

To meet the changing educational needs of its service area, Vernon College provides distance education (DE) opportunities to students with special scheduling needs, at remote locations, and at high schools and other regional centers. Distance education courses are available through the internet (in both online and hybrid formats) and by two-way interactive video (ITV) classrooms at area high schools and other selected sites.

Vernon College Distance Education

Student Manual – 2023-2024

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Introduction

Welcome

Welcome to online learning at Vernon College! We are excited that you are interested in our college.

Distance education (DE) provides learners with a convenient and flexible opportunity to go to college in a non-traditional environment. To meet the changing educational needs of its service area, Vernon College provides distance education (DE) opportunities to students with special scheduling needs, at remote locations, and at high schools and other regional centers. Distance education courses are available through the internet (in both online and hybrid formats) and by two-way interactive video (ITV) classrooms at area high schools and other selected sites.

Our ultimate goal is student success! Vernon College recognizes distance learners, like all students, need access to a host of services. Distance education provides many of these services from student services to technical support to online tutoring services.

Thank you for your interest in Vernon College distance education courses.

Mission Statement

The distance education program at Vernon College provides access to college courses and support services for students who are separated by time and physical location from faculty members, support personnel, and/or instructional locations. Courses taught via distance education are the same as traditional face-to-face courses offered on site in terms of academic quality, learning outcomes, credit hours, and transferability.

Distance Education Overview

Definitions

The following words and terms, when used in this subchapter, shall have the following meanings, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise. According to the Texas Administrative Code:

Distance Education – The formal educational process that occurs when students and instructors are not in the same physical setting for the majority (more than 50 percent) of instruction.

Distance Education Course – A course in which a majority (more than 50 percent) of the instruction occurs when the student(s) and instructor(s) are not in the same place. Two categories of distance education courses are defined as:

Fully Distance Education Course – A course which may have mandatory face-to-face sessions totaling no more than 15 percent of the instructional time. Examples of face-to-face sessions include orientation, laboratory, exam review, or an in-person test. Instead of attending traditional face-to-face classes on site, students access course content through the internet. While course content may be obtained online, proctored testing may be required for online courses. Some courses require students to purchase and install software on their computers.

Hybrid/Blended Course – A course in which a majority (more than 50 percent but less than 85 percent), of the planned instruction occurs when the students and instructor(s) are not in the same place. These courses require students to attend synchronous class sessions at the appropriate instructional location. While much of the course content is presented online, proctored testing may be required for hybrid courses. Some courses require students to purchase and install software on their computers. Some courses may use Microsoft Teams for virtual class meetings.

Interactive Video (ITV) – A course in which instruction provides two-way, real-time communication between instructor and students who are separated by geographical distance. VC's interactive television classrooms send and receive instruction from the Vernon Campus and Century City Center, as well as provide connection to select area independent school districts.

Acadeum/Digitex – VC partners with other Texas community colleges as a host college for Acadeum/Digitex. Acadeum/Digitex courses may be made available to students in subject areas where VC does not offer a viable alternative for the course in the specific term, and the course is necessary to complete individual academic goals. Enrollments in Acadeum/Digitex courses must be approved by the Vice President of Instructional Services.

Delivery Methods

On-Site - Students will meet on-site according to the published schedule in the assigned locations. Additional online instruction may be required.

Online - Students will have the ability to access and satisfy course requirements online with clear deadlines. Exams may require a web camera.

Live Stream - Students will meet according to the published schedule via video conference. Exams may require a web camera.

On-Site w/ Live Stream - Students will meet on-site according to the published schedule with the option of attending via video conferencing. Exams may require a web camera.

On-Site Hybrid - Hybrid course has a classroom **AND** an online requirement. Students will meet according to the published schedule. Exams may require a web camera.

On-Site Hybrid w/ Live Stream - Hybrid course has a classroom **AND** an online requirement with the option of attending via video conferencing according to published schedule. Exams may require a web camera.

Connected Classrooms - Students attend on-site in classrooms at different VC locations. Instructor may alternate locations.

Connected Classrooms w/ Live Stream - Students attend on-site in classrooms at different VC locations with the option of attending via video conferences according to the published schedule. Instructor may alternate locations. Exams may require a web camera.

