

USEFP News

THE UNITED STATES EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION IN PAKISTAN

DECEMBER 15TH 2009

Distance Education:

Is a Virtual Classroom for You?

POSITIVE ASPECTS OF DISTANCE EDUCATION:

1. INDEPENDENCE AND TIME MANAGEMENT

Students who take courses online often hone their ability to work on their own, and they also gain experience in managing their time efficiently. With nobody to stand over them and make them work, virtual learners tend to develop these skills more quickly than if they were to learn strictly in a traditional classroom.

2. A FLEXIBLE SCHEDULE

Only so many class periods are available in a single school day, and some students already have jam-packed course loads. Distance education provides these high achievers with the opportunity to take classes outside regular school hours. By taking courses online, students have the flexibility to explore all their areas of interest.

3. ADVANCED AND SPECIALIZED CLASSES

In many cases, small schools and rural schools simply cannot provide advanced or specialized classes. Virtual education gives students the chance to gain experience in areas that would otherwise remain out



of reach.

4. EMPHASIS ON THE WRITTEN WORD

Strong writing skills are essential to success in secondary and higher education as well as in the workplace. Distance education teaches students to communicate more effectively through writing, because the questions they ask and the work they complete is based almost solely on the written word. Virtual learning clearly gives students the opportunity to develop as writers.

PROBLEMATIC ASPECTS OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

1. LACK OF FACE-TO-FACE INTERACTION

Some educators argue that both teacher-student and student-student contact are integral to the learning process, and online classes eliminate these elements of education altogether. Also, students who excel at class participation need to consider that this piece of the learning puzzle will be missing as well.

2. POOR-QUALITY PROGRAMS

The number of distance-learning programs is increasing rapidly, and educators are concerned that many online courses fail to

provide valid educational experiences. Students must be sure to fully research any distance-education program before signing on. Participating in a weak program will only lead to a waste of time, effort, and money.

3. THE NEED TO SELF-START

Distance education truly lets students make their own schedules. Those who have a hard time with self-motivation will undoubtedly have trouble in this type of educational setting. Procrastinators beware.

4. EMPHASIS ON THE WRITTEN WORD

The heavy focus on writing can be a plus of distance education for some. However, for those students who struggle with writing, it can be a major negative. If writing is a serious weakness, virtual learning may not be the best educational option.

While distance education may be the perfect alternative for some students, it's not the right choice for everyone. So carefully consider your unique needs and interests and weigh the positive and negative aspects of virtual learning before you sign on.

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College Roommate Rules

Getting to Know You

Flash forward to your first week at college...

10:00 p.m.: You've finished your schoolwork for the evening. You neatly stack your books on your desk, fold and put away clothing, shut off the lights, slip into your neatly made bed, and drift off to sleep.

11:30 p.m.: You're jolted out of your peaceful dream by loud heavy metal and bright lights. Could it be morning already? No such luck. Rather, it seems your party-loving roommate has

just arrived home from—surprise, surprise—a party (for the sixth night in a row) and is just now starting her homework. You watch in amazement (and frustration) as she simultaneously powers up her computer, dances to the music filling your small room, and discards her clothes and books on the floor. "Hey!" she yells over the music, noticing you for the first time. "What's up?" she asks, seemingly unaware that you were fast asleep.

You flop back onto your bed, put your pillow over your head and groan. "How am I ever going to get through the year?" you wonder.

Scenes like this are not unusual. Getting along with a roommate is a real concern, and one you may be facing for the first time. If you're a bookworm who goes to bed early and your roomie is a party animal who just gets going at midnight, sharing the same quarters may not be easy. But that doesn't mean the two of you can't get along.

The Good News

Perhaps the most important lessons you'll learn in college are the ones you learn outside the classroom. Figuring out how to live with someone involves respecting differences, sharing, being courteous, accepting others for who they are, and much more. You'll find



that sharing space builds character.

While most freshmen do miss the privacy of their homes, they also find comfort in sharing company with others who are experiencing the same issues—difficult courses, living away from home, balancing school work and social life, and a whole lot more. In fact, while there are many alternatives for roommates who don't get along, most do stick it out, and solve their problems by talking it out.

The Talking Cure

Keeping lines of communication open is essential. Before you even step foot in your dorm, give your roommate a call and find out who you'll be living with for the next year. Here are some tips for getting off to a good start:

Discuss important issues and establish rules. If you can't study with music on, then come to an agreement about quiet hours. If she likes to have lots of friends in the room all the time, and you

don't, make a schedule so that you can both enjoy the room at different times. If your roommate would rather you didn't study with the light on when she's trying to sleep, she should tell you. If you make house rules, and communicate openly and often, you can avoid unpleasant surprises down the road.

