



# **ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE DISTANCE EDUCATION STUDY SKILLS GUIDE**

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## THE ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE DISTANCE EDUCATION STUDY SKILLS GUIDE

There are a variety of factors which contribute to the academic success of students. The students must know their weaknesses and understand how to use their areas of strength to compensate for weaknesses. This guide is intended to be used in conjunction with the Academic Excellence Distance Education programs offered through American University of Leadership. American University of Leadership offers students the opportunity to learn what strategies can be used to develop individual strengths. American University of Leadership emphasizes:

- ways to improve actual performance
- effective learning and academic strategies
- skills which teach students how to analyze their own learning tasks
- self-management procedures
- factors that contribute to actual achievements.

The distance education university environment demands that students learn how to set goals, take risks, monitor performance, make adjustments when necessary and assume responsibility for oneself. Successful students are willing to ask for help when needed and use services available to them. The Academic Excellence Distance Education Study Guide helps students work together as partners with a common goal; your personal and academic success.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Study Skills Checklist	page 4
Learning Styles Inventory	page 5
How to Prepare to Read a Textbook Chapter	page 8
How to Get the Most Out of Class	page 9
Understanding the Syllabus	page 11
Being a Successful Student	page 11
Time Management	page 12
Student Responsibility	page 13
Five Steps for Note Taking	page 13
Cornell Note taking System	page 15
Note Taking Sample	page 15
SLOWER: How to Write Essays/Papers	page 15
Self-Advocacy	page 16
Guidelines For Contacting Instructors	page 16
Showing Self-Confidence	page 16
Passive, Aggressive, and Assertive	page 17
Go Week: The Week Before the Exam	page 18

## Study Skills Checklist

Most students begin the semester with high expectations of themselves. They hope to achieve grades that reflect their hard work and preparation. If you are dissatisfied with your performance, take this Study Skills Checklist.

Answer each of the following questions by rating your past preparation. Total the points at the end of the checklist.

Score 3 points for **"almost always"**

Score 2 points for **"sometimes"**

Score 0 points for **"almost never"**

	Almost Always 3 points	Sometimes 2 points	Almost Never 0 points		
• Do you stay up all night Completing assignments?	_____	_____	_____		
• Do you let reading assignments accumulate?	_____	_____	_____		
• Do your reading notes look like a mess and/or solid blocks of words with not a clue as to what information might be the most important?	_____	_____	_____		
• Do your notes contain irrelevant information?	_____	_____	_____		
• When you highlight or underline your reading assignment, do you highlight entire paragraphs and/or sentences?	_____	_____	_____		
• Do you settle down to study at 10 p.m. or later?	_____	_____	_____		
• Is the radio or stereo on while you study?	_____	_____	_____		
• Do you start your reading assignment reading from the introduction straight through to the finish?	_____	_____	_____		
• Do you try to study for hours at a time with no interruption?	_____	_____	_____		
• While reading, does your mind tend to wander as soon as you to read your assignment?	_____	_____	_____		
<b>Total each column:</b>	_____	_____	_____		
<b>Your score equals:</b>	_____	+	_____	+	_____
<b>Your total score:</b>	_____				

**Scores of 0 to 3-** Super! Your answers demonstrate you've discovered peak study hours and have mastered the important techniques of reading and writing.

**Scores of 3 to 20-** You can be a better student. Your study habits are inconsistent, neither all good nor all bad. And, your grades probably reflect that, too. Spend time with your professor online and find out where to place more emphasis in your study habits. And, by all means, let your family know you need a better study environment so they can help you.

**Scores 20 to 30-** This is the one time a high score is not the best score. If you took this test, you've demonstrated that you're concerned about your education, but your answers show your study efforts have not been positive ones.

Asking for help is the first step to improve your study habits. There is no one answer for all students. Ask your professor or student services for suggestions.

