

Students' Guide to Online Courses @ Texas Wesleyan

Welcome to E-learning. This guide is intended to provide you with some answers to frequently asked questions and information about resources available to you. Detailed information related to academic and administrative processes can be found in the appropriate University catalog and student handbook. If you are a first time online student, you will want to read through this guide and refer to it often. If you are a veteran to online learning, you will want to review the guide looking for changes and additional information.

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Contacts

Technical Support

Telephone: 1-877-362-2638 (toll free) or 817-531-4428 ext. 1 (metro)
Web: <http://helpdesk123.com/helpdesk/helpform.cgi?call=377>

Information Technology

Telephone: (817) 531-4428
Email: helpdesk@txwes.edu
Web: <http://www.txwes.edu/it/>

West Library

Telephone: (817) 531-4800
Email: reference@txwes.edu
Web: <http://ezproxy.txwes.edu/index.php>

Student Financial Aid

Telephone: (817) 531-4420
E-mail: financialaid@txwes.edu
Web: <http://www.txwes.edu/financialaid/>

Student Records and Registration

Telephone: (817) 531-4414
Email: jaedwards@txwes.edu
Web: <http://www.txwes.edu/registrar/>

Cashier's Office

Telephone: (817) 531-4456
Fax: (817) 531-6570
Web: <http://www.txwes.edu/cashier/>

University Bookstore

Telephone: (817) 531-4272
Email: txwesleyan@bkstr.com
Web: <http://www.bkstr.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/StoreCatalogDisplay?storeId=10123&langId=-1&catalogId=10001>

Academic Advising

To make sure you are complying with requirements for your particular degree program, we recommend that you contact your faculty adviser prior to enrolling in any course.

Graduate Programs

Business: (817) 531-6500
Education: (817) 531-4941
Law: (817) 212-4000
Nurse Anesthesia/Health Sciences: (817) 531-4406

Undergraduate Programs

Arts and Sciences: (817) 531-4900
Business: (817) 531-6500
Education: (817) 531-4945

Students' Reference

About CE 6

Texas Wesleyan offers a number of online and web assisted courses using the Blackboard CE 6 (formerly WebCT) course management system. CE6 is an integrated learning environment that is used by over 2,000 colleges and universities worldwide.

CE6 is more than just a course tool to facilitate distance learning. It is a flexible, integrated environment where students can integrate course experiences into the real world communities of work and play.

To log in to CE6, direct your web browser to <http://texaswesleyanwebct.embanet.com:8900/> and enter your University issued User ID and CE 6 Password (if you are new to CE 6, your temporary password is 1234567). If you have forgotten your ID visit the RamLink Web page at <https://RamLink.txwes.edu>. If you would like assistance via the phone call (817) 531-4428 ext. 1.

System Requirements

Computer

PC: Pentium IV processor or faster with monitor; 128 MB RAM or more; 56K Modem or faster

Operating Systems

Microsoft Windows XP SP 2 or Vista operating systems

Browsers

Microsoft® Internet Explorer 6.0 or newer
Mozilla Firefox 1.5 or newer

Plug Ins

[Adobe Acrobat Reader](#)

View and print Portable Document Format (PDF) files on the Web with the free Adobe Acrobat Reader.

[Adobe Flash Player](#)

View content created with Flash, such as interactive web applications and animations.

[Adobe Shockwave Player](#)

View content created with Director, such as games and interactive 3D simulations.

[Apple Quick Time](#)

The free QuickTime Player is an application for playing, interacting with, or viewing any video, audio, VR, or graphics file that is compatible with QuickTime. This includes MPEG-4, the new standard for digital media, new in QuickTime.

[Microsoft Media Player](#)

Windows Media Player supports Windows Media (WMA, ASF), MP3, WAV, MIDI, AVI, and other formats.

[Real Networks RealPlayer](#)

Play online audio and video content.

[Spybot - Search & Destroy](#)

Detects and removes spyware and adware, a relatively new kind of threat not yet covered by common anti-virus applications.

