Online Learning Guide and Best Practices  
Woods College of Advancing Studies

This document is designed to help you successfully continue your courses in an online environment, prepare you for academic success, provide a review of the technology, and introduce the resources available to support you during this period.

I. **Tips for Success as an Online Student**
II. **Accessing Your Online Course**
III. **Get to Know Canvas**
IV. **Academic Resources for Students**

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I. **TIPS FOR SUCCESS AS AN ONLINE STUDENT**

This section is designed to help you achieve success in your online course and avoid some of the unique challenges online learning environments can present. It is important to remember that online learning requires more discipline and attention to detail than in-class learning.

**Communicate Effectively:**
- Online learning is new territory for many students. Instructors, staff, and IT support teams are ready and waiting to answer all of your questions. *Please reach out as soon as you encounter a problem or need guidance!*

- Students are expected to contribute to a safe, honest, and inclusive community with a shared commitment to acting with mutual respect. Please review these [Netiquette guidelines](#) and remember, just like etiquette is a code of polite behavior in society, netiquette is a code of good behavior on the Internet.

- Crafting well-written assignments and discussion posts is a key to your success, review these [writing strategies](#) to ensure you are submitting quality work.

- Utilize the academic support available through the [BC Libraries](#) and [Online Writing Lab](#).

- Your faculty will use the discussion board feature in Canvas. Writing for a discussion board is not like writing a text, nor is it like writing a formal essay. It reflects what you would say in class, but with more detail. Read the question carefully, then write your answer in a text editor (like Word). Check it for clarity and completeness - then check the spelling and grammar.
Create a Designated Work Space:
- Whether your workspace is your kitchen table or another quiet place in your home or at work, it is important to establish a space that works best for you.
- Ensure your space is equipped with necessary items such as a reliable internet connection, textbooks, headphones for virtual meetings, etc.

Follow a Weekly Schedule:
- Designate certain hours each week to reading, watching lectures, completing assignments, studying, and participating in forums.
- Mark assignment due dates on a calendar and check it regularly so you know what workload is coming in the weeks ahead.

Eliminate Distractions:
- Turn your cell phone off to avoid losing focus every time a text message or notification pops up.
- Download a website blocker like Cold Turkey and Freedom to help eliminate distractions by blocking the apps or websites that tend to compete for your attention.

Actively Participate:
- Engage with classmates, read what other students are saying, consider the ideas and topics and offer meaningful input to the discussion.
- Ask questions if you need clarification on a topic or assignment.
II. ACCESSING YOUR ONLINE COURSE

Canvas is the Learning Management System at Boston College, designed to help faculty and students share ideas, collaborate on assignments, discuss course readings and materials, submit assignments, and much more - all online. For a comprehensive overview of all the features in Canvas, you can go to the Canvas Guide for Students.

Accessing Canvas

Each course has a designated site in Canvas where assignments and learning materials can be found. Follow the instructions below to log into Canvas.

1. Click on this link or copy/paste into your browser: bc.edu/lms

2. Enter your username and password and click the “sign in” button. The page will automatically open your personal Canvas dashboard. The courses you are enrolled in will be listed on this page; click on the colored box to enter a course.

Technology Requirements

To ensure you have an enjoyable and productive online learning experience, you will need specific hardware items and a reliable internet connection.

We recommend you use a computer that is five years old or newer with a recent operating system (either Windows or Mac). If your class will require virtual class sessions, you are strongly encouraged to use headphones with a built-in microphone,
as these will help block out background noise (for both you and for your classmates). You may also need a webcam for virtual class sessions, though this will probably be built into your computer if you are using a laptop.

List of Necessary Items:

- A Windows or Mac computer
- A broadband internet connection
- Headphones with a built-in microphone ([example](#))
- A webcam or HD webcam

For individuals with reduced or impaired vision, the screen readers below are known to work with Canvas. Please note that there is no screen reader support for Canvas in the Google Chrome browser.

- Macintosh: [VoiceOver](#) (latest version for Safari)
- PC: [JAWS](#) (latest version for Internet Explorer)
- PC: [NVDA](#) (latest version for Firefox)
- There is no screen reader support for Canvas in Chrome

**Technology Support**

The Woods College wants to ensure you have the necessary technology support to engage fully in your course and troubleshoot any problems. Support teams are ready and waiting to answer all of your questions.

[IT HELP CENTER](#) is the initial point of contact for requests for assistance. Support is available via web, email, or phone; check [here](#) for the current operating hours.

- Phone: 617-552-4357
- Email: help.center@bc.edu
- Chat: [live tech support chat](#)
- Submit Help Ticket: [www.bc.edu/-gethelp](#)

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### III. GET TO KNOW CANVAS

This section will help you get comfortable with commonly used functions in Canvas and provide information about where to find help when you need it. It is essential that you set up your Canvas account to send you updates and reminders from your courses.

*NOTE: To ensure you receive ALL course communications, we strongly encourage setting up email notifications and calendar reminders.*
IV. ACADEMIC RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

Library Resources
The Boston College Library will be a valuable resource as you complete academic research and writing. Much of the library catalog and other library resources can be accessed remotely with your BC credentials. The Boston College Libraries’ home page will link you to the available online services.

Ask a Librarian: Library help is available M-F, 9:00am - 5:00pm.

Student Guides
The Services for Undergraduate Students guide and Services for Graduate Students guide are helpful resources to acquaint you with the services offered through the library. From basic information on accessing collections to research, data, and course support, these guides are invaluable.
**Additional Online Tools**

This section provides information about the technology and digital tools you may find useful for your online course. Also included are some system requirements you will want to review to make sure your computer will support these digital tools.

**Zoom**

If your course requires attendance at a virtual class meeting, you will use a tool called Zoom. Zoom is a secure video communication service for classes, office hours, and meetings.

If this is your first time using Zoom, **test out the software before your first** class session (watch the video tutorial below). Your instructor will provide a link to each Zoom session through Canvas. To test the software, click the invitation link or copy and paste it into a web browser. *If you do not have Zoom installed on your computer, you will be prompted to download and install it.* Like other virtual conferencing programs, it is a separate program that runs on your computer.

- Zoom Meeting Overview
- Screen Sharing in a Zoom meeting
- Screen Sharing a PowerPoint Presentation
- For more detailed instructions on how to use Zoom, review the [Zoom Guide for students](#).

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**Google Hangouts Meet**

Hangouts Meet is another virtual meeting tool that students may use to meet with project teams, and study groups. To start a Hangouts Meeting, visiting the following website, and log in with your BC email address [https://meet.google.com/__meet](https://meet.google.com/__meet).
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- Start a video meeting
- Join a video meeting
- Hangouts Meet Instructions & Tips