Characteristics of the Ideal Online Learner

Your goal is to determine if the characteristics you currently possess may compare to those of the ideal online learner. You will discover how you can strengthen your skills and measure your success. It is natural to feel a bit anxious as you begin this new endeavor, but your confidence will grow as you move through each week of the course.

The ideal online learner possesses three main characteristics: self-discipline, information literacy, and motivation.

SELF-DISCIPLINE

According to recent research, eLearning requires that students possess more maturity and self-discipline than learning in the traditional classroom (Zhang, Zhao, Zhou, & Nunamaker, 2004). In a face-to-face classroom, students are continuously reminded of due dates for papers and other pertinent assignments. Additionally, students often submit those assignments during class. Thus, if most students in the class turn in their assignments on time, it is easy for others to spot those who do not.

In an online environment, all work is submitted electronically, usually in a manner that is not public. The self-disciplined online learner knows which tasks require completion and schedules those tasks into his or her daily activities so that he or she finishes and submits the work on time. This individual does not procrastinate and forsakes other activities to ensure that he or she completes all the necessary assignments. Thus, the ideal online learner excels at time management.

INFORMATION LITERACY

An independent learner is first and foremost information literate (*The nine information literacy standards…*, 2000). Information literacy is defined as:

> …a set of abilities requiring individuals to recognize when information is needed and individuals have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information (*Information literacy competency standards for higher education*, 2011).

To be a successful online learner, you should possess the ability to locate and analyze information available on the World Wide Web. Additionally, you should be able to gauge the time and skills needed to complete each task. Unlike the traditional face-to-face classroom, in which a desk and chair are all you need to receive your lectures, the online classroom uses several technologies for lecture delivery. It is up to you to learn the learning management system (LMS) and its functionality, review the Web sites supplied in the course, and conduct online research.

HIGHLY MOTIVATED

Motivation is another key to success in the online learning environment. In most face-to-face classrooms (with the exception of auditorium lectures), professors can easily spot those students who are present and those who are missing. In the online classroom, you may only have one synchronous session per week. The remainder of your class work is done per your own schedule. Thus, rarely will an instructor remind you that you must log in and take your

exam on Day X, read a particular article on Day Y, or check for announcements on Day Z. This is all up to you.

REFERENCES

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