Credit Hour – In accordance with federal regulations, a credit hour is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally established equivalency that reasonably approximates:

1. Not less than one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours out of class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester hour, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time, or
2. At least an equivalent amount of work as required outlined in item 1 above for other academic activities as established by the institution including laboratory work, internships, practical, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

Distance Education Readiness

Online learning requires motivation, self-discipline, computer proficiency, and strong study habits as well as effective time management skills. Strong study habits are important because success in online courses requires self-directed learning and extensive time commitment toward the online course. In traditional face-to-face courses, students are expected to spend a minimum of 2 or more hours per

week outside of class for each hour in class. Online courses require an even greater time commitment due to the absence of the traditional face-to-face classroom component. Online students should expect to spend a minimum of 3 hours per week for each semester credit hour (SCH) of online courses in which they are enrolled (i.e. 9 hours per week minimum for a 3 SCH online course).

Student Orientation

New students will be enrolled in an online Canvas Student Orientation class at the beginning of the semester. Basic log in and navigation information can be located in the [Canvas Student Access Guide](#).

Computer Requirements for Distance Education Courses

Vernon College uses Canvas by Instructure learning management system (LMS). A high speed internet connection is suggested for best results with the applications available within the LMS. To determine whether or not your computer system is sufficient for the distance education course OR to locate free software downloads, visit the [Vernon College Distance Education](#) web page.

Policies and Procedures

Academic Integrity

Vernon College is a comprehensive community college that promotes a culture of success for all who are a part of the institution. It is in this learning environment that the ethical growth and development of students can best be facilitated. The success of their experiences at Vernon College is contingent on the existence of an environment that requires adherence to a set of values that includes but is not limited to honesty, fairness, excellence, freedom, responsibility, achievement, civility, and community. Therefore, behaviors that contradict these ideals are unacceptable and do not support our mission and vision for the future. Academic integrity is the foundation of the respect and worth of our instructional efforts including the degrees and certificates we award.

Student Responsibilities - Students have a responsibility to behave in accordance with ethical standards that will build and sustain the trust of the faculty, the administration, and their peers and to follow the Honor Code of Conduct of Vernon College:

By virtue of being a student of Vernon College, I pledge to behave ethically by

- 1. following the standards of academic honesty and scholastic expectations;*
- 2. refraining from giving or receiving any unauthorized aid or engaging in collusion;*
- 3. refusing to take the work of others and submit it as my own;*
- 4. notifying the appropriate instructor and/or those in immediate authority of any incidents of suspected academic misconduct.*

Student Code of Conduct

Students enrolled in distance education courses with Vernon College are expected to abide by the [Vernon College Code of Student Conduct](#), outlined in the [Vernon College General Catalog](#) and [Student Handbook](#). When interacting with the instructor and fellow classmates, students are expected to follow all guidelines outlined in the [Code of Student Conduct](#). Students who violate these policies and guidelines will be subject to disciplinary action.

Specific Violations of Academic Integrity - Violations of academic integrity are serious academic violations and will not be tolerated. Violations of academic integrity and forms of scholastic dishonesty include but are not limited to the following:

- Plagiarism
- Collusion
- Cheating
- Other acts designed to give an unfair academic advantage to the student.

“Plagiarism” includes, but is not limited to, the appropriation, buying, receiving as a gift, or obtaining by any means someone else’s work and then submitting that work for credit as if it were one’s own. It also includes the failure to properly document sources used in research and using artificial intelligence resources.

“Collusion” includes, but it is not limited to, unauthorized collaboration with another person in the preparation of an academic assignment offered for credit.

“Cheating” includes, but is not limited to:

1. copying from another student’s work, e.g., test paper or assignment, or allowing another student to copy from one’s own without authority;
2. possessing any materials during a test that are not authorized by the instructor, such as class notes, specifically designed “crib notes,” calculators, electronic devices, etc.;
3. using, buying, stealing, transporting, or soliciting in whole or in part the contents of a test that has not been administered, test key, homework solution, or computer programs;
4. collaborating with or seeking aid from another student during a test or other assignment without authority;
5. discussing the contents of an examination with another student who will take the examination;
6. divulging the contents of an examination for the purpose of preserving questions for use by another when the instructor has designated that the examination is not to be removed from the examination room or kept by the student.
7. submitting for another person or permitting another person to substitute for oneself to take the course, to take a test, or to complete any course-related assignment;
8. registering for and taking a class for which the student does not have the formally required prerequisite classes or a written waiver from a Division Chair or Instructional VP;
9. falsifying academic records, including, but not limited to, altering or assisting in the altering of any official record of the College.

