

## Self-Directed and Self-Regulated Learning



# SELF-DIRECTED AND SELF-REGULATED LEARNING

JENNY PEACH



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# ATTRIBUTION

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# WELCOME

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This resource will guide you through your journey as a self-directed and self-regulated learner. The tools have been designed to support you in developing your confidence and success as a learner.

Self-regulation enables you to become a self-directed learner by developing a sense of **resourcefulness** and **building the capacity to stay motivated and focused on achieving goals**. Self-regulation (which includes metacognition and mindfulness) refers to the skills and strategies used to assess and manage one's internal state (emotions, thoughts, and mindset) and behaviours.

You can select any chapter content that supports your skill development.

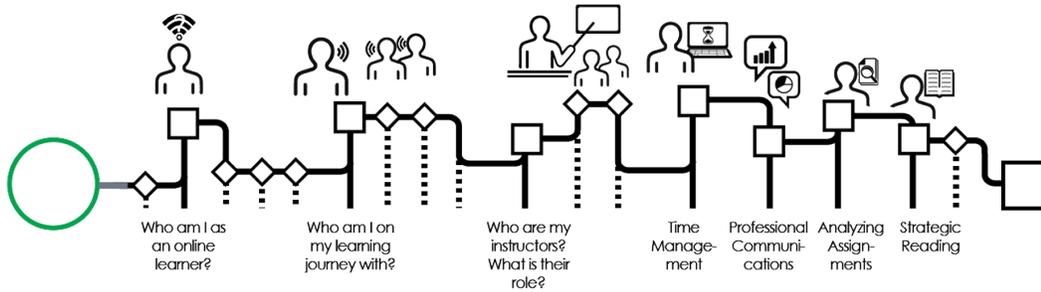




## PART I

## WHO AM I AS AN ONLINE LEARNER?

Image Credit: Graeme  
Robinson-Clogg



In this section of the workshop, you will explore your role as an online learning student. By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- 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.

Go to the next chapter to move on to the first section of this module.



1.

## IDENTIFY SKILLS FOR SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING

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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 direction about what to learn directly from the instructor. In these environments, students might spend time taking 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 the central actor 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.



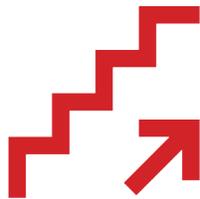
An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/selfdirectedlearning1/?p=21#h5p-2>

### Skills for Independent Learning



**Define  
Goal**



**Identify  
Necessary  
Steps**



**Choose  
Learning  
Strategies**



**Reach out  
for Support**

Image Credit: Rawia Inaim

Independent learning requires the following skills:

- Defining your learning goal for your program, each course, and each assignment you complete.
- Identifying the steps you must take to move towards your goal. What content do you need to know? How will you learn it?
- Choose strategies that will support your own learning.
- Reach out for the support you need from your instructor, classmates, and university support services.

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

## 2.

## MANAGE INFORMATION FOR ONLINE LEARNING

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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, to develop a resource file of information that **will support professional growth**.

Many online learners feel **overwhelmed by the volume of reading** and the wealth of online resources available to them. Managing information well requires you to develop skills for identifying the purpose of your reading.

1. What do you need to learn from this reading?
2. Why is it important to you personally and professionally?, and the strategy that will help you achieve your purpose (skimming, reading key portions, a close reading).

In the [Strategic Reading](#) module, 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 should select a system that allows you to store, search for, and retrieve readings and notes from current and past courses. Online note systems, such as OneNote, Evernote, Dropbox, or cloud-based drives (which can also be helpful for sharing notes with your classmates), 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, creating additional sections or pages for weekly module topics
- Create flexible notes that include text, images, audio, and video files
- Store PDFs and other course documents for your own records (note: you will eventually lose access to Moodle pages when courses are complete)
- 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 all of your devices

### Comparison of Notebook Apps

- [Apps for Note-Taking](#)

Try it!

After investigating and installing your preferred digital notebook, create a notebook for each of your semester courses.

3.

## ASSESSING YOUR LEARNING PROGRESS

Have you ever wondered what the most successful students do differently from other students? Students 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 of your academic life. To learn more about how metacognition applies to student life, watch the video below.

### Learning Choices: Videos and Text

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 video transcript located directly below each video. Scroll past the video to read if this is your learning preference.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/selfdirectedlearning1/?p=24#oembed-1>

### Plan – Monitor – Evaluation

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



The Learning Cycle (Image Credit: Christina Page)

cycle, along with the other questions you will want to consider.

**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 to 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 the chart below, you will identify the key question for each stage in the

**Key Questions****What do I need to learn? (*Planning*)****Other Questions to Ask Yourself**

- 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 test?
- 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*)**

- 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 in office hours?

**How am I doing at learning this material? (*Monitoring*)**

- 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 support available to me (e.g. office hours, tutors)?
- How can I make this material more personally relevant to me?

**Did I learn the material effectively? (*Evaluation*)**

- To what extent did I meet the Learning Objectives for this unit?
  - What in my exam preparation worked well?
  - What in my exam preparation did not go well? What do I want to change?
  - How did my exam answer compare with the suggested answer? What key components did I miss?
  - How will what I have learned help me in my next courses?
- 

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1. Chick, N. (2017). *Metacognition*. Retrieved August 31, 2017, from <https://wp0.vanderbilt.edu/cft/guides-sub-pages/metacognition/>

2. Tanner, K. D. (2012). Promoting student metacognition. *Cell Biology Education*, 11(2), 113–120. <https://doi.org/10.1187/cbe.12-03-0033>

4.