## **LEARNING STYLES INVENTORY**

### **Group 1**

- \_\_\_ 1. I like to read when I have free time.
- \_\_\_ 2. I like to read a report rather than be told what's in it.
- \_\_\_ 3. I understand something best when I read it.
- \_\_\_ 4. I remember what I read better than I remember what I hear.
- \_\_\_ 5. I would rather read a newspaper than watch the news on TV.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Total number of check marks in Group 1**

### **Group 2**

- \_\_\_ 1. I take notes when I read to better understand the material.
- \_\_\_ 2. I take lecture notes to help me remember the material.
- \_\_\_ 3. I like to recopy my lecture notes as a way of better understanding the material.
- \_\_\_ 4. I make fewer mistakes when I write than when I speak.
- \_\_\_ 5. I think the best way to keep track of my schedule is to write it down.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Total number of check marks in Group 2.**

### **Group 3**

- \_\_\_ 1. I like to listen to people discuss things.
- \_\_\_ 2. I learn more when I watch the news than when I read about it.
- \_\_\_ 3. I usually remember what I hear.
- \_\_\_ 4. I would rather watch a TV show or movie based on a book than read the book itself.
- \_\_\_ 5. I learn better by listening to a lecture than by taking notes from a textbook on the same

subject.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Total number of check marks in Group 3.**

### **Group 4**

- \_\_\_ 1. I remember things better when I say them out loud.
- \_\_\_ 2. I talk to myself when I try to solve problems.
- \_\_\_ 3. I communicate better on the telephone than I do in writing
- \_\_\_ 4. I learn best when I study with other people.
- \_\_\_ 5. I understand material better when I read it out loud.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Total number of check marks in Group 4.**

### **Group 5**

- \_\_\_ 1. I can "see words in my mind's eye" when I need to spell them.

- \_\_\_2. I picture what I read.
- \_\_\_3. I can remember something by “seeing” it in my mind.
- \_\_\_4. I remember what the pages look like in books I’ve read.
- \_\_\_5. I remember people’s faces better than I remember their names.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Total number of check marks in Group 5.**

#### Group 6

- \_\_\_1. I like to make models of things.
- \_\_\_2. I would rather do experiments than read about them.
- \_\_\_3. I learn better by handling objects.
- \_\_\_4. I find it hard to sit still when I study.
- \_\_\_5. I pace and move around a lot when I’m trying to think through a problem.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Total number of check marks in Group 6.**

### **Interpreting the Inventory**

This inventory deals with six basic learning styles: reading, writing, listening, speaking, visualizing, and manipulating. You probably use a combination of several learning styles as you go about your work. The learning styles inventory is designed to point out your *strongest* learning styles. Look over the inventory you took. In which groups do you have the most check marks?

If you had three or more check marks in Group 1, *reading* is one of your preferred learning styles. You find it easier to learn information by reading printed words.

If you had three or more check marks in Group 2, *writing* is one of your preferred learning styles. You learn information more easily when you express it in written form.

If you had three or more check marks in Group 3, *listening* is one of your preferred learning styles. You find it easy to learn information that you hear.

If you had three or more check marks in Group 4, *speaking* is one of your preferred learning styles. You are best able to learn when you express yourself out loud.

If you had three or more check marks in Group 5, *visualizing* is one of your preferred learning styles. Your mind’s eye is a very powerful learning tool for you. You learn well when you use your brain to “photograph” information.

If you had three or more check marks in Group 6, *manipulating* is one of your preferred learning styles. You learn well when you are able to handle objects you’re learning about. Manipulating situations by changing your location, moving around, etc., also helps you to learn.

Each of the next six sections focuses on one learning style. Turn to the sections that feature your preferred learning styles to find general suggestions for taking advantage of the ways you learn best. Read about any learning style in which you had three or more check marks. These are your strongest learning styles and you should use them whenever you can.

#### Reading

If reading is one of your preferred learning styles, you take in, store, and retrieve information more easily when you can see it and read it yourself. Below are some general suggestions for how to take advantage of this style.

Read a chapter before you discuss it.  
Read a book or article about a topic.  
When you watch demonstrations, take good written notes. Later you can refresh your memory by reading your notes.  
Get information for reports by reading instead of watching videos or listening to speeches.  
Read your notes and study guides over and over again.  
Back up what you have read by taking notes that you can refer to again.  
Read directions instead of having someone tell you how to do something.  
Look up words you don't know the meaning of in a dictionary instead of asking someone what the words mean. You'll be more likely to remember the meanings.

### Writing

If writing is one of your preferred learning styles, you take in, store, and retrieve information more easily when you write it down. Below are some general suggestions for how to take advantage of this style.