Sanctions Related to Violations of Academic Integrity. The sanctions for academic dishonesty include but are not limited to:

1. a grade of zero on an exam or assignment;
2. an “F” in a course;
3. administrative withdrawal from a class with a possible recommendation of disciplinary sanctions.

[Academic Integrity Policy](#)

Attendance

To promote student success and to maintain compliance with various state and federal regulations, Vernon College faculty and instructors maintain attendance records in all courses. Online courses are no different from traditional face-to-face courses in this regard; however, “attendance” must be defined in

a different manner. Student "attendance" in online courses is defined as active participation in the course as described in each course syllabus/outline.

Online courses will, at a minimum, have weekly opportunities for student participation, which can be documented by any or all of the following methods: student tracking in Canvas; submission/completion of assignments; and/or communication with the instructor. Students who do not log on to the course prior to the Official Census Date will be dropped from the course. The Official Census Dates can be found on the Vernon College website under [Important Dates for Registration](#). Students who fail to maintain active participation in an online course as defined in the course syllabus/outline will be processed in accordance with the College's current attendance policy.

Hybrid courses have classroom and online attendance requirements. Refer to the individual course syllabus/outline for more specific information about hybrid attendance requirements. The course syllabus/outline should include the dates that students are required to be on campus. Students enrolled in a hybrid course will typically meet with their instructor on the first day of the class.

[Attendance Policy](#)

Course Load

The average course load during a sixteen (16) week semester or two (2) 8-week semesters within the 16-week semester is five courses of fifteen to seventeen semester credit hours. Physical education activity courses, labs, and other one-semester-hour courses are not included. The maximum load for a student is six regular courses or no more than 18 total hours in a Fall or Spring 16-week semester, and/or two (2) 8-week semesters, without the approval of the Vice President of Instructional Services.

The maximum load for a student is restricted to two regular courses during each five and one-half week summer semester unless permission is granted by the Vice President of Instructional Services for an additional enrollment. No more than fourteen total hours may be attempted in a summer semester of eleven (11) weeks or two (2) summer semesters of five and one-half weeks each.

Authenticating the Identity of Distance Education Students

All distance education students are authenticated through the use of a unique student identification number. Students receive their unique student identification number upon completion of the registration process.

Password Security - The student is responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of the password and account. A student must not disclose his/her username and/or password to any other person. Disclosure of a username and/or password may result in administrative withdrawal from Vernon College with forfeiture of tuition and fees. Any student who is aware of a violation of username and/or password security must immediately notify either the instructor of the course or the Canvas Administrator.

If you have any problems logging-in, please complete and submit the [Help Form](#).

Computer Security Policy

Every student has a personal responsibility for reporting any misuse of Vernon College's telecommunications facilities to the Institutional Support Specialist (940-552-6291 ext. 2242) or to his/her instructor. Students should be aware that not all Internet sites are secure. If students choose to transmit personal information of any kind while using Vernon College's telecommunications facilities, they do so at their own risk. Vernon College cannot be responsible for any problems that occur. Examples of this type of information are credit card numbers, social security numbers, etc.

Student Complaints/Grievance Procedures

Vernon College recognizes that students have the right to file a complaint when they have a grievance against college policy or personnel. Vernon College defines "grievance" as a written student complaint submitted to the Dean of Student Services on the Vernon College Grievance Form. Vernon College has reasonable, just, and timely policies and procedures in place for the resolution of these written student complaints. All students are encouraged to resolve problems when they first arise with the parties involved. Only when problems can't be solved informally are they moved to the formal written grievance procedure. The grievance procedure is published in the [Student Handbook](#).

Privacy of Students Enrolled in Distance Education Courses

The privacy of Vernon College distance education students enrolled in distance education courses is protected in the same manner as those enrolled in traditionally delivered courses. A comprehensive system of storage has been developed which ensures that student records are accessed by authorized personnel only, and will be stored in a safe and secure manner. Instructional and course communications between instructors and students are primarily accomplished through Vernon College issued electronic mail accounts which require authorized credentials and password securities.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA)

The privacy of distance education students is maintained in accordance to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Communication precautions are taken to protect distance education students. Instructional and course communications between instructors and students are primarily accomplished using Vernon College issued electronic mail accounts which require authorized credentials and password

securities. Please consult the [Vernon College General Catalog](#) online, or the [Student Handbook](#) for full policy.

Withdrawal Policy

Students may drop a part of their course load or withdraw from all classes any time after they have registered and paid and until the last day to withdraw. That date can be found on the Vernon College website under [Important Dates for Registration](#). Students are strongly encouraged to visit with their instructor(s) and their Student Success Advisors before seriously considering dropping a course or withdrawing from school. Please consult the [Vernon College General Catalog](#) online.