## 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 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**.

### BLOOM'S TAXONOMY

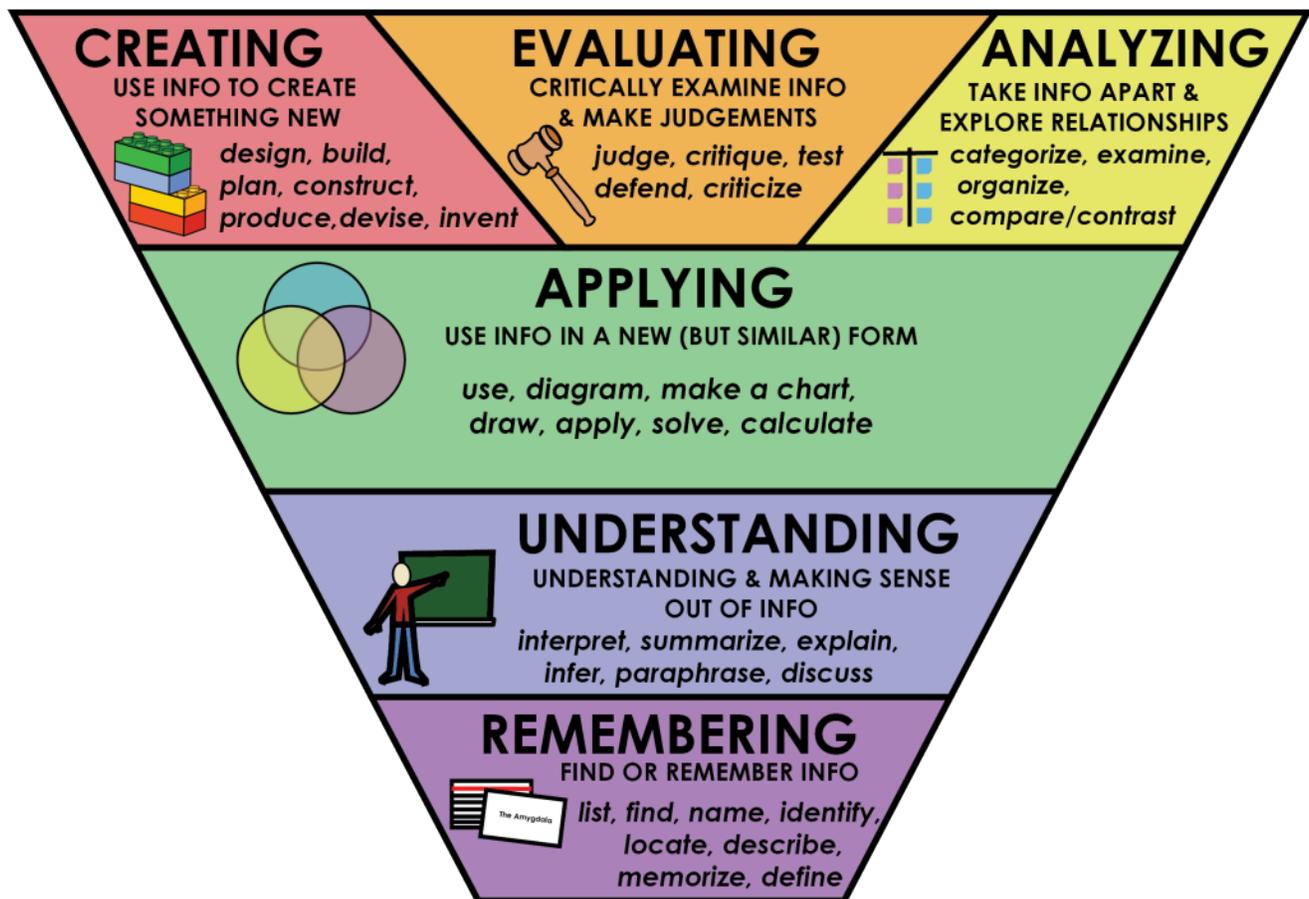


Image Credit: Rawia Inaim

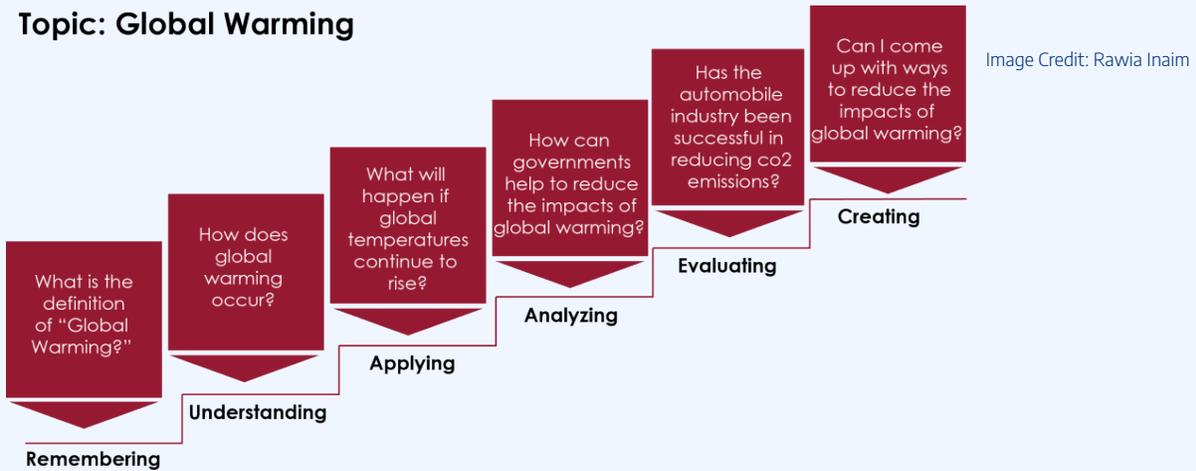
The levels of Bloom's taxonomy build upon each other. While you need to be able to remember key concepts, your courses will spend more time developing your ability to **apply, analyze, evaluate, and create** using this knowledge. As you encounter new concepts, you will want to use critical questioning to understand the concepts at all levels, moving from surface to deeper knowledge.

One method for creating study questions or planning active learning activities is to move step-by-step through each level of Bloom's Taxonomy.

1. 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.
2. 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.

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

### Topic: Global Warming



### Try It!

#### 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:

- Develop a question and answer it to show that you can think about the material at that level. Use the example questions on the handout above 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.](#)

Level	Question
<b>Remembering</b>	Remembering and Recalling information. My question(s):
<b>Understanding</b>	Understanding Explaining ideas or concepts. My question(s):
<b>Applying</b>	Applying information in a familiar situationMy question(s):
<b>Analyzing</b>	Analyzing by breaking information into parts to explore relationships. My question(s):
<b>Evaluating</b>	Justifying a decision or course of action. My question(s):
<b>Creating</b>	Generating new ideas, products, or ways of viewing things. My question(s):

## 5.

# EFFECTIVE STUDENT-PROFESSOR COMMUNICATION

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Now that you have developed a picture of the role that your professors will have in your online learning journey, how might you develop an effective relationship with them?

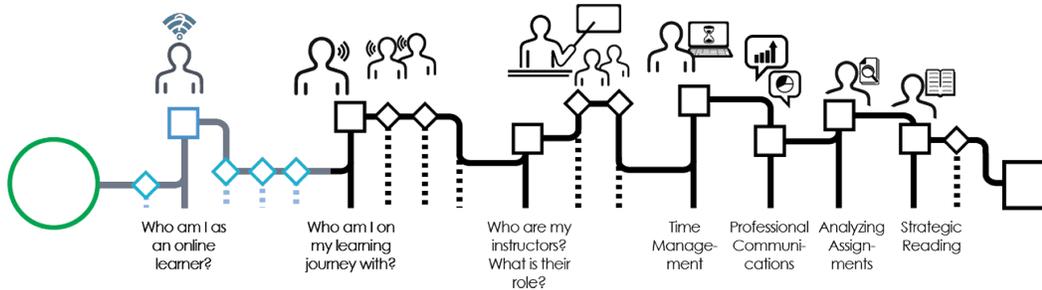
Consider the following suggestions:

1. When you look at a course reading, activity, or assignment, try to put yourself inside the mind of your professor. Why do you think they 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 with your work.
2. Take advantage of opportunities to connect with your professor, either face-to-face during learning block weeks or during online office hours.
3. Check the course site regularly. Your professor is likely to post announcements and other 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 the section on professional communication in this resource – but if you are curious, you may choose to view [the chapter on how to email a professor](#) now.

## PART II

## WHO AM I ON MY LEARNING JOURNEY WITH?

Image Credit: Graeme Robinson-Clogg



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, much of your learning will take place in groups. In some disciplines, this process is referred to as becoming part of a community of inquiry or community of practice.

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- Define the role of a 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 workshop.



## 6.

## DEFINE YOUR LEARNING COMMUNITY

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When you join an online course, you become part of what is known as a **Community of Inquiry**.

In the Community of Inquiry, you will have a **Professor, content to process, and a 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.

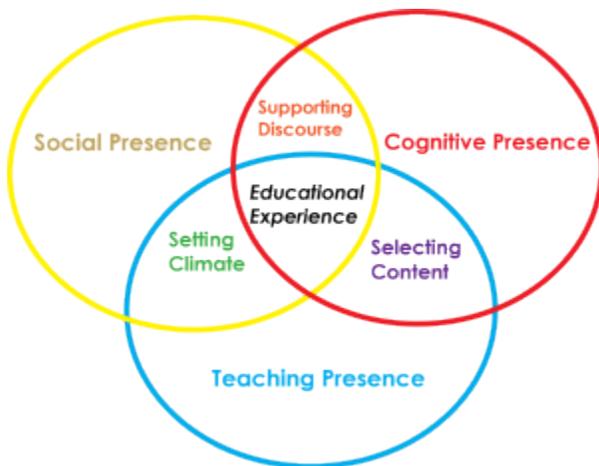


Image Credit: Rawia Inaim. Adapted from: <https://coi.athabasca.ca/coi-model/>

### Cognitive Presence and Critical Thinking

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 professors, from fellow students, or by searching for it 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 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.**



An interactive HSP element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/selfdirectedlearning1/?p=37#h5p-3>

## 7.

## THE ROLE OF AN ONLINE PROFESSOR

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.

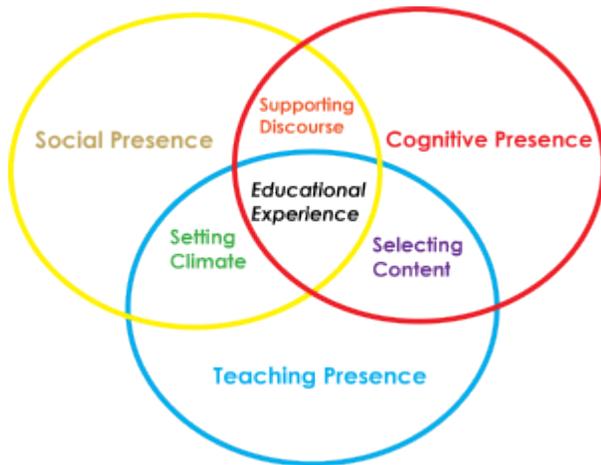


Image Credit: Rawia Inaim. Adapted from: <https://coi.athabascau.ca/coi-model/>

online classrooms, your professor takes on the following roles:

- **Designer:** In an online learning environment, your professors will 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 professor carefully creates opportunities for you to learn the skills you need for your future career and designs assignments and learning activities to lead you towards intellectual, personal, and professional growth. As you review the course presentation, consider each of the learning activities and assignments. Think about the reasons why your professor may have selected these course components to contribute to your development.
- **Director:** Online professors are available to answer questions along the way. As you learn, you will inevitably find areas that are unclear to you, either related to the course content or your learning process. By communicating with your professor effectively, you will take full advantage of their role in guiding you on your journey.<sup>1</sup>

What is the role of your professor in this learning environment?