- “Pencil read” by reading with a pen/pencil in your hand. Underline and take notes as you read.
- “Talk to yourself” in writing.
- Take good lecture notes.
- Recopy your lecture notes in your own handwriting.
- Choose to do written reports instead of giving speeches whenever possible.
- Write down the steps you need to follow in order to complete a project.
- Keep track of your schedule with a calendar system and write down commitments.
- Write lists of things you need to do.
- Carry a small notebook with you so you can take notes to remember what you have read or heard.
- Write people emails instead of calling them on the telephone.

### Listening

If listening is one of your preferred learning styles, you take in, store, and retrieve information more easily when you hear it. Below are some general suggestions for how to take advantage of this style.

- Listen to information about a topic on videotape, TV, or an audiotape.
- Read out loud the information you are studying
- Interview people about the subject you are studying
- Study with other people. Discuss ideas online.
- Discuss your notes, direction, or manuals out loud with yourself.
- Use a tape recorder to quiz yourself.
- Repeat information out loud.
- Call people on Skype instead of writing to them.

### Speaking

If speaking is one of your preferred learning styles, you take in, store, and retrieve information more easily when you talk about it. Below are some general suggestions for how to take advantage of this style.

- Dictate into a tape recorder what you need to write or study.
- Ask yourself questions out loud while you are studying.
- Study information by saying it out loud and discussing with yourself.
- Study by asking questions out loud and answering them.
- Choose to give a speech rather than do a written report whenever possible.
- Repeat things right after you read them to help you remember them.
- Calm your nerves by saying positive things to yourself.
- Call people on Skype instead of writing an email.

If you are having trouble spelling a word, spell it out loud before you write it.

### Visualizing

If visualizing is one of your preferred learning styles, you take in, sort, and retrieve information more easily if you can picture something in the mind's eye. Below are some general suggestions for how to take advantage of this style.

Close your eyes and practice "seeing" what you need to remember.

Watch movies or videos on a subject so you will have an easier time "seeing" the information again.

As you read something, picture how it would look if you were seeing it in a movie.

As you study diagrams and maps, close your eyes and "see" them again.

Take special note of the shape of things you want to remember.

Close your eyes and "see" a word you need to spell before you write it.

Calm your nerves by picturing yourself calm and in control in that particular situation.

Remember details by studying them until you can "see" them in your mind's eye.

Visualize your tasks on the job to more clearly understand what you need to do.

For the visual learner, color-coding notes, highlights and study materials help to organize material.

### Manipulating

If manipulating is one of your preferred learning styles, you take in, store, and retrieve information more easily if you can handle things and/or change your environment. Below are general suggestions for how to take advantage of this style.

Build models of hard-to-understand concepts.

Experiment by doing things you read about.

Watch someone do what you need to learn before trying it.

Type a research paper on a typewriter or computer.

Watch demonstrations instead of reading or hearing about them.

Visit a place you are learning about in class.

Given a choice, build a project rather than write a report about it.

Make sure your work area allows you to move around while you study.

Be flexible with your time schedule so you can change plans and expectations when you need to.

### REMEMBER:

Read it.

Say it aloud.

Write it.

Listen to it (tape it).

Visualize it (Use or create charts and maps).

Manipulate it. (Experience it).

The results of an experiment to determine how people learn best concluded that people remember:

10 percent of what they read

20 percent of what they hear

30 percent of what they see

50 percent of what they see and do

70 percent of what they say

90 percent of what they say and do



**Survey: Survey the Chapter**

- Read the preface and the introduction. The preface will usually tell you why the author wrote the book, what is presented it, and for whom the book is intended.
- Read the table of contents. The titles of units and chapters give you a picture of the book's contents.
- Leaf through the book noting what visual aids it may have, such as pictures, graphs, charts, marginal notes, and subheadings.
- Check the glossary and/or index at the end of the book. A glossary can save you many trips to your dictionary.
- If your chapters have summaries, read them!

**Question: Question**

- What does the title of the chapter mean?
- What do I already know about the subject?
- What did my instructor say about this chapter or subject when it was assigned?
- What questions do the headings and subheadings suggest?
- Are there questions at the beginning or end of the chapter?
- What questions does this information raise for me?
- What do I want to know about the contents of this chapter when I am finished reading?