Refund Policy

If a course is cancelled by the College, one hundred (100%) percent of all applicable tuition and fees charged will be refunded. No refunds are made without the honorable dismissal or official withdrawal of the student from the College. No cash refunds or reversal of charges to credit cards will be made. All credits will be applied to any outstanding balance owed to the college before a refund will be issued. Refunds are issued by check mailed to the student's address of record, by direct deposit to the student's Chaparral ID Card, or by other designated direct deposit account. Tuition and fees paid directly to the institution by a sponsor, donor, grant, or scholarship shall be refunded to the source rather than directly to the student. Visit the [Refund Policy](#) web page for full policy and refund schedule.

Registration for Distance Education Courses

Registration for Distance Education courses will be conducted in the same manner as for traditional, face-to-face courses.

[Register for Classes link](#)

At the beginning of each enrollment period, registration for classes will be held. Registrations will normally be conducted through [MyVC](#) (Vernon College's online registration process) according to the schedule provided on the Vernon College website under [Important Dates for Registration](#).

Students should apply for admission, complete all applicable placement tests, and complete the required New Student Orientation and visit their Student Success Advisor early in order to facilitate course selection and availability.

The time, place, and method of each registration will be designated by Vernon College officials and can be found on the Vernon College website under [Important Dates for Registration](#).

A schedule of classes, broken down by campus and learning centers, is made available through [MyVC](#). Students may, with the assistance of their Student Success Specialist, select courses which will meet the requirements of their chosen certificate or degree program. Lists of internet courses (both online and hybrid formats) and interactive video classes are denoted in the schedule of classes published on the Vernon College website.

Class Schedule includes:

1. Course offerings
2. Additional course information including time, days, semester hours, location, and instructor

Additional Information/Dates for Registration includes:

1. Registration and Advising Calendar
2. Student Instructions for [MyVC](#)

Student Support Services

Student Success

The Office of Student Success is structured to help students maximize progress and reach their educational goals. Student Success Specialists work with students individually and in groups to provide intensive guidance, ongoing support, and intrusive advising to promote engagement, retention, persistence and completion.

Academic Advising

The individual student is ultimately responsible for course and program selections. At Vernon College, all students are assigned a Student Success Specialist upon completion of the admissions application. The Student Success Specialist is a student's primary point of contact for all student success needs beginning with the first semester and continuing through the completion of educational goals.

Career Services

Career services helps students learn more about themselves through interest and personality inventories, enables them to clarify and evaluate their career and educational goals, provides them with direction and career information on the job market, helps them develop a strategy to reach their career goals, and assists them in the career decision making process. Students interested in utilizing this service should contact the Career Services Coordinator at any VC location. The Career Services Coordinator contact information can be found on the Vernon College website.

Academic Coaching

Academic Coaching is a collaborative and interactive process intended to assist students in making an individualized plan for achieving academic success. It provides students with the opportunity to work individually with a Student Success Specialist to enhance their academic skills, increase awareness of educational resources, gain confidence and discover motivation. Academic Coaching is available year round. Sessions may vary based on student need.

STEPS

Striving to End Probation Status (STEPS) is a targeted academic coaching opportunity with a Student Success Specialist. Individual participant sessions include but are not limited to goal setting and detailed discussion of tools and resources available to increase student success. STEPS is designed to include periodic progress checks throughout the semester with a Student Success Specialist.

Emotional Support Services & Intervention

Student Success Specialists are available to provide consultation on personal or social matters including resources available and developing a support system to help each student achieve their goals.

Early Alert

Vernon College has instituted an Early Alert process by which faculty and instructors may “alert” both the student and VC Student Services personnel in the likelihood of a student being unsuccessful in a course due to poor academic performance, excessive absenteeism, or other perceived barriers. This initiative is designed to provide early intervention strategies in the form of student support services and resources to assist students in successfully completing the course.

Financial Aid

Students enrolled in distance education courses with Vernon College who are interested in applying for Financial Aid should begin the application process early to ensure that the process is complete prior to registration. Visit the [Financial Aid](#) web page for specific details on how to apply and deadlines.

VC Library

Students enrolled in distance education courses with Vernon College receive online access to a vast array of library resources and services.

Resources include:

- Off Campus Access to Article Databases: Login and search the databases 24/7 for articles on any research topic.
- E-books: Checkout and download e-books to your Chrome Book, PC, or other personal device. E-books are conveniently accessible from the [Library's Catalog](#).