Your online professor provides the teaching presence to create and **design** significant learning experiences for you and your fellow students. Professors 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.

In

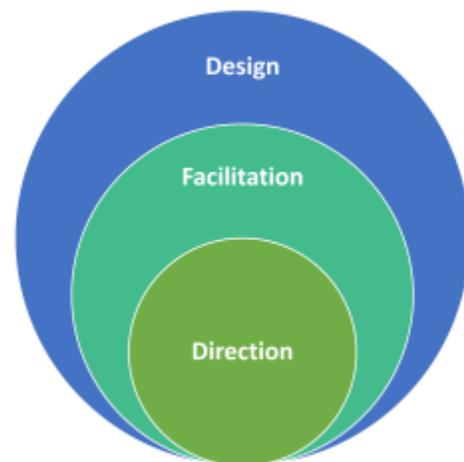


Image credit: Christina Page

1. Garrison, D. R., & Vaughan, N. D. (2008). *Blended learning in higher education: framework, principles, and guidelines* (1st ed). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

## 8.

## PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE TEAMWORK



Image Credit: Rawia Inaim

Effective teams share five key 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

At the end of its working period, the group processes its functioning by answering two questions:

### Group Processing

- What did each member do that was helpful for the group?
- What can each member do to make the group work better?

Necessary for effective group functioning.

### Skills in Communication

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.

1

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



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/selfdirectedlearning1/?p=40#h5p-4>

1. Johnson, D., T. Johnson, R., & Smith, K. (1998). *Active Learning: Cooperation in the College Classroom* (Vol. 47). [https://doi.org/10.5926/arepj1962.47.0\\_29](https://doi.org/10.5926/arepj1962.47.0_29)

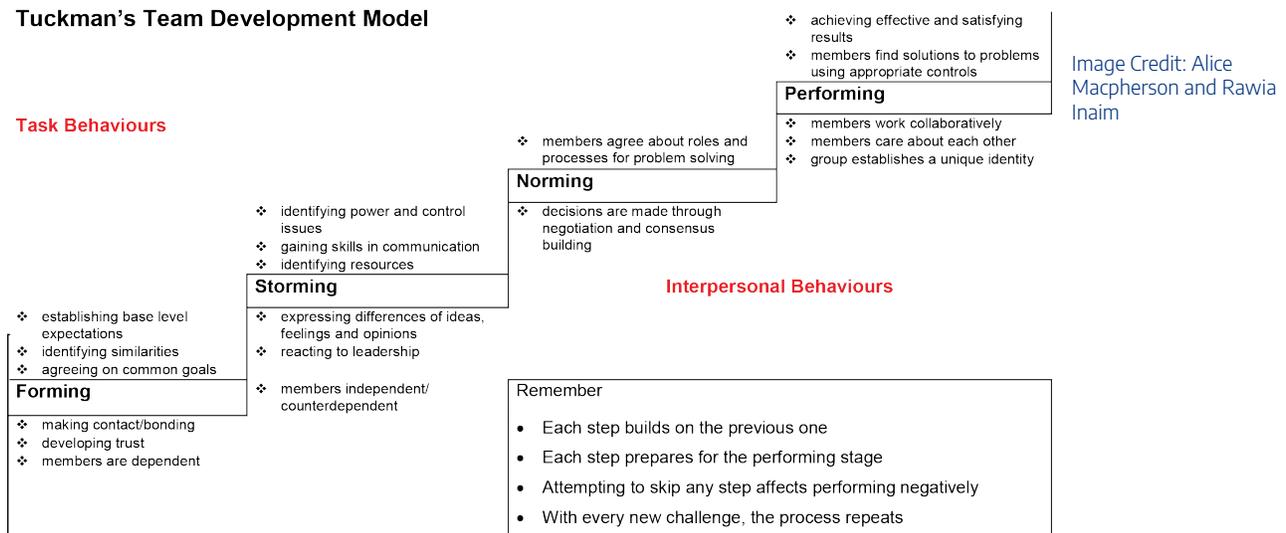
Now that you understand the characteristics of effective teams, move to the next section to discover how good teams develop and grow through their life cycle.

9.

# PLAN FOR SUCCESSFUL TEAMWORK

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

## Tuckman's Team Development Model



In the first section of this module, 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.

Consider the strategies you plan to use to demonstrate social presence and form a strong interpersonal foundation for your newly forming team.

1. Tuckman, B.W. (1965) 'Developmental sequence in small groups', *Psychological Bulletin*, 63, 384-399. Reprinted in *Group Facilitation: A Research and Applications Journal*, Number 3, Spring 2001



## PART III

## TIME MANAGEMENT FOR ONLINE LEARNING

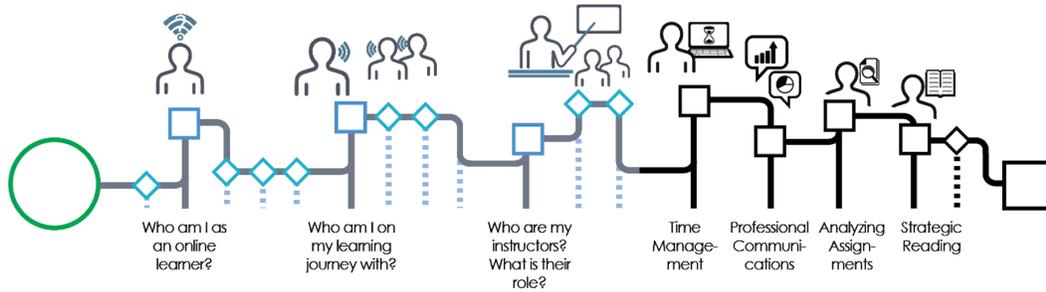


Image Credit: Graeme Robinson-Clogg

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 blended course, you will be responsible for a higher number of independent self-study hours than in traditional classroom courses.

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

Move to the next chapter to get started.



10.

## CREATE A SEMESTER SCHEDULE

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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 over the semester and to develop a plan that allows you to complete this work effectively.

Many students find it helpful to develop a semester 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 presentations.

A semester schedule gives you a visual picture of the assignments, projects, tests, exams, presentations, and practicum requirements that will happen during the semester. If you are taking several classes, this is a tool to be able to see what is coming up next.

By having the “big picture” in view, you will be able to proactively manage busy periods in your semester. If you have flexible due dates, you will be able to schedule your assignments for the optimal time in the semester. 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 in the semester.

The following video will help you better understand how to read your course presentation and how to plan for the semester ahead.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:  
<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/selfdirectedlearning1/?p=61#oembed-1>

### Video Transcript: Creating a Semester Schedule

Creating a master schedule for your whole semester can help you see the big picture and stay on track. In this video, you will learn how to compile the information from your course presentations into one master schedule that will allow you to see your semester at a glance.

Here are 3 *STEPS* you can take to use your course presentations to create a semester schedule.

**Step 1:** Create a table with 7 columns, one column for each day of the week, and one row for each week of the semester. Label the days, Monday, Tuesday, and all the way along, across the top of the table. Then label the weeks across the side of the table. At this point, you can also add specific dates for each week of the semester. You can download a ready-made semester schedule by clicking in the description of this video.

**Step 2:** Next, gather up all of your course presentations for the semester. You should have one for each course you are taking, which includes details about the weekly schedule and readings, assignment due dates, and exams. If you have a part-time job and know your schedule, and if you have family commitments that have a regular schedule, gather up these schedules as well.

**Step 3:** Now, go through the course presentation, looking for important details and commitments that will take place in Week 1 of the semester. This could include required course readings, homework, and assignments. On your semester schedule table, find the day of the week these commitments need to be completed and write them down. Make sure to include the course name, the details of the commitment, and what it is worth if it is a graded assignment. Now keep working through your course presentation each week of the semester. Keep following these same steps for each of your courses until you have completed your schedule.