**Read: Read**

- Read to answer the questions you raised while doing the survey/questions routine or read to answer the questions at the beginning or end of the chapter if there are any. Remember, reading to answer these questions gives you a purpose and a sense of direction. Highlight answers to your questions.
- Read all the added attractions in the chapter. Most textbooks have pictures, maps, graphs, tables, and other illustrations which supplement or clarify what the author is saying.
- Read about 5-10 pages per day. Read carefully all the underlined, italicized, or bold printed words or phrases.

**Recite: Recite**

- Use written notes, note cards, visual imagery or outlines.
- Use your own judgment about places to stop and recite.
- Be selective and mark only key ideas or terms.
- How can I organize this information?
- How can I picture this information?
- Highlight only after you have read the passage and understand it.

**Review: Review**

- Review immediately after reading a chapter.
- Review weekly.
- What is my hook for remembering this information?
- Plan a final review.

<b>How to Get the Most Out of an Online Class</b>
---------------------------------------------------

**Create:****Create a "file" in your mind.**

- Find out what you will be studying in class from the

syllabus.

- Finish reading the related material **BEFORE** deadline.
- Have questions ready for information you didn't understand in the reading.
- Have paper and pen handy before contacting your professor so you can begin to jot down any questions that come to mind, or any key vocabulary or points.

**Learning Online:**

**Learning Online begins with you.**

- Professors may assume you already know the material in the book, and will only "build upon" that material.
- Examples and clarification of complicated material may be requested.
- Keep in mind the professor's point of the assignments.

**Always Contact:**

**Always contact professors for support**

- If a professors repeats a point over and over, it might be a signal that this point is important!
- If a professor emphasizes a point in an assignment, it might be a signal that this point is important!
- Watch for repeated requests to get a feel for how important the information is.
- Remain in contact with other students. If others are focusing on certain areas in the assignments, you might want to make a note of it as well.

**Summarize:**

**Summarize (in your mind).**

- Has the professor changed topics?
- Is the point related to previous information?
- Is this point introducing another topic?
- Is this emphasizing a point or making an example?
- Do I remember reading that?
- What vocabulary do I need to review?

**Summarize Again!    Summarize at a later time.**

- Use the notes from your interaction with the professor.
- Use your own list of key words or phrases.
- Make sure you understand everything.

<b>Understanding the Syllabus</b>
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In each course, you will be given your syllabus the first day in most of your classes. The syllabus will outline the requirements and describe assignments for the entire semester. The syllabus provides you with a general outline of the course and could list:

- required reading assignments
- learning objectives
- assignments and due dates
- course projects
- professor's office hours and contact information

Unfortunately, it is easy to fall behind. Readings should always be completed **BEFORE** the due date. In traditional college classes, you probably read various chapters after the professor lectured on a subject. In an online course, you must be prepared having already read the section that the professor assigns by the due date. If you fail to keep up with the work of the class, you will find yourself overwhelmed with little chance of catching up. Better organization, proper time management, and constructive scheduling are important keys to success in an online course.

### **Being a Successful Student**

The key to being a successful student is you! There are many people encouraging you to succeed: professors, family, staff, and friends. No one can make you a success but you. This means you must know yourself. Also, don't forget that outside influences may affect your school success.

Are you working?

Do you have a long commute to work?

Do you attend community activities?

## Time Management

Online courses require you to be more independent, forcing you to structure your own schedule, manage your time, and organize your day.

### Sample Weekly Time Schedule

	<b>MONDAY FRIDAY/SUNDAY</b>	<b>TUESDAY</b>	<b>WEDNESDAY</b>	<b>THURSDAY</b>	
<b>6-7 a.m.</b>	wake up	wake up	wake up	wake up	wake up
<b>7-8</b>	travel	travel	travel	travel	travel
<b>8-12 12-1p.m.</b>	Work Lunch study session	Work Lunch study session	Work Lunch study session	Work Lunch study session	Work Lunch study session
<b>1-5 5-6</b>	Work travel	Work travel	Work travel	Work travel	Work travel
<b>6-7</b>	dinner	dinner	dinner	dinner	dinner
<b>6-7 7-9</b>	Family time Family study o reading time	Family time Family study o reading time	Family time Family study o reading time	Family time Family study o reading time	Family time Family study o reading time
<b>0-10</b>	Relax	Relax	Relax	Relax	relax

Now let's try to create your schedule. Let's be realistic. Schedules only work if you can follow them.