[Sun Java](#)

Sun Java Runtime Environment (JRE) allows you to use interactive tools on the web.

Discounted Software and Hardware

Students of universities can purchase many software titles and computer hardware and peripherals at an educational discount. To receive this discount, you will need to provide proof of your academic status when placing an order. This is usually done by submitting your name, the name of the university you attend, and your university ID number to the software distributor along with your order.

Below is a list of some of the companies that specialize in selling software and hardware to faculty and students. Review and compare each vendor's price before making a purchase. Also, make sure the discount is more than you can get through the manufacturer.

Software

JourneyEd, available online at:

<http://www.journeyed.com/>

Logisoft, available online at:

<http://www.logisoft.com/>

Creation Engine, available online at:

<http://www.creationengine.com/>

CCV Software, available online at:

<http://www.ccvsoftware.com/>

Academic Superstore, available online at:

<http://www.academicsuperstore.com/>

Hardware

Dell, available online at:

<http://www.dell.com/content/default.aspx>

HP, available online at:

http://www.shopping.hp.com/webapp/shopping/register_app.do

Optimizing Your Browser

CE6 provides an interactive activity that allows you to optimize your browser settings for use in CE6 at www.webct.com/tuneup. It is our recommendation that you complete the activity prior to entering the course web site. If you are unable to complete the activity, some general tips for optimization are provided below.

- For all browsers, enable JavaScript™ and turn Pop-ups on.
- To use Chat, Whiteboard, the edit-on Pro HTML editor, and the WebEQ™ Equation Editor, enable Java™.
- To use ticket-based authentication, client browsers must allow cookies.
- To use all features in Content Module, client browsers must allow cookies.
- For all browsers, enable cascading style sheets (.css).
- For all users, set cached pages to update "automatically" (Microsoft Internet Explorer, and Netscape Navigator 6.2.x), or "when the page is out of date" (Netscape Navigator 7.0).

Getting Started

Learning online can be an excellent way to accomplish your educational goals. Below are some tips from Underhill (2004) on how to get off to a smooth start in your course.

- Visit the course site the first day of scheduled classes and review the syllabus.
- Set up a study schedule for completing the course requirements.
- Make contact with your instructor via telephone or email during the first week of class. Having a person's voice to associate with text can reduce your feelings of separation.
- Participate in all assigned group discussions.
- Choose someone in the class with a similar background and interests to act as a "study buddy".
- If you run into any technical difficulties complete and submit the Technical Request Form available online at <http://helpdesk123.com/helpdesk/helpform.cgi?call=377>.
- Follow the schedule for submitting assignments. Assignments posted on the course web site must be completed in the assigned order and submitted as outlined.
- Keep a copy of the assignments you submit. If an assignment gets lost or corrupted, you will be required to re-submit it.
- Contact your instructor if you are concerned with your progress. The sooner you do this the better, as delaying this discussion may result in academic penalties.
- Keep track of your examination dates. All examinations must be completed and submitted as outlined on the course web site.
- If you have concerns related to online learning in general, please contact the University Instructional Technology and Distance Education Specialist at (817) 531-5818.

Characteristics of Successful Online Students

Taking an online class has many advantages, increased flexibility in completing homework assignments, the convenience of "attending" class from home, and access to all the resources provided by the Internet. However, an online class is not for everyone. Below is a list of key characteristics possessed by students who are successful in online courses. If you lack any of these characteristics, you may have difficulty in an online course.

- Self-motivated (does not need a lot of direction or motivation from a teacher)
- Self-disciplined (can budget time wisely and does not procrastinate often)
- Enjoys the challenge of learning on her/his own (likes to read and learn)
- Self-directed (completes assignments with little prompting and few reminders)
- Communicates well in writing
- Needs the flexibility provided by online learning

For a complete analysis of your key strengths and weaknesses related to online learning, take the Test of Online Learning Success (ToOLS) available at:

http://www.txwes.edu/distanceeducation/studentresources/tools_quiz.html

The Learning Process

Successful learners use a variety of strategies to improve the process of learning. Researchers often refer to these strategies as cognitive (related to processing information to generate meaning) and metacognitive (related to planning, evaluating and reflecting on the process of learning). The strategies you choose will be linked to your learning goals. Your goals may be motivated by external forces or by internal forces (Underhill, 2004). In either case, the strategies identified below should be helpful.