Now, add important life events to your semester schedule; this might include work events, family events, trips, and special occasions.

In summary, once you have completed these 3 steps using your course presentations to create a semester schedule, you will now have a central and easily accessible schedule that includes all of your commitments in one place. You won't have to go searching through piles of paper or go back online through the course website to remember what you have to get done each week. As well, being able to see, in one

place, what your commitments are today, this week, and in the upcoming weeks can help you organize your time in the most efficient way possible.

## 11.

## DEVELOP A WEEKLY SCHEDULE

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Your next step is to create a weekly schedule.

This will include your work, class, and study commitments, volunteer roles, 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?

1. **Record your regular weekly commitments first** (work, classes, organized activities).
2. **Designate regular study blocks for each of your classes.** 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.
3. **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.
4. **Keep some time open for daily physical activity.** Remember, research indicates that regular exercise will not only give you a general sense of well-being but can also reduce tension and help you accomplish a tough class, study, and work schedule.
5. **Label some empty blocks of time** as OPEN for academic or personal needs.
6. **Schedule some time on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday 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.



An interactive HSP element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:  
<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/selfdirectedlearning1/?p=67#h5p-11>

## 12.

## MANAGE DAILY TASKS

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By using **smaller blocks of time, you can cover material in chunks** and not have to worry about the larger whole. A mistake that many people make is that they try 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 20 minutes on your bus ride reading or reviewing for your upcoming class 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. Going out to eat often? Consider making something simple at home that you could put in the oven to cook without needing to tend to; that time could be used doing some work for class and still leave you time for other activities once dinner is done.

Now that you can see the big picture of your semester and weekly priorities, the next step is to create a **daily to-do list** to prioritize your tasks. The video below introduces you to some principles for creating daily task lists. When you are finished, move to the next section to choose strategies for managing your tasks.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/selfdirectedlearning1/?p=69#oembed-1>

### Managing Daily Tasks Video Transcript

By the time you've finished the day today, what will you have accomplished? In this video, you will learn to create a system to manage your daily to-do list, so that you can prioritize effectively and use your time efficiently. For every task you have to complete, you need to decide:

1. When do I need to finish this by?
2. How much time will it take?
3. Is this task a priority, or can it wait until later?

A good to-do list helps you make sure that you complete all of your high-priority tasks and that you allocate a manageable amount of work to each day. So, how do you make a daily task list? First, you will want to find the format that works best for you. Some people prefer to use a paper planner. Others prefer to use the reminder function on their phone or another task list app. Choose the format that meets your needs the best. Second, you will need to divide your work into tasks that are specific, measurable, and achievable. In general, a task should be anything that you can complete in a single work period—for example, in an hour or less. If you have a large project, break it down into smaller tasks.

Third, you will need to assign your tasks to a specific day. Make sure that each day's task list is reasonable and achievable.

Fourth, prioritize each day's tasks. What tasks *must* be finished today? Be sure that you complete these before moving on to lower-priority tasks. After the most important things have been done, move on to the less urgent tasks.

At the end of the day, decide what to do with any tasks that aren't yet complete. Most often, you will move the task to another day. You might also decide that the task isn't important and delete it from your list.

Finally, be sure to reward yourself for a day's work well done. If you are able to create an effective motivational system for yourself, you will be less likely to procrastinate, and more likely to finish your most important work each day.

To summarize, a daily to-do list can help you stay on track and achieve your most important goals. Choose a tool that works for you, organize your tasks, prioritize them, and work through your list each day.



## PART IV

# PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION IN THE ONLINE ENVIRONMENT

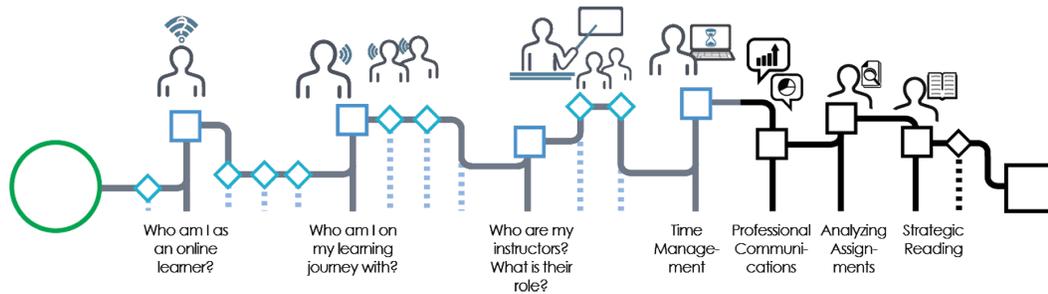


Image Credit: Graeme Robinson-Clogg

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

When you finish this module, you will be able to:

- Write clear and professional emails.
- Communicate effectively in online forums.
- Give and receive feedback to fellow learners.



13.

## USE EMAIL IN THE ONLINE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

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In an online learning environment, communicating by email is an important part of getting things done.

The video below, which includes an interactive quiz, will provide you with some tools for sending a clear and professional email. You will use many of these same principles for your communication with classmates and in other work settings.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/selfdirectedlearning1/?p=77#h5p-7>

### Video Transcript

Communicating with your instructor throughout the semester is an important part of being an active and engaged post-secondary 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 for your busy instructors to read and understand your email as possible, there are a few basic principles to keep in mind when sending an email message to your professor. In this video, we are going to cover five of these principles that will help ensure that your email communication is clear, effective, and professional.

First, 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 was Tom Smith, an email to them might look something like “Dear Professor Smith.” You may wish to conclude with a closing like “best regards”. In general, don’t worry about being too formal with your instructor. Think of your email as a professional, business communication.

Second, 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 to avoid unnecessary confusion. Remember, your instructor is much more likely to help you if they are able to understand what you are saying.

Third, it is helpful to keep your message brief. Avoid long emails that go into too many unnecessary details or that appear to be long-winded rants. Keep your tone friendly and respectful, and 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.

Fourth, 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, assignment description, class website, or lecture notes can answer many of the questions you might have.

Finally, it is important not to expect that your instructor will respond to you immediately. Unlike with instant messaging, email responses can take anywhere from one to three 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 re-send an email after at least five days have passed.

In this video, we covered five key principles that, if followed when writing an email to your instructor, will help ensure that you communicate clearly, effectively, and professionally.

## 14.

## COMMUNICATE IN ONLINE FORUMS

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

Forums are a tool for creating collaborative learning relationships. They can also be a low-stakes way to express your developing ideas and to get feedback on how you are learning the course material as you work towards larger assignments.

### What Makes a Good Forum Post?

The rubric below outlines what distinguishes stronger online posts from those that are less successful. Review the chart below. What do you notice? If your professor has provided a rubric for online posts, read the rubric and identify your instructor's criteria for success.<sup>1</sup>

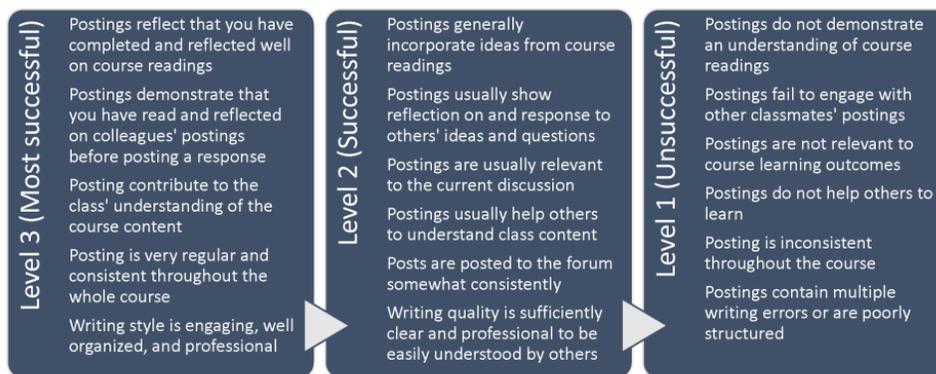


Image Credit: Christina Page

Adapted from rubrics developed for the MES program at the University of Alberta. In Fenwick, T. J., & Parsons, J. (2009). *The art of evaluation: a resource for educators and trainers* (2nd ed.). Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing.