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
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6-7 a.m.					
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7-8					
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8-9					
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9-10					
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10-11					
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11-12					
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12-1p.m.					
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1-2					
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2-3					
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3-4					
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4-5					
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5-6					
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6-7					
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7-8					
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8-9					
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9-10					
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## Student Responsibility

Here is a list of suggestions for coping with an online course:

- organize your time--develop a schedule and stick to it;
- develop and use study skills;
- set realistic goals for course work;
- maintain close contact with your professor;
- utilize support services;
- develop a system for keeping and locating materials;
- work on writing skills;
- try not to take on additional responsibilities at work during the academic year'
- learn to seek online peer help;
- develop a code for note taking and use it;
- set aside a place to study;
- deal with problems immediately;
- set priorities regarding social and academic life;
- eat, sleep, and dress to protect your health; and
- Utilize the resources available online.

If you can identify strengths and attempt to solve problems, the online experience can be a positive one. These suggestions can be of assistance on the road to success.

## Five Steps for Note Taking

### Preview:

1. You should lead not follow.
2. Relate reading assignments to your own interests and needs.
3. Read outside assignments **BEFORE** the due date.
4. Organize note taking around what you already know.

### Select:

1. Read everything, but be selective.
2. Do not try to copy everything.
3. Search for the important ideas, the core of the reading assignment.

### Question:

1. Question continuously to yourself.
2. Focus your note taking around questions.

### Organize:

1. Put your notes in a logical outline form.
2. The most important part of note taking is trying to see the material as a whole with all its relationships and interconnected parts.
3. Organized notes are easier to remember and provide more help when you are studying for exams.

### Review:

1. It is important to reread your notes.
2. It is al important to revise your notes as soon as possible after you take them.

One method of taking notes is called the “**two-column format**”. With this method, you draw a line down the middle of a page of paper and take notes on the left side. Later, when you review the notes, the right side of the page can be used for adding comments, questions, examples, or summaries. During your reading, you may want to make notations marking important main ideas. During later assignments, the professor may refer back to earlier notes so you can easily add additional comments near the earlier information. The right side can also contain outlines of the main ideas of the day with important details. Use lines and other visual markers to separate, emphasize, and organize notes. The more you review the notes, the more you will use the right half of the paper.

In addition, some professors make their notes available to students. Be sure to check with your professor to see if this is something you can request for the class. If the professor’s notes are available, you should continue to take notes because this enhances your active learning. The professor’s notes can be used to compare with your notes as you review each day.

As you begin to use some of these strategies, create a plan for your future note taking. Some questions you might ask yourself could include the following:

Will I use an outline form?

Will I use a form that lets me add information from later readings to what I write now?

Which of the 5 W’s and H will I answer in my notes? The 5 W’s are:

What do I know about this subject?

What significance does this information have for me?

What do I want to learn from this material?

What does this author want me to learn from this material?

What should I look for as I read the material?

The H question asks:

How does this information relate to other information given in class?

Abbreviation and word economy are important sub skills to good note taking. Commonly accepted abbreviations include “Mr.” for “Mister”, “vs.” for “versus”, “w/” for “with”, and “+” for “and”. Omitting vowels from some words is also a good way to abbreviate (e.g., “prps” for “purpose”). Word economy is just as important as abbreviating. Many students copy whole sentences from their readings or try to write every word. Omit words that are not necessary such as “the”, “and”, “each”, etc.

Note taking describes a range of techniques that enable you to study information later. Learning the skills of abbreviation and how to improve the quality of notes is critical to your success. These techniques will help you to become a more active learner and a better note taker.

## Cornell Note Taking System

2 1/2"

6"

### 2. Reduce or Question

\*write key words,  
phrases or questions  
that serve as cues for  
notes taken

\*cue phrases and  
questions should be  
in your own words

### 3. Recite

\*with reading notes  
covered, read each key  
word or questions  
\*recite the fact or idea  
brought to mind by key  
word or question

### 1. Record

\*write down facts and ideas in phrases

\*use abbreviations when possible

\*read through your notes

\*fill in blanks and make scribbles more legible

### 4. Reflect and Review

\*review your notes periodically by reciting

\*think about what you have learned

### 5. Recapitulation (After Lecture)

## **SLOWER: How to Write Essays/Papers**

Select:

1. Select a topic you can handle
2. Pick a topic you understand.

List:

1. List all your ideas related to your topic.
2. Brainstorm for five minutes. Picture the points and ideas and jot down key words. Don't worry about sentence structure.
3. Use notes from lectures for short papers.
4. Use note cards for research.

