.
4. Now read the discussion section closely. This is key to understanding the article well.
5. On a separate sheet of paper, create questions that you will answer by reading the article. Include questions such as the following: From what you know, does this author agree with other researchers and what you understand about the topic? Does this article support or contradict your thesis?
6. Read the article purposefully, answering your questions. Do not be afraid to change your questions as you read and discover more.
7. When you find the answers to your questions, write them down along with the page number where you found the information. You will need the page numbers to properly cite your sources when you write.

As you learn to approach journal articles systematically, you will become skilled at extracting important information as you read.

Taking Effective Notes

Why take notes? Taking good notes helps you quickly review the key points in the material that you have read. Taking notes is also an effective learning strategy. Intentionally annotating the texts that you read requires you to critically engage with the material. You are doing the work of identifying the important content and considering its implications for your course and your professional practice. This practice facilitates deep learning and ensures that you remember key material.

Choose the note-taking method that is most effective for you. You may prefer traditional notebooks. Many readers underline, highlight, and handwrite key notes in the margins of their books. You may prefer to create typewritten notes and to store these notes in your electronic notebook / information management system.

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE NOTE-TAKING

1. Working with online texts is a little different from working with regular textbooks. Acknowledge the difference and consider the strategies you can use for taking effective notes that will help you retain what you are reading, prepare for exams, and note key information for use in your assignments.
2. Consider browser extensions and resource management tools available to help you with note-taking.
3. Develop a schedule for when you will do your reading and note-taking.
4. Develop a plan and structure for note-taking. Do you want to annotate? Highlight? Make comment bubbles? You may find that you fall into a pattern of preference as you get more comfortable with online articles.

5. Find your balance in taking notes that highlight the key points without making *everything* key. This will take practice!
6. At the end, develop a short and concise summary of the main points of the source.

Reviewing Your Learning

As a learner in the online environment, you are asked to read and process large amounts of information, which is why effective reading skills are so important in online learning. Evaluating your reading skills provides the ability to identify areas of opportunity for growth. The SQ3R method for reading is a focused process used to read with purpose, select important materials, and strategically read through resources. Now that you have completed this part, consider what you have learned and identify what you want to start doing as a result of new strategies you have explored. Give yourself time to perfect this technique, as strategic reading is a skill that will serve you well in many areas of life.

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Congratulations

Congratulations on completing the *Learning Online* resource. You have gained some valuable skills to help you on your learning journey.

You may wish to continue your learning by taking one or more of the following steps:

- Visit the faculty, program, or course home page and review any specific preparation resources, guides, and handbooks available to you. Attend additional academic skills seminars or available resources. These seminars and resources are offered in a variety of formats: in a live online session, in a self-paced session, or in a text resource / website.
- Specific to AU, you may find helpful information and support on the Tutoring and Learning Support website, AU Write Site, or the library.



Figure c.1: Fostering excellence in learning. Illustration by Jessica Tang.

Good luck in your online learning journey!

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Downloadable Resources

Chapter 2: Applying the Plan-Monitor-Evaluate Model for Assessing Your Learning Progress

Questions to Improve Your Learning: <https://oer.aupress.ca/oer-202504/dr2.1>

Planning-Monitoring-Evaluation Cycle Activity: <https://oer.aupress.ca/oer-202504/dr2.2>

Chapter 3: Using Critical Questioning to Support Your Learning

Create Study Questions Using Bloom's Cognitive Taxonomy: <https://oer.aupress.ca/oer-202504/dr3.1>

Chapter 11: Developing an Effective Student-Instructor Connection

Developing Instructor Relationships Online: <https://oer.aupress.ca/oer-202504/dr11.1>

Chapter 12: Using Your Course Schedules to Organize Your Learning

Master Schedule Template: <https://oer.aupress.ca/oer-202504/dr12.1>

Chapter 13: Developing a Weekly Schedule That Works for You

Weekly Schedule Template: <https://oer.aupress.ca/oer-202504/dr13.1>

Chapter 20: Using a Rubric / Marking Guide to Structure Your Work

Use a Rubric / Marking Guide: <https://oer.aupress.ca/oer-202504/dr20.1>

Chapter 21: Creating an Assignment Plan

Create an Assignment Planner: <https://oer.aupress.ca/oer-202504/dr21.1>

Chapter 22: Using Feedback to Move Forward

Use Evaluation to Support Planning: <https://oer.aupress.ca/oer-202504/dr22.1>

LEARNING ONLINE RESOURCE 2.1

Key Questions to Improve Your Learning

At each stage in the learning cycle, there are key questions that you will ask yourself to support your learning process. In the following chart, you will identify the key question for each stage in the cycle along with the other questions you will want to consider.

Use this worksheet as you begin a new course, topic, or module to guide your study plan.