### Tips for Participating in Forums

1. Develop a clear understanding of the expectations and ground rules for the forum. Review your course presentation (syllabus) to 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 that your growing understanding are 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.

1. Fenwick, T. J., & Parsons, J. (2009). *The art of evaluation: a resource for educators and trainers* (2nd ed.). Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing.

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 (ie. 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, 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. Read others' comments before posting, and connect your ideas with what you are hearing from your classmates. <sup>2</sup>

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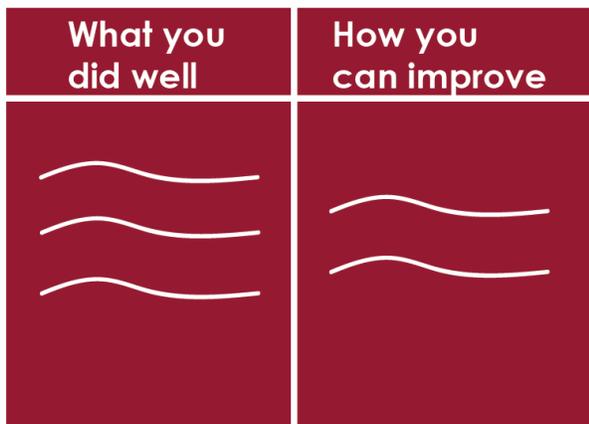
2. Pappas, C. (2015a, June 6). 10 netiquette tips for online discussions. Retrieved August 7, 2018, from <https://elearningindustry.com/10-netiquette-tips-online-discussions>; Pappas, C. (2015b, August 16). 7 tips on how to use forums in elearning. Retrieved August 7, 2018, from <https://elearningindustry.com/7-tips-use-forums-in-elearning>.

## 15.

## GIVE AND RECEIVE FEEDBACK

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Good communication and learning within your online environment as well as at your workplace require giving and receiving feedback. You might give feedback to classmates in a group project or receive feedback from your professors and workplace supervisors.



*Effective feedback must include the following:*

What is being done correctly and well?

How it can be improved?

What the next steps might be?

### Receiving Feedback

If another person offers you feedback, it may sound like *criticism*. It may be that they intend to be positive but they may not know how to say something positively. It may also be that their self-esteem is low and they are being defensive or aggressive towards you. Most importantly, you may become defensive or aggressive if you see their feedback as critical or negative, **no matter what was meant**.

Image credit: Rawia Inaim

Attempt to suspend your reaction until you understand the information that is being given. Paraphrase what you hear. If it seems unclear, ask for clarification. Having it 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 by you indicated?
- Is it an evaluation of the past or an indication of the future?

Think about and cope with your possible defensive reaction.

- Do you see wants as demands?
- Do you feel guilty or obligated?
- Are you hearing more than what is being said?

Ideally, listen to comments and find the positive side of them. Then, explain your position or point of view without feeling that you must justify yourself. Determine the importance of the message to you. You may choose not to change.

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

### Giving Positive Feedback

It is easy to criticize and to 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, is **very difficult**.

You first need an 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 block you and your opinions out. If you do not have permission to comment, you may be seen as aggressive, and the other person may respond by being aggressive or defensive towards you.

Ask if the other person wants 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 before 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 to avoid or clear up misunderstandings or confusion.

**Be Positive.** Try to begin and end your feedback with comments about what is working, correct, or right about the situation. No matter how *bad* you perceive things to be, there will be good points to comment on.

**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 own experiences and perceptions. Use alternative, positive words and phrases. Avoid comparing the person involved to other people in other situations. The *where*, *when*, *what*, and *who* of each situation are different. Comparisons tend to produce resentment and frustration.

**Be Specific** in your description of the problem. Avoid vague or misleading statements. If attitude seems to be a problem, show specific instances and then take 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.

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 one point at a time, and
- 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.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/selfdirectedlearning1/?p=83#h5p-8>



## PART V

## ANALYZING ONLINE ASSIGNMENTS

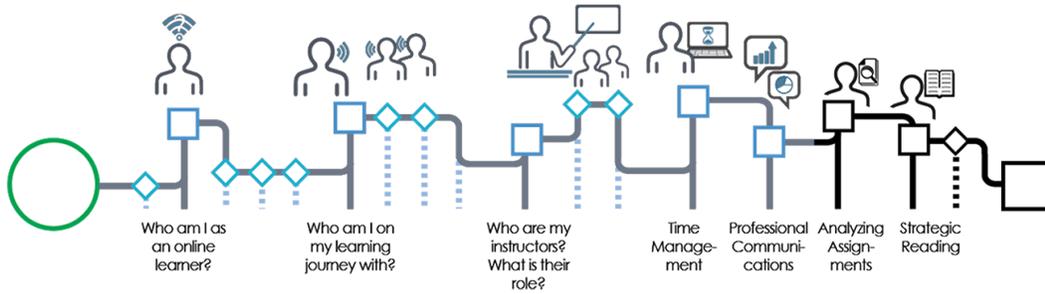


Image Credit: Graeme Robinson-Clogg

Assignments are a key part of your online journey. As you work towards independent learning, you will develop strategies to support you in completing projects effectively. By completing this module, you will be able to:

- Identify learning goals for your assignments.
- Use a rubric to evaluate your work.
- Create an assignment plan.
- Use feedback to move forward.



16.

## IDENTIFY LEARNING GOALS FOR ASSIGNMENTS

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You need a clear understanding of what the professor wants before starting on any assignment or project. Then you will want to translate assignment terms and requirements into details as to what your professor expects.

When you are not sure, remember to ask your professor.

### **Interpreting the Assignment**

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

- What is the task you need to do for this assignment?
- Why did your professor ask you to do this particular task?
- What kind of evidence do you need to support your ideas?
- What kind of writing style is acceptable?
- What kind of referencing style must be used?
- What guidelines must you follow?

### **Terms that might be used to determine the task**

- *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 materials you have studied in the course up to the point of the assignment. As you read the assignment or project requirements, start by identifying which theories, formulas, and graphics relate. Consider what research you will need to do to complete the project.

## 17.

## USE A RUBRIC TO EVALUATE YOUR WORK

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### What is a Rubric?

When you receive many of your course assignments, you may also receive a copy of the rubric the professor will use to grade your work.

- The rubric provides information on what criteria shape a highly successful assignment.

### How to Use Rubrics

Your assignment instructions and rubric are two of your key tools throughout the process of completing the assignment. These provide an outline of the criteria that the instructor has set out for a successful assignment.

There are two key times to use the rubric and assignment instructions:

1. Before you start writing: Unfortunately, time may be lost writing something that does not meet the key guidelines you must follow. To avoid this problem, take time to read both the assignment instructions and the rubric *carefully* before beginning. Clarify any areas of confusion with your instructor.
2. After you have written a draft, but before you submit the assignment: At this point, grade your work according to the rubric. Think carefully and critically. Are there areas where you may not have met the criteria well? If so, edit your work accordingly, making the needed revisions before submitting the assignment.

The video below provides additional strategies for using rubrics.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/selfdirectedlearning1/?p=94#oembed-1>

### Making Rubrics Work for You: Video Script

When you receive an assignment, you may notice that it includes a rubric or checklist that indicates how your instructor will mark your work. Have you ever thought that this could be a powerful learning tool for you?

In this video, you'll learn how to use a rubric to its maximum potential to support your learning.

The first time you want to look at the rubric is when you first begin working on your assignment. 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 rubric carefully. What is your instructor looking for? Which sections receive more marks? What elements are worth fewer marks? Use this information to determine how you want to focus your efforts.

Not sure what a term on the rubric means? Now is a great time to ask!

Imagine that you've finished writing the first draft of your assignment. How does the rubric help now? As it turns out, there are some powerful things you can do with a rubric at this stage in your work.

One secret to student 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 in the place of your instructor and try to grade your own assignment according to the rubric.

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

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

As you continue to use this process, you will work towards using a rubric to self-evaluate accurately, so that your self-evaluation closely matches your instructor's evaluation of your work.

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

## 18.

## CREATE AN ASSIGNMENT PLAN

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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 research paper may seem overwhelming, but if you can divide the task into achievable steps, you will be on your way to success.

Use the chart below 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 research paper:.

