



TEN TIPS FOR STUDENT SUCCESS IN DISTANCE LEARNING AT NPS

- 1. Get connected.** Make sure you have access to [Sakai](#) - the collaborative learning environment (CLE) used for NPS distance learning (DL) courses, through the network you use at home or at work.
 - For assistance connecting to Sakai, email the CLE Help Center (CLEhelp@nps.edu).
- 2. Read the syllabus.** The syllabus for a course outlines the course description, learning objectives, books and other materials, schedule and assignments, and other vital information.
 - Read it as soon as possible. To access a course syllabus in Sakai, go to the Syllabus tool in the left-hand navigation column.
 - If you don't find a syllabus there, email your instructor and ask for one.
- 3. Zoom-in.** Most NPS DL courses use the online collaboration tool [Zoom](#) for lectures, real-time discussions, virtual office hours, and other virtual classroom activities.
 - See the [Student Guide to Zoom](#) to get started and test your internet connection, computer, speakers and microphone and/or headphones, and web camera to make sure you can join Zoom sessions by audio and video.
- 4. Get onto the cloud.** NPS offers students two options for cloud storage of documents, spreadsheets, images and video, and other materials you will use and create for courses.
 - Cloud storage options, [Box](#) and [OneDrive](#), enable you to safely store and back-up files online and access them anywhere on a computer or mobile device with an internet connection.
 - This is especially useful for backing up assignments, projects, and saving Zoom recorded sessions etc.
- 5. Manage your time.** Don't attempt to complete an entire week's activities in one sitting. Instead, make the course a part of your regular daily schedule.
 - Set aside some time every working day to participate in the course. This doesn't have to be the same time every day, but if possible, schedule it during the time of day you are most productive.
 - Treat this time as you would treat the time scheduled for a face-to-face course.
 - Make it a time commitment, not an extra task you can squeeze in when you have some unscheduled time.
- 6. Defend your space.** Create a workspace that maximizes productivity and minimizes distractions.
 - Set up your work area at a location with adequate internet connectivity that can be as private as possible given your duty and living situations.
 - If you will be studying in your living area, occasional interruptions by family, roommates, pets, and others with whom you share living space may be inevitable.



- Reduce the impact of these interruptions by reminding family members etc. that your study time is work time, and you are not just playing on the computer.

7. Stay on schedule. It can be very tempting to skip online lectures, let deadlines for assignments slip, etc. when you don't have to physically show-up for class every day. **Don't.**

- Make the same level of commitment to attend virtual class sessions and complete work on time that you would if you were taking the course in a traditional brick-and-mortar classroom.
- Demands of work or family emergencies can sometimes result in missed deadlines—we've all been there. If that happens, do the best you can to catch up as soon as possible.

8. Ask questions. Do not hesitate to ask questions on assignments and activities.

- Even when courses include real-time online lectures, instructors in distance courses can't read clues from facial expressions and body language to see if the points they're making are coming across clearly.
- If you need clarification on an assignment or have questions on readings or other course materials, contact your instructor, or, better yet, post a question in a Q&A forum on the course's Sakai site if one is available.
- If your instructor offers virtual office hours, join-in as often as possible.
- Asking questions can help both your fellow students and your instructor, because if you find something to be unclear, chances are others will find it confusing as well.

9. Take care of yourself. Distance learning is challenging and requires physical, mental, and emotional readiness.

- This may be the first time you've gone "back to school" in quite a while, a change that requires adaptation to a new set of rules and expectations.
- Stress from academics, work, family, and military duties adds to the challenge.
- Take the time and effort to maintain your physical and emotional health and fitness and see the [Dudley Knox Library Learning Tools](#) page for a list of resources for staying ready to succeed.

10. Remember you're not alone. Working and studying while physically separated from other students, instructors, and a campus academic environment can create a sense of isolation.

- A sense of isolation is one of the main reasons online learners fail to complete courses.
- Do not keep your struggles and frustrations to yourself. You will find that other students are struggling with many of the same issues or have faced them in past courses.
- Other students can offer encouragement and practical suggestions to help you overcome the obstacles you're dealing with, and you can do the same for them.
- The [Student Muster site](#) has lots of helpful information on how to stay current and connected to the NPS community. Stay on course and help others complete the mission.