Cognitive Strategies:

- Identify relevant information and concepts. Focus on the learning objectives identified in the course or unit introduction, the key terms and concepts that are identified and your own interest and experience to identify content that is valuable to your learning experience.
- Read, review and test your memory of key learning concepts. This may include highlighting relevant passages or key terms and copying these in note form for later review.

- Organize the ideas presented. This is most effective if it is logical – according to “theme, main ideas, relationships among ideas and supporting details or examples.” (Olgren, 1998 in Gibson, 1998).
- Build connections with your prior experience. Here learners may summarize, associate new learning with examples, consider analogies or metaphors, reflect, discuss, develop further questions, explain and use new learning to solve problems. Research shows that learners who pause to reflect or think about what they are learning, using prior knowledge to make inferences and draw conclusions are more likely to be successful learners (Alexander & Judy, 1998; Derry & Murphy, 1986 in Gibson, 1998).

Metacognitive Strategies:

- Look through your course materials, the introduction, learning objectives and assignment schedules. This orientation will help you to determine your goals and make decisions about the amount of time and effort you are prepared to invest.
- Assess your progress and your understanding of the material you are studying. In assessing your learning progress, you will want to check your comprehension, adapt your strategies if they are not working, seek clarification, discuss with others and reflect on your understanding of the concepts as they relate to past learning or experiences.
- Evaluate your learning. Strategies include self-testing and review of the content, reflection on and revision of your own learning goals and the strategies you are using to accomplish them (Underhill, 2004).

Textbooks and Required Materials

You should order your textbooks and other required materials as soon as possible. Every syllabus should have a section titled “Required Course Materials” which lists all the learning materials you will need to purchase or acquire for the course. You may order the required textbooks and Course Materials Packets through the Wesleyan Bookstore online at

<http://www.bkstr.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/StoreCatalogDisplay?storeId=10123&langId=-1&catalogId=10001> . If texts are not available through the Wesleyan Bookstore, you can order them directly from the publisher or an online bookstore (Amazon.com, BarnesandNoble.com, etc.).

Technical Assistance

As you become familiar with the course web site you may encounter problems such as forgotten or incorrect logins or pages of content that will not display. For technical assistance **not** related to course content, you should contact the Online Help Desk using the Technical Assistance web form found online (<http://helpdesk123.com/helpdesk/helpform.cgi?call=377>).

If you encounter a problem related to course content or need to be added or removed from a course, you should contact your instructor. S/he should be able correct the identified problem using the course management tools available in CE6.

What to expect from the Instructor

Most online instructors will act as a facilitator, your guide through the course content. S/he will likely contact you by telephone or email at the beginning of the course as an introduction and invite you to share in the process of building an online community.

Throughout the semester, most instructors will try to:

- Ensure that some type of educational process occurs among all students involved in the course.
- Provide gentle guidance and a loosely constructed framework as a container for the course, thus allowing you to explore the course material, as well as related materials without restriction.
- Provide prompt, thoughtful comments on your works and stimulate further discussion.
- Facilitate and make room for personal and social aspects of the online community.

- Post guidelines and rules for participation.
- Evaluate outcomes both in terms of the learning process and your satisfaction.
- Relinquish the role of power within and over the educational process in order to allow you and your peers to take on a process management role.

If at any point you find yourself struggling with the material or pace of the course, contact your instructor. S/he may provide assistance with identifying the cause of the problem and with developing a plan of action.

What the Instructor will expect from you

Your role in an online class is different than the role a student typically takes on in a face-to-face class. Specifically your role changes from passive receiver of information to active pursuer of knowledge. In addition to completing the readings and submitting assignments on time, most instructors will expect you to:

- Be responsible for actively seeking solutions to problems contained within the broad confines of the knowledge area being studied and raising the level of those solutions to one of more complexity.
- Work with others collaboratively to generate deeper levels of understanding and critical evaluation of the material under study.
- Participate within minimal guidelines, interact and engage with other students, speak up if the course or discussion is moving in a direction that is uncomfortable, and take responsibility for the formation of the online learning community.