Assignment Task	Target Completion Date	Complete?
Read assignment instructions and rubric	October 2	Y
Review course materials and choose topic	October 3	Y
Library research — find 3 peer reviewed articles and two books	October 5	
Read and take notes on two articles	October 7	
Read and takes notes on final article and books	October 8	
Organize notes; write thesis and outline	October 9	
Write body paragraph 1	October 10	
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 organization (use the rubric)	October 14	
Writing tutor appointment	October 15	
Edit and proofread assignment	October 16	
Submit final assignment	October 18	

In the above 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 research 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.

19.

## USE FEEDBACK TO MOVE FORWARD

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“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 professor 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 towards 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 towards 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 Mid-Course

An excellent time for self-evaluation is after you have received feedback on your first midterm exam or major assignment. 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 or 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. Consider the resources available to you: online learning, workshops, tutoring, support from classmates, and your professor. Identify the people on your “team” that can help you respond to feedback and move towards your new goals.

### Reflecting at the End of a Course

The completion of a course is also an excellent time for reflection and evaluation. In addition to the questions in the midterm 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.

12

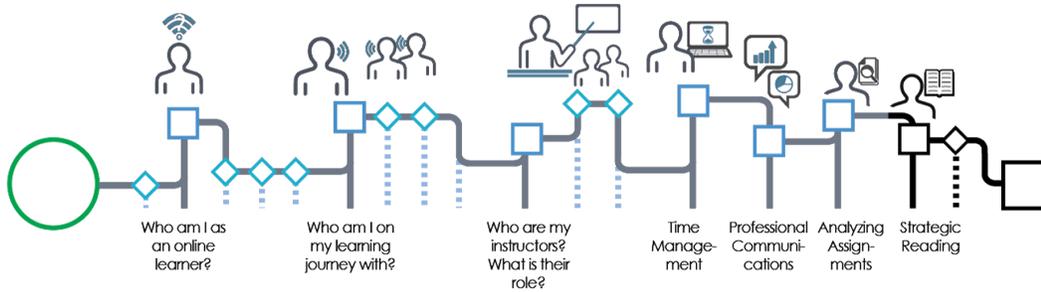
- 
1. Chen, P., Chavez, O., Ong, D. C., & Gunderson, B. (2017). Strategic resource use for learning: A self-administered intervention that guides self-reflection on effective resource use enhances academic performance. *Psychological Science*, 28(6), 774–785. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797617696456>;
  2. Tanner, K. D. (2012). Promoting student metacognition. *Cell Biology Education*, 11(2), 113–120. <https://doi.org/10.1187/cbe.12-03-0033>



## PART VI

# STRATEGIC READING

Image Credit: Graeme Robinson-Clogg



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 module 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 module, you will be able to:

- 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 the module.



20.

## READING IN YOUR LEARNING JOURNEY

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Photo credit: Emily Tan

Online learning typically requires you to interact with a larger amount of written material than traditional in-class 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 give most pages equal time in order 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 available 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 sections of this module, you will learn a strategy called SQ3R that can guide you through the process of using questions to guide 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 form where you can easily access it again.

## 21.

## TAKE EFFECTIVE NOTES ON ONLINE READINGS

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**Why take notes on online content?** After all, you can easily search for it and read it again. However, re-reading is not always the most effective use of time. 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 put keynotes in the margins of their books. You may prefer to create typewritten notes and store these notes using your electronic notebook or information management system. Another tool for engaging with digital texts is *Hypothesis*.

Watch the video below, and consider how this tool might work for you. If you prefer reading to watching videos, scroll to the bottom of the page for a transcript.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/selfdirectedlearning1/?p=115#oembed-1>

### Video Transcript

So, you have your texts for your course, but they're not regular textbooks. You'll be using online texts and other articles as the primary readings in your course. What strategies can you use for making effective notes that will help you retain what you are reading, prepare for exams, and note key information for use in your assignments?

One tool that can help you take notes electronically is *Hypothesis*. Hypothesis is a free tool that you add to the Chrome browser that allows you to highlight and add notes to online text. In this video, you will learn how to install Hypothesis, create notes and highlights, and create a group to work collaboratively with your classmates.

To get started with Hypothesis, you will first create a free account. Type hypothesis into the search bar to visit the page. On the top right, you will find a "Get Started" button. Click here to create your account. You will provide your email address, create a user name, and password. Then, check your email and click on the link to activate your account.

The second step is to install the Hypothesis extension in your web browser. In this case, you will use the Chrome browser. To install the extension, go to the "Get Started" section of the Hypothesis page. Then, click the Chrome extension button. This will guide you through the steps of installing the extension.

When the extension is installed, you will see a square icon at the top left of your screen. When you click this icon, you will see a new menu on the far right of your browser. Click the arrow to open the menu and login.

Next, you will choose where to store your notes. Be aware that the default setting is public. You will likely want to create a private group for personal notes or group projects. To create a group, click on Public, and then create a new private group. For each text you highlight, you can choose which group can see your notes. This feature can be especially helpful for group study and projects. You may also wish to create a group that only you can see to store personal notes.

Now, begin reading and taking notes. Today I'm going to read and take notes on this chapter on procrastination from an online text.

When I highlight some text, I have the option to highlight or annotate the text. When you click on highlight, the text is marked with a

yellow highlight, as you might expect. This can be helpful in identifying key points in the document. However, be careful not to over-highlight – be very selective in highlighting only key information.

*I assumed that procrastination was always a time management problem. What might be a different reason that I procrastinate?*

Finally, I can choose to add a page note that summarizes my key learnings or questions, or indicates how I might use this information in the future. As I read this page, I found the information on the Pomodoro technique useful. If I was reading this text together with a group of classmates, I might add something like this to the notes:

*I found the Pomodoro technique interesting – has anyone else used this method successfully?*

My group members can then respond with their own insights.

Reading purposefully requires you to actively interact with texts. In this video, you learned how to use Hypothesis as a tool for engaging with online texts. You learned how to create an account, install the extension, and use the basic highlighting and annotation tools.

How might you use Hypothesis to support the reading in your courses?

## 22.

## READ JOURNAL ARTICLES STRATEGICALLY

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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.

### Parts of a Journal Article

<b>Abstract and Keywords</b>	This is a concise summary of the article. Read this <b>first</b> to decide if the article is relevant to your current research topic. Below the abstract, you will find 4-5 keywords. These indicate the subject area of the article.
<b>Literature Review</b>	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.
<b>Research Methodology</b>	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?
<b>Results</b>	This section discusses the findings of the study in detail. It often includes statistical information, charts, and graphs.
<b>Discussion</b>	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.
<b>References</b>	Skim the reference list. This may lead you to other key articles that are related to your topic.

### How to Approach Journal Articles

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 the 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, "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.

23.

## THE SQ3R METHOD FOR STRATEGIC READING

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 below the video to find a transcript.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/selfdirectedlearning1/?p=107#oembed-1>

### Video Transcript

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 – 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:

- Read the Learning Objectives or chapter introduction
- You will read the chapter summary and the end (you don't have to wait until you're finished the chapter to read the summary)
- You'll skim the study questions at the end of the chapter
- And you'll 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 to 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 section of the workshop. The real test will be applying the method to your actual reading; try it out and see how it works for you.

24.

## APPLY 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 the video below. At several points in the video, you will have the opportunity to pause and try the steps in the method. When you are finished the video or reading, go to the next chapter to move on in the workshop.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/selfdirectedlearning1/?p=111#oembed-1>

### Apply It

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?

### Video Transcript

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 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 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.
- And 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 3-4 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 of 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 on 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* are 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?

25.

## EVALUATE YOUR READING SKILLS

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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 quiz below. You will receive feedback about the effectiveness of your current preferred strategy.



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/selfdirectedlearning1/?p=105#h5p-9>



PART VII

# LEARNING TO LEARN REFLECTION



26.

## LEARNING ABOUT SELF-REFLECTION

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One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:  
<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/selfdirectedlearning1/?p=373#audio-373-1>

Self-reflection within a learning context means examining the way we learn and the work we have accomplished and using the insights we gather to inform our future actions. Taking the time to consider how an activity, learning strategy, or assignment has helped you learn can enable you to identify what's working, what's not, and opportunities for improvement. The following video will explain the importance of self-reflection and how you can develop reflection skills. It will review a framework that you can use to become a reflective learner.

[What is Self-Reflection, and Why Does it Matter? Video Transcript \(.pdf\)](#)



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:  
<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/selfdirectedlearning1/?p=373#h5p-12>

[Three Steps to Self-Reflection Infographic \(.pdf\)](#)



Want to build on the three-step reflection framework? Ready to level up?  
Try incorporating these six steps below!