- Ask the Librarian: Visit our chat room for real time assistance or email librarian@vernoncollege.edu
- Research Assistance: Access tutorials and research guides for help in finding informational resources in a variety of subject-specific areas.
- [Online Orientations](#): View a schedule and register to attend any of the library's weekly orientations.
- [Inter-campus Borrowing](#): Students enrolled in distance education courses may use the library's online form to request books from the main collection in Vernon.

See the [Library Handbook](#) for more information on library services.

[Vernon College Library Link](#)

Proactive Assistance for Student Success (PASS) Department

[Tutoring Centers](#) at the Vernon Campus and the Century City Center provide help in accessing face-to-face tutoring, online tutoring, and NetTutor services. The Tutoring Centers also provide free in-house essay tutoring either in-person or through email, computer usage, including internet access, and a quiet place to study or read. NetTutor can be accessed through Canvas for all students. Students may also request online tutoring. In addition, tutoring services may be arranged at the Skills Training Center with advance notice.

The [Office for Students with Disabilities](#) (OSD) offers reasonable accommodations in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. To assure that accommodations are available for the first day of class, students should contact the Office for Students with Disabilities early to allow adequate time to arrange necessary services and supplies. Contact OSD at 940-552-6291 ext. 2308 or visit the [OSD](#) website.

The [New Beginnings Program](#) provides financial assistance to financially disadvantaged students who are pursuing degrees/certificates in Career and Technical Education programs. Financial assistance with textbooks, child care and travel expenses is available to qualifying students. Applications can be found on the [New Beginnings](#) website.

Technical Support

Should you encounter technical problems with the following please use the links below to report your technical problem as opposed to calling. This will ensure a prompt turnaround time to address your issue.

[Student Email Accounts](#)

[Canvas by Instructure](#)

[MyVC](#)

Transcript of College Record

An official transcript bearing the college seal and signature of the Director of Enrollment Management/Registrar will be furnished to a student, an employer or an educational institution upon the student's request. Grades and transcripts will NOT be released if the student has a "hold" on his/her records. Vernon College uses a third-party system called Parchment for official transcript ordering. There is no charge for official transcripts. If the transcript must be mailed, you will be required to pay shipping and handling.

[Transcript Request Form link](#)

Note: Other institutions may not accept a transcript that has been issued directly to the student unless it is in a sealed envelope. If you send a transcript to yourself, **do not open it if you plan to send it to someone else who has requested an official copy.**

Graduation Procedures

Application for Graduation - In order to receive a certificate or a degree, it is necessary to apply for graduation prior to published deadlines. Candidates should file for graduation at least the semester before they plan to complete all certificate or degree course work. The application for graduation is filed with the Office of Admissions and Records by all candidates.

Course Information

Course Syllabi Listings

To view course syllabi for your Vernon College courses, visit the [Vernon College Instructional Information](#) web page.

Bookstore and Textbook Information

Textbook information for your distance education courses will be provided for you in your class syllabus. Textbook(s) and other required materials can be purchased at the bookstore on the Vernon or CCC campus. Both are owned and operated by Texas Book Company. Visit [Vernon College Bookstore](#) for hours of operation and contact information.

Enrolled in a Distance Education – Getting Started

Note that you will not have access to your online course(s) prior to the first official day of classes. If you do not have access to your online course(s) by the end of the first day of classes – PLEASE contact your instructor. Your instructor’s name can be located on your course schedule.

STUDENTS: How to Access Canvas

Canvas will likely be used for your Online, Hybrid, and Face to Face Courses here at Vernon College. To access Canvas from a laptop/desktop computer, you will need:

1. Reliable Internet access - For free Internet access options visit a Vernon College campus library.
2. The latest version of your chosen web browser - For free auto updating browser:
https://www.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/new/?redirect_source=getfirefox-com
3. Computer Specifications- For a complete list of computer specifications and a browser checker please visit [the Canvas Community page](#). → Failure to have ALL of these will result in Canvas not functioning correctly.

Once you have verified your computer is set up to be compatible with Canvas do the following to access Canvas at Vernon College:

1. Open up your web browser (Firefox, Chrome, Safari etc.)
2. Go to VC homepage at <https://www.vernoncollege.edu/>

3. Click on the Canvas icon.



4. You will be taken to your Microsoft login page where you will enter your VC Username and Password.

VC Username = Outlook Email Address

VC Password = Chaps Pin

The word "Chaps" followed by your 4 Digit PIN number. *For example, if VC student Jane Smith's 4 Digit PIN is 1234, then her password will be: Chaps1234

NOTE: The "C" is a capital letter.