Be respectful. Successful roommate relationships are based on mutual respect. If your roommate doesn't like anyone borrowing her clothes, respect her wishes. If you don't like music on while you're

studying, she should respect your needs, too.

Be willing to compromise. You and your roommate may not agree on everything, but you both have to be willing to compromise a little bit. If you're a slob and she's a neat freak, you should start cleaning up, at least in the parts of the room you share. And she should try to be flexible and realize your unmade bed doesn't affect her.

Be courteous. Courtesy is contagious. If you behave politely to your roommate, she will likely follow your lead. Take messages when people call for her. Wish her luck on an exam. Ask if you can pick up something for her while you're running errands. And, don't borrow anything without asking.

Good friendships often begin by sharing space with strangers. So, who knows... maybe that loud, partying roommate you thought you'd never last with will become your good friend.

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How to Take on College Studying Your Cramming Days are Over

In college, you may be shocked by the workload you suddenly face. Read a whole book for the next class? A test on three chapters when the semester has hardly begun?

Think of college as a full-time job, in which you spend about 40 hours a week on class, labs, section meetings, and study groups, and doing homework. And you're largely responsible for deciding exactly how much time to allocate to each task. Getting organized and using your time well are key to succeeding academically.

Decide Where and When to Study

Come up with a specific plan for where and what you'll study during any gaps in your schedule. In addition to making use of transitional times during the day, it's generally a good idea to avoid studying too late at night, when you tend to be tired, work inefficiently, and forget much of the material you cover. The best places to study have the following qualities:

- Good light
- Comfortable temperature
- Good desk space

Beyond that, different environments have their own pros and cons. Ultimately, the decision of where to study depends on two factors: the environment in which you are best able to concentrate and the type of work you are planning to do. For

completing problem sets or brainstorming possible test questions, you may want to study with a group or at least in a setting where others in the class are available for discussion. When you are reading Friedrich Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil* or working on a research paper, by contrast, you are probably better off in a less social environment.



Develop Good Study Habits Early On

Here are some simple tips to help you improve your study habits:

- Have a routine for where and when you study.
- Decide in advance what you'll study, choosing reasonable and specific goals that you can accomplish.
- Do things that are harder or require more intense thought earlier in the day.

● Take breaks so that you stay fresh and don't waste time looking at material but not absorbing it.

● Make use of "dead" time right before and after class and in breaks between other activities.

● Get to know students whom you respect and can study with or call and ask questions.

● Keep up with the workload and seek help at the time you need it. You don't want to become paralyzed by stress or get so far behind in the work that it is too late to begin studying the material you've skipped.

Do the Reading

There's a big difference between reading effectively and merely skimming the text without thinking about your relationship to the material. To read more effectively:

● Read assigned materials before class so that you'll be able to ask questions about and have a context for understanding them.

● Take notes on the reading instead of highlighting the text. It's a more active form of learning, because it requires you to think through and rephrase the key points. Later, you can highlight the important ideas from your notes on the reading and your class notes. Having written notes apart from the text will also be a great help when it comes time to review the material for tests.

UPCOMING EVENTS AT USEFP, DECEMBER 2009:

USEFP Islamabad:

Undergraduate College Camp Sessions every Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday of the month at 3:00pm
A General Graduate Presentation will be held every Thursday of the month at 3:00pm

USEFP Karachi:

A Visa Seminar will take place every Wednesday of the month at 3:00pm
A Graduate Education Presentation will be held every Thursday of the month at 3:00pm
An Undergraduate Education Presentation will be held every Friday of the month at 3:30pm

Please contact your local office to register for upcoming events and receive additional information:

Islamabad: advising@usefpakistan.org; **Karachi:** advisingkarachi@usefpakistan.org; **Lahore:** lahoreadvising@usefpakistan.org

Upcoming Test Dates for TOEFL, GRE, and SAT

SAT:

General and Subject Test

Test Dates:

December 05th, 2009

January 23rd, 2010

May 01st, 2010

June 05th, 2010

International Registration:

Please check for early registration options for international candidates.

iBT TOEFL:

Test Dates:

December 05th, 2009

December 12th, 2009

December 20th, 2009

GRE:

The GRE Test is offered four days a week, Monday through Thursday, throughout the year.

Please visit our website or call in order to register for a particular test day.



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