Key questions	Other questions to ask yourself
What do I need to learn? (Planning)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the learning objectives for this class?• What do I already know about this topic?• What are the concepts I need to master before my next learning assessment?• What do I want to learn about this topic?• How do I distinguish important information from the details?
How am I going to learn the material? (Planning)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How can I integrate textbook reading with lecture notes?• What active learning strategies will support my learning?• Will I study alone or with a study group?• What charts or visuals will help me reorganize or process this material?• What memory strategies can I use to remember key words and concepts?• How can I connect with my instructor?
How am I doing at learning this material? (Monitoring)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What concepts do I understand well?• What concepts are still confusing for me?• Can I explain the material to someone else without referring to notes?• Can I create and answer self-testing questions about these concepts?• What other strategies could I use to learn this material?• Am I using the supports available to me?• How can I make this material more personally relevant to me?
Did I learn the material effectively? (Evaluation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To what extent did I meet the learning objectives for this unit?• What in my preparation worked well?• What in my preparation did not go well? What do I want to change?• What key components did I miss?• How will what I have learned help me in my next courses?



LEARNING ONLINE RESOURCE 2.2

Planning-Monitoring-Evaluation Cycle Activity

Two key questions in the Planning phase of learning are the following:

1. What do I already know about this topic?
2. What do I want to learn?

In this exercise, you will apply these two questions to your knowledge about learning strategies.

What do I already know about learning strategies for university?	What do I want to know about learning strategies?

LEARNING ONLINE RESOURCE 3.1

Create Study Questions Using Bloom's Cognitive Taxonomy

Pick a subject area in which you are working. For each level of Bloom's taxonomy on this page, do the following:

- Develop a question and answer it to show that you can think about the material at that level. Use the example questions in the chapter text as a guide.
- Think about how your questions would allow you to assess how much you know and what level you are working at.

Level	Question
Remembering	Remembering and recalling information My question(s):
Understanding	Understanding or explaining ideas or concepts My question(s):
Applying	Applying information in a familiar situation My question(s):
Analyzing	Analyzing by breaking information into parts to explore relationships My question(s):
Evaluating	Justifying a decision or course of action My question(s):
Creating	Generating new ideas, products, or ways of viewing things My question(s):



LEARNING ONLINE RESOURCE 12.1

Master Schedule Template

To create your master schedule, gather the course schedules and study guides from all your courses. These will tell you the dates (or suggested dates for self-paced courses) of examinations, assignments, presentations, learning activities, course readings, and practicum requirements. Add all of these dates to your master schedule. Use colour to distinguish different courses if you wish. Print out this schedule and post it in a place where you will see it often.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Week 1							
Week 2							
Week 3							
Week 4							
Week 5							
Week 6							
Week 7							
Week 8							
Week 9							
Week 10							
Week 11							
Week 12							
Week 13							
Week 14							
Week 15							
Week 16							



LEARNING ONLINE RESOURCE 13.1

Weekly Schedule Template

Create your weekly schedule for this semester following the principles you have just learned. Follow your schedule as you have created it for two weeks. After two weeks, make any adjustments necessary. Perhaps you need more time to study for a difficult class, or perhaps you would like to add a recreational activity to maintain a good life balance.

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
8:00 a.m.							
8:30 a.m.							
9:00 a.m.							
9:30 a.m.							
10:00 a.m.							
10:30 a.m.							
11:00 a.m.							
11:30 a.m.							
12:00 p.m.							
12:30 p.m.							
1:00 p.m.							
1:30 p.m.							
2:00 p.m.							
2:30 p.m.							
3:00 p.m.							
3:30 p.m.							
4:00 p.m.							
4:30 p.m.							
5:00 p.m.							
5:30 p.m.							
6:00 p.m.							
6:30 p.m.							
7:00 p.m.							
7:30 p.m.							
8:00 p.m.							
8:30 p.m.							
9:00 p.m.							
9:30 p.m.							
10:00 p.m.							
10:30 p.m.							
11:00 p.m.							
KEY	Self-care	Study	Free time	Commute	Work		



LEARNING ONLINE RESOURCE 20.1

Use a Rubric / Marking Guide

Take out your assignment instructions and rubric / marking guide. Use them to answer the following questions.

Key question	Information from the assignment and rubric / marking guide
Describe in one sentence your task on this assignment: What do you need to do?	
What resources will you use to complete this assignment? Review any textbook materials, handouts, or class notes that relate to this assignment.	
How many additional resources do you need to find to complete the assignment task? Consider books, peer-reviewed articles, websites, or other resources.	
What content do you need to create for this assignment?	
What guidelines do you need to follow related to the format of the assignment?	
What aspects of APA do you need to pay attention to for this assignment? What have you learned in your previous courses that you can apply here?	



LEARNING ONLINE RESOURCE 22.1

Use Evaluation to Support Planning

Consider your use of learning resources. These include instructor office hours, online resources that supplement your textbook, peer tutors, and Support Services consultations. Use the Stop-Start-Continue method to make your plan. If any of your current strategies are ineffective, you may wish to stop them and replace them with other study methods. Continue strategies that are currently effective and start new strategies that you feel will support your success.

	Learning strategies	Learning resources
Stop		
Start		
Continue		



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