[Six Steps to Self-Reflection Infographic \(.pdf\)](#)

**REFLECTION SERIES**  
**SIX STEPS TO Self-Reflection**

- 1** **Detailing the Situation**  
What happened?
- 2** **Assessing Your Emotional State**  
What was I thinking/feeling/why did I feel the way I did?
- 3** **Making Sense of the Situation**  
Why did it happen?
- 4** **Critically Reviewing and Developing Insights**  
What did I learn?
- 5** **Changing Your Practice**  
What else could I have done? How can I do better in the future?
- 6** **Reinforcing Your Reflection**  
What happened if a similar situation arose?

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Adapted by NYU, with permission from  
Gardner, B., Cole, H., Rodriguez, B., Whithorne, S., & Katten, R. (2018). Reflection practice in health-care and how to foster effective implementation. *Journal of Surgical Education*, 83(4), 444-450. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jse.2018.04.001>  
© <https://www.yorku.ca/learning-centre/learning-centre/>

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- Three Steps to Reflections\_2023
- Six Steps to Self-Reflection\_2023

27.

## PRACTICING SELF-REFLECTION

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Self-reflection can help facilitate the transition to university, which requires more self-directed, independent learning. By reflecting on your learning habits and experiences, you can gain a deeper understanding and reach a higher-order learning stage where you start to critically evaluate experiences, relate new concepts to previous knowledge, and connect concepts to experiences beyond the classroom.

Self-reflection is a skill that requires practice for proficiency, so consider the five tips shared in the following video as you practice this important skill and prepare to complete reflection-based assignments in class.

### Five Tips for Students on Self-Reflection

[Five Tips for Self-Reflection Video Transcript \(.pdf\)](#)



An interactive HSP element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/selfdirectedlearning1/?p=378#h5p-13>

### Three-Step Self-Reflection Guided Writing Activity

To download the activity in an Alternative Format (.docx) click



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PART VIII

# SELF-REGULATION



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[Link to Introduction to Self-regulation Video \(transcript.pdf\)](#)

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28.

## LEARNING ABOUT SELF-REGULATION AND METACOGNITION

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<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/selfdirectedlearning1/?p=421#audio-421-1>

As a university student, you will have to manage different responsibilities and timelines as you pursue your learning activities. Self-regulation is an essential skill you will need to help you persist and succeed as a learner. Whether you're working on a group project, studying on your own, or tackling a challenging assignment, self-regulation can help you plan your learning and respond to challenges strategically and effectively.

The following video will introduce you to how self-regulation is practiced in a learning environment, what metacognition is and how it is related to self-regulation, and how you can start to develop these skills.

[What is Self-Regulation in a Learning Context? Video Transcript \(.pdf\)](#)



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*  
<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/selfdirectedlearning1/?p=421#h5p-24>

[Five Steps to Self-Regulated Learning \(.pdf\)](#)

**SELF-REGULATION SKILLS**  
**FIVE STEPS TO**  
**Self-Regulated Learning**

**1. Analyze the Task**

- Is this task you've done before or something new?
- Does it build off of a task you've already done before?
- How much time and focus will you need?
- How do you feel about the task at hand?

**2. Develop Your Plan**

- How will you structure this task?
- What are the milestones, sub-goals and timelines?
- Will you need resources from the library or learning centers?
- Given your needs, when should you get started on the task?

**3. Set Expectations**

- How much information is available?
- Given your strengths, what type of outcome would you like?
- What will you strive to achieve?
- How will you stay motivated?

**4. Monitor & Strategize**

- How did your study session go today?
- Did you meet your timelines this week?
- Did working in the library help or distract you from completing a task? For example, if you're struggling to develop a shift outline how can you get help?

**5. Evaluate & Adapt**

- How do you feel about your outcome and performance?
- Think about the strategies you used: what worked well and what didn't?
- How can you use a different strategy next time?
- How can you learn from this experience and adapt?

**IPEDS**  
aligned to IPEDS, not otherwise from MSU-ITL  
[https://www.campusontario.ca/self\\_regulation.html](https://www.campusontario.ca/self_regulation.html)  
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## Monitor Your Learning

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29.

## PRACTICING MINDFULNESS TO BECOME SELF-REGULATED LEARNERS

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Mindfulness is an important component of self-regulation. Mindfulness helps us develop present-time awareness and a means to regulate our thoughts and emotions. Practicing both attributes is important when becoming a self-regulated learner. Practicing mindfulness can help us focus on completing the task at hand by silencing past or future distractions or worries so that we can move forward.

This short series on mindfulness will introduce you to mindfulness and how you can implement daily mindfulness practices to help you become an effective self-regulated learner.

### Why Mindfulness is Important to Self-regulation

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30.

## NURTURING A GROWTH MINDSET

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When things don't go as planned, for example, when the strategies we set don't work well or when we don't get the grade we had hoped for and we're challenged with a new course, it can feel discouraging. Often, we may end up believing that we just can't learn something or are simply not "good" students, and we focus more on comparing ourselves to others and worrying about how we might look if we fail. When we're faced with challenges and thoughts like these, having a growth mindset can help us change our thinking so we can stay motivated and on track.

This series on mindset will introduce you to the concept and research behind growth mindset and how developing a growth mindset can help us learn and develop new skills, including becoming a self-regulated learner.

[Three Ways to Spot a False Growth Mindset Video Transcript \(.pdf\)](#)

To download the activity in an Alternative Format (.docx) click



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<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/selfdirectedlearning1/?p=430#h5p-27>

[How to Develop a Growth Mindset Infographic \(.pdf\)](#)

**HOW TO**  
Develop a Growth Mindset

**Not This**

- ✗ I don't know how to do this.
- ✗ Critique and feedback are always about me personally.
- ✗ This task is challenging, I can't do it.
- ✗ If I ask questions I'll look unintelligent.

**But That**

- ✓ I can learn how to do something I don't know.
- ✓ Feedback helps me move forward and get better.
- ✓ This task is challenging, but I can try again.
- ✓ Asking questions will help me learn and get clarity.

Reference:  
Stanford 2016. Mindy: Strategies and Success by Elizabeth H. Margolis  
[https://www.stanford.edu/group/eflow/eflow\\_publications/mindset/mindset.pdf](https://www.stanford.edu/group/eflow/eflow_publications/mindset/mindset.pdf)  
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31.

## LEARNING TO LEARN

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As university students, we need to practice thinking metacognitively to become self-regulated learners, and this requires thinking about how we think, learn, and approach new tasks. For example, we need to be aware of our strengths, weaknesses, prior knowledge, and even our preferred study location and learning strategies. By having this understanding, we can think about what's working and what's not so that we can make changes as needed and develop into strong learners.

Here are some strategies that may help you engage in metacognition when studying so that you can build up your learning skills.

**Preparing for Your Course:** Your instructor has created a course syllabus to guide you through the learning journey. Take the time to review the learning outcomes or objectives and the course schedule, and see if you can identify how the topics or concepts are related within this course and to your other courses. Visit the syllabus throughout the term to monitor your progress.

**Creating A Study Plan and Monitoring Learning:** When we refer to study skills, we refer to a range of approaches to learning that improve your ability to study and retain and recall information. This can include things like time management, critical thinking, and thinking metacognitively. The following guiding questions can help you think metacognitively as you plan, monitor, and evaluate your approach to learning and your ability to retain and learn new concepts. Whether you are studying, completing an assignment, attending class, participating in tutorial discussions, or listening to a guest speaker, you can use the questions below as prompts to think metacognitively.

*To download the activity in an Alternative Format (.docx) click*



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## PART IX

# TRANSFERRING YOUR KNOWLEDGE



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[Link to Introduction to Transfer Video \(transcript.pdf\)](#)

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32.

## LEARNING ABOUT TRANSFER OF KNOWLEDGE

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Transfer of knowledge is the process of constructing new knowledge by applying your prior learning to a new context. The process involves making connections between course concepts and how the topics and issues relate to a variety of sectors, organizations, and occupations.

