

DISTANCE LEARNING



Prior to enrolling to take classes through an online school, check to make sure distance learning is really right for you. Earning a degree online can be a pleasurable and rewarding experience. But, distance education is not for everyone. While some people thrive on the independence and freedom offered through such classes, others find themselves regretting their decision and wishing they had enrolled at a traditional school instead.

Successful and happy distance learners have a few characteristics in common. Compare yourself to the following list to determine whether or not online classes are a good fit for your personality and habits.

1. Successful distance learners do just as well, if not better, without people looking over their shoulders. While some people need teachers to keep them motivated and on-task, distance learners are able to motivate themselves. They realize that they will never be face-to-face with the people who give them assignments and grade their work, but they don't need others to encourage them. The most successful students are self-motivated and set their own goals.

2. Successful distance learners never (or at least rarely) procrastinate. You'll rarely find them putting off assignments or waiting until the last moment to write their papers. These students enjoy the freedom of working at their own pace and appreciate the ability to complete their work in as much time as it takes them, instead of waiting for an entire class. However, they understand that putting off their work too often can end up adding months, if not years, to their studies.

3. Successful distance learners have good reading comprehension skills. While most people learn by listening to lectures and taking notes, the majority of distance learners are expected to master material through reading alone. Although some distance learning courses offer video recordings and audio clips, most programs require that students understand a large amount of information that is only available through written text. These students are able to comprehend texts at the college level without the direct guidance of a teacher.

4. Successful distance learners can resist constant distractions. Whether it's the phone ringing off the hook, the kids screaming in the kitchen, or the allure of the tv, everyone faces distractions. Successful students know how to filter out the constant disturbances that threaten their progress. They feel comfortable turning down an invitation or letting the machine pick up the phone when they know there is work to be done.

5. Successful distance learners feel alright about missing the social elements of traditional schools. Sure, they realize that they'll miss out on the homecoming game, the dances, and the student elections, but they're convinced that the independence is absolutely worth it. Whether they're mature adult learners who aren't interested in the fraternity hype, or younger students who get their socialization from extracurricular activities elsewhere, they are comfortable with their current social situation. In place of classroom discussion, they explore the issues with their peers through email and message boards or discuss what they're learning with spouses or coworkers.

If you have few of the qualities of these successful students, you may want to reconsider applying to an online school. Remember that online learning is not for everyone and, while it is an excellent choice for some, others will always struggle with learning independently. But, if, after comparing your personality and habits to those of successful distance education students, you've discovered that you have a lot in common, online classes may be the perfect option for you.