This may seem a daunting task. However, when students embrace their new active role they generally report a feeling of empowerment, a sense of control over their own learning.

Contacting the Instructor

You can contact your instructor by telephone and/or email (most online instructors prefer to be contacted by email). Contact information for your instructor will be included in the course syllabus. If you are having difficulty reaching your instructor, you should contact the appropriate school or departmental secretary.

How to Submit Assignments

Assignments are to be submitted directly to your instructor following the instructions in the course site. Assignments should be submitted according to the course/assignment schedule. Instructors are not required to accept or grade multiple assignments submitted in a batch (all at once) or after the due date.

Most instructors will expect you to follow the procedures described below:

- Follow the instructions for submission outlined in your course site
- Save and submit the file in the stated format (usually .rtf (rich text format) or .doc (MS Word))
- Include your name and the title of the assignment in the subject line and your name, student number, and course and section numbers in the body of the document

If you are unhappy with the grade you receive on an assignment, contact your instructor immediately to discuss the assessment criteria used and grade assigned. Keep in mind that review of assignment grades is at the discretion of your instructor.

Completing the Course

Online courses typically run one semester in length. These courses must be completed within the allotted time as course sites are closed and cleared to make space for subsequent courses*. If an issue arises

that will make it impossible to complete the course in the allotted time, your instructor should be able to provide you with advice on how to proceed.

If wish to withdraw from the course, you should contact the Office of Student Records and Registration (<http://www.txwes.edu/registrar/>). It is important to remember that many instructors will not permit late withdrawals close to the end date of the course, but the request for withdrawal may be considered if accompanied by medical or other documentation.

Many instructors recognize that students involved in distance education may have full-time employment and demanding careers. For this reason, a change in employment circumstances (not previously anticipated), may also be considered as grounds for late withdrawal if supported by a letter from the employer.

In some cases it may be possible to compete the course early, depending on the course design. Check with the course instructor, before registering, to see if this is possible. If it is possible, you may make arrangements with your instructor to submit the course assignments and take the final exam.

* Academic concessions such as course extensions may be granted on medical or compassionate grounds and require supporting documentation and permission from your course instructor.

Disability Accommodations

Disability accommodations are intended to provide “reasonable accommodation” in legal terms, or in common language, a “level playing field” for disabled students. A “disability” has been defined as any impairment in function which limits normal performance and includes physical disabilities (such as being wheelchair-bound), learning disabilities (such as dyslexia or math disorder), or other mental health disorder (such as severe depression, anxiety disorder, etc.). All disability claims must evidence a diagnosis by a physician, psychologist, or other health-care professional. It is the responsibility of the student to provide documented evidence of disability to the appropriate Disability Contact listed below.

Dean Vickie Rainwater (Law School students only, telephone: (817) 212-3952)

Dr. Michael Ellison (Main Campus students only, telephone: (817) 531-7565)

Course Evaluations

Feedback regarding your experience in the courses you take is valuable to instructors, e-learning staff, administrators and course design teams as we revise and rework courses and curriculum to better meet the learning needs of students. It is very important that you answer every question on the surveys as honestly as possible. Your answers do make a difference.

Student course evaluations are distributed and collected online. All online instructors are sent a link to the survey four weeks prior to the end of the semester. Generally, the instructor posts the link on the course entry page at least two weeks prior to the end of the course and requires students to complete the survey before proceeding to the final exam.

References

Gibson, C. (1998). *Distance learners in higher education*. Madison, Wisconsin: Atwood Publishing.

UBC Distance Education and Technology. (2004). *Learner's guide* (2nd edition) [Brochure]. Vancouver, Canada.

Underhill, C. (2004). *The learning process*. Retrieved January 5, 2005 from the University of British Columbia Web site: <http://www.ubc.edu>.