Envision YU resources focused on the **transfer** capacity will support you in identifying relevance by guiding you through the process of making connections between your coursework and your interest, competencies, and the Canadian world of work. As you work through the different Envision YU resources, you will have opportunities to engage in three methods of self-directed research:

1. Online career-focused research
2. Informational gathering through networking
3. Organizational research and analysis

[Introduction to Transfer Video Transcript \(.pdf\)](#)



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<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/selfdirectedlearning1/?p=495#h5p-42>

### 33.

## NETWORKING IN YOUR FIELD OF INTEREST

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Networking is an essential skill for success in any industry. Through building a professional network, you will gain valuable insights and advice from industry experts and increase your opportunities for growth and advancement. The following activity will guide you through the process of identifying and researching potential networking contacts, engaging in meaningful conversations, following up and maintaining professional relationships, and lastly, reflecting on the learning experience and the impact of your networking efforts.

*To download the activity in an Alternative Format (.docx) click*



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34.

## INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING GUIDE

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Informational interviewing is a great way for you and other early career professionals to network and gain insights into a profession and develop a deeper understanding of an industry or specific organization. Conducting informational interviews is also a great opportunity for you to practice and/or further advance your interpersonal skills. The following activity will guide you through the process of planning and conducting an effective informational interview.

To download the activity in an Alternative Format (.docx) click



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<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/selfdirectedlearning1/?p=547#h5p-55>

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35.

## CONNECTING WITH COLLABORATORS

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Creating a plan of action will help you prioritize and focus your efforts when connecting with collaborators and partners. The plan typically outlines the steps required, including a list of people you would like to reach out to, how to connect with them, and what questions to ask when engaging in conversation. Approaching the process prepared with a plan of action can help you feel confident and build stronger relationships.

*To download the activity in an Alternative Format (.docx) click*



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Click the image below for a larger view. [3 Steps to Creating a Plan of Action Infographic \(.pdf\)](#)



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36.

## TIPS FOR DIGITAL STORYTELLING

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Digital storytelling offers a creative alternative to traditional presentations, whereby information is shared in an engaging manner, such as videos, podcasts, vlogs, and social media posts. Digital storytelling is done using relevant and engaging multimedia content along with a compelling narrative structure (i.e., a story with a hook) that captures and retains the attention of your audience.

[Tips for Digital Storytelling Video Transcript \(.pdf\)](#)



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<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/selfdirectedlearning1/?p=555#h5p-57>

[8 Tips for Digital Storytelling \(.pdf\)](#)

**TRANSFER SERIES**

## 8 TIPS FOR DIGITAL Storytelling

- 1**  
**Select a topic**  
Determine its importance and the purpose of your story.
- 2**  
**Determine the genre of your story**  
Will it be fiction, non-fiction, or a combination?
- 3**  
**Consider your audience**  
Ensure that your story resonates with them.
- 4**  
**Include a specific call to action**  
Change the behaviour of your audience because of your story.
- 5**  
**Determine the mood of the story**  
Will it be funny, sad, urgent, uplifting?
- 6**  
**Create a hook to pique interest**  
To draw your audience into your story.
- 7**  
**Prioritize information of your story**  
How will you structure the content that you want to share?
- 8**  
**Create the shape of your story**  
How will you convey the deeper meaning of your story to your audience?

  
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PART X

# TESTING TIPS



37.

## PREPARING FOR A TEST

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### Critical Thinking and Tests

Within academic tests, professors expect to see your thoughts, your interpretations, and your critical thinking process. The video provides a great summary of the different types of common questions within an exam, with a focus on critical thinking skills.



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(Video: 1.12 mins)

### The Secrets of the Q and A's

Your professors will likely use various conventional types of questions. Here are some tips for handling the most common types. You can gain even more confidence in your test-taking abilities by understanding the different kinds of questions a professor may ask and applying the following proven strategies for answering them:

#### Multiple-Choice Questions

Read the instructions carefully to determine if there may be more than one right answer. If there are multiple right answers, does the professor expect you to choose just one, or do you need to mark all the correct options?

- Read each question carefully and try to answer it in your head before reading the answer options. Then consider all the options.
- Eliminate first the options that are clearly incorrect.
- Read the questions and one of the options as a sentence and turn it into a True/False question.
- Look for clue words that hint that certain option answers might be correct or incorrect.
- Ensure the option you choose best matches what the question is asking.

#### True-or-False Questions

Answer the questions that are obvious to you first. Then go back to statements that require more thought. If the question is stated in the positive, restate it to yourself in the negative by adding the word “not” or “never.” Does the new statement sound truer or falsier?

#### Short Answer Questions

Short answer questions are designed for you to recall and provide some very specific information: When you read the question, ask yourself what exactly the professor wants to know. Keep your answers short and specific.

#### Essay Questions

Essay questions are used by professors to evaluate your thinking and reasoning applied to the material covered in a course. Good essay answers are based on your thoughts, supported by examples from classes and reading assignments.

- Careful planning is critical to answering essay questions effectively. Note how many essay questions you have to answer and how difficult each question seems. Then allocate your time accordingly.
- Read the question carefully and underline or circle keywords. Watch for words that describe the professor's expectations for your response.
- If time allows, organize your thoughts by creating a quick outline for your essay. This helps ensure that you don't leave out key points, and if you run out of time, it may pick up a few points for your grade. Jot down specific information you might want to use, such as names, dates, and places.
- Introduce your essay answer, but get right to the point. Remember that the professor will be grading dozens of papers and avoid "filler" text that does not add value to your answer.
- Write direct and concise statements.
- Write neatly and watch your grammar and spelling. Allow time to proofread your essay. You want your professor to want to read your essay, not dread it. Remember that grading essays is largely subjective, and a favourable impression can lead to more favourable grading.
- Be sure to answer all parts of the question. Essay questions often have more than one part. Remember, too, that essay questions often have multiple acceptable answers.

## Test Taking Tips



## Before the test:

- Learn as much as you can about the test.
- Try to foresee the questions likely to be on the test.
- Don't be tempted to stay up late cramming.
- The night before, get some exercise, watch what you eat and get a good night's rest.
- Get to the test site early with all your tools

## During the test:

- When you receive your test, scan the entire test first. Evaluate the importance of each section. Then create a time allocation plan.
- Write it down. Take a couple minutes to write down key facts, dates, principles, statistics, and formulas on a piece of scratch paper or in the margin of the test paper.
- Read the directions carefully.
- Do the easy questions first.
- Keep an eye on the time. Keep as close to your plan as possible.
- Check your work. Ensure that you have complete answers according to the directions; then look for other common mistakes.

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## TEST ANXIETY

### Testing Your Test Anxiety

It is normal to feel stressed before an exam. Stress motivates you to study and review, generates adrenaline to help sharpen your reflexes and focus while taking the exam, and may even help you remember some of the material you need. But suffering too many stress symptoms or suffering any of them severely will impede your ability to show what you have learned. Test anxiety is a psychological condition in which a person feels distress before, during, or after a test or exam to the point where stress causes poor performance. Anxiety during a test interferes with your ability to recall knowledge from memory as well as your ability to use higher-level thinking skills effectively.



Photo by Lacie Slezak on Unsplash

### There are steps you should take if you find that stress is getting in your way:

- **Be prepared.** A primary cause of test anxiety is not knowing the material. If you take good classes, read notes, and review them regularly, this stressor should be greatly reduced, if not eliminated. You should be confident going into your exam (but not overconfident).
- **Make sure you eat well and get a good night's sleep before the exam.** Hunger, poor eating habits, energy drinks, and lack of sleep all contribute to test anxiety.
- **Bounce bad vibes.** Your own negative thoughts—"I'll never pass this exam" or "I can't figure this out, may move you into a spiraling stress cycle that in itself causes enough anxiety to block your best efforts. When you feel you are brewing a storm of negative thoughts, stop what you are doing and clear your mind. Once your mind is clear, repeat a reasonable affirmation to yourself — "I know this stuff" — before continuing your work.
- **It's all about you!** Don't waste your time comparing yourself to other students in the class, especially during the exam. Keep focused on your own work and your own plan. Exams are not a race, so it doesn't matter who turns in their paper first.
- **You perform best when you are relaxed,** so learn some relaxation exercises you can use during an exam. Before you begin your work, take a moment to listen to your body. Which muscles are tense? Move them slowly to relax them. Tense them and relax them. Exhale, then continue to exhale for a few more seconds until you feel that your lungs are empty. Inhale slowly through your nose and feel your rib cage expand as you do. This will help oxygenate your blood and reenergize your mind.

### Simple Relaxation Exercises for Everyone

Try a Guided Belly Breathing Meditation.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/selfdirectedlearning1/?p=793#oembed-1>