Order:

1. Order your ideas. Picture what you want to write down. It needs to flow together and make sense in your mind first. Worry about the English structure later.
2. Organize your thoughts into paragraphs by highlighting.
3. Quickly code your notes for the essay.



- Write:
1. Write the first draft.
  2. Be concise.
  3. Give examples and supporting evidence when possible.
- Examine:
1. Examine your draft for errors. Be sure to check verb tense. Use your grammar guides and idiom dictionary.
  2. Have someone else read your paper.
- Revise:
1. Proofread for punctuation, capitalization, and sentence structure.
  2. Be sure to answer the question completely.

### **Self-Advocacy**

Self-advocacy for an online student can be defined as the ability to recognize and meet the needs specific to oneself without compromising the dignity of oneself or others. By being knowledgeable about oneself and by being skillful in knowing when and where to self-advocate, students can obtain personal independence and success in meeting both their educational goals.

Steps should be addressed:

- Initiate a virtual face to face conversation online.
- Maintain eye contact.
- Use an appropriate voice tone.
- Use appropriate facial expressions.
- Use good body posture (straight or relaxed).
- Use good listening skills.
- Ask for what you want.
- State the reason why you want it.
- Thank the other person if he/she agrees to the request.
- Propose an alternative if the other person does not agree with the request.

### **Guidelines For Contacting Instructors**

There are many ways you can reach out to your professors:

- 1- Email
- 2- Chat through the AUL campus, instant messaging, Skype...
- 3- Phone call if your professor discloses his phone number and best time to reach him
- 4- Make an e-appointment by using a video method such as Skype, Face time, Viber...
  - Be on time for the e-appointment.
  - Introduce yourself.
  - Tell the professor which course you are in.
  - Show an interest in the class.
  - Be calm and courteous.
  - Be prepared.
  - Present the material you have questions about.
  - Be prepared to problem solve or look for alternative answers with the instructor.
  - Leave the instructor with a positive impression.

## Showing Self-Confidence

Assertive individuals display self-confidence and success by approaching people even in an online environment with assertive introduction of themselves, assertive distance, and assertive emails. Saying hello, or introducing yourself in such a manner will display a picture of confidence. Confidence always communicates a picture of success. That is the type of person who sets a good example and leaves a good impression. That is the type of person who communicates to others that he/she is happy, motivated to learn, ready to take on challenges and is very secure.

## Passive, Aggressive, and Assertive

### Passive:

- Deny themselves the right to make choices
- Fail to express their feelings
- Seldom reach desired goal
- Allow others to infringe upon their rights

### Aggressive:

- Reach their goals and enhance self-worth by hurting others
- Make choices for others and infringe upon the rights of others
- Pushes others around

### Assertive:

- In a calm and polite manner, ask for what you want and decline what you don't want.
- Strive to reach goals without hurting others
- Express feelings and thoughts
- Make choices for themselves
- Speak up for themselves without trying to hurt others

### How to give an assertive response:

- State what you want.
- Make a calm, polite statement.
- Say it without insulting others.
- Express one's own wishes

## Go Week: The Week Before the Assignment is Due

- **Find out exactly what is required by doing the following:**
  1. Make a list of what things you must include and rank them according to importance.
  2. Talk to friends who have taken the previously. Get their advice on what to include in assignment.
  3. Get together a "study group" of some serious students and review the final project or assignment.
- **Organize yourself for maximum efficiency by doing the following:**
  1. Eat on schedule.
  2. Get a normal amount of sleep every day.
  3. Take time off from your other activities.
  4. Set aside your usual daily activities (TV, dates, hobbies) for after the assignment..
  5. Review the syllabus for details needed in assignment.

6. Build up a positive mental attitude by reminding yourself of all the good consequences of succeeding by recalling past successes. Be positive. Think up!
  7. Plan an after-the-course get together as a reward for your survival and success.
- **Learn what you need to include in each assignment:**
    1. Read the assignment one more time in detail.
    2. Review it again.
    3. Review the top priority items again.
    4. Do your best and feel good that you gave it your best.