5. Click the "Log In" button

Class Structure

In a distance education course, students complete assignments, take tests, and do other coursework as they would in a traditional face-to-face class. They do this mostly within their course website. However, please note that some classes may require students to meet on-campus for orientations, labs, and/or exams.

It is important that you read your course syllabus and course outline thoroughly to anticipate assignments and exams and to complete them on time.

Communication

Communication in distance education, primarily takes place via Vernon College student email accounts, or messaging and/or discussion boards within Canvas. Please read your course syllabus and course outline thoroughly for specific details on modes of communicating with your instructor and classmates.

Courses with a Required Lab Component

Labs are counted as class meetings. Refer to your course syllabus and/or outline for lab details.

Course Grades and Grade Points

At the end of each regular enrollment period, permanent grades are reported, posted to each student's permanent record, and available on the web site through [MyVC](#). Grades and transcripts are not released if the student has a hold on his or her records.

VC uses standard alphabetical system to record grades and uses the four-point system for grade point evaluation. For more information refer to the [Vernon College General Catalog](#) or [Student Handbook](#).

Exams

Online, Off-site or Proctored Exams - Exams for distance education may require a proctor and/or the use of Respondus Monitor and a web camera.

Off-Site Campus Testing for Proctored Exams - Exams for distance education may require a proctor. To take a proctored exam in your Vernon College distance education courses, arrangements need to be made with the instructor of the course. Students at remote sites must submit a completed [Distance](#)

[Education Proctor Agreement Form](#) to the instructor. It is the responsibility of the student to locate a proctor that will offer such services and have the proctor contact the instructor for instructions. Vernon College reserves the right to select and approve or decline proctors.

Student Resources

Campus Life

In addition to providing quality academic instruction, Vernon College offers the support resources you need to succeed before, during, and after attending VC, as well as activities and opportunities to help you make the most of your campus life and college experience.

Click on the icons below to follow us on social media and check out our College Calendar for important dates!

[College Calendar](#)

[Twitter](#)

[Facebook](#)

[Instagram](#)

Other VC News Sources:

Financial Aid Newsletter – emailed to your VC account and posted to the Financial Aid homepage in April and November. The newsletter contains important deadline information and updates.

Social Networking

Distance education students are encouraged to like our VC Facebook page and follow VC on Twitter. These social networking sites can provide a sense of community for the online learner, as well as up-to-date information and announcements related to Vernon College and distance education.

Online Netiquette

With the onset of the online education environment and online courses a new buzzword has evolved called netiquette. Simply defined, it means etiquette on the Internet (or net). In an online course you will have your communication skills tested! You will be speaking through written communication to fellow students and instructors, so it is imperative to communicate well and professionally. Mostly, when speaking in an online course or in any online environment for that matter, the same rules apply

for etiquette as they do in-person. The golden rule of netiquette in an online class or environment is: do not do or say online what you would not do or say offline. Let us look at five important netiquette rules in an online course or education environment:

1. Be friendly, positive and self-reflective. When people cannot see you, and also do not know you, feelings can be hurt if you are not careful in how you express yourself. The old saying, think before you speak is important here. Think before you write. One word of advice is to not respond when you feel angry. Wait. Write it down somewhere and come back to it. When you do, you may find that you no longer feel the same way as you did when you wrote it because you have had time to reflect about the situation. Last, if you still feel the need to be heard, then edit before you post, and write it in terms that are easily embraced. This is also true when you feel a critique is necessary; say it in a positive tone. Reread what you have written to be sure it is positive.
2. Use proper language and titles. Do not use slang or even profane words in an online education environment, even if they are words you consider, "not so bad," as they will sound offensive to the reader. Do not refer to your professor as "Doc" or by his or her first name, unless it is acceptable with him or her to do so. Also, do not use caps lock when writing, it will insinuate yelling. That would hurt someone's feelings and possibly give an individual the wrong impression.
3. Use effective communication. This takes practice and thoughtful writing. Try to speak and write clearly at all times. Again, reread before you respond. Define and restate your words when necessary. Correct a misunderstanding right away. Chances are, if one person felt a certain way about what you said, then another may have as well. Likewise, be mindful of chosen words and joking. Let's say for example, I write, "get out!" This slang term can be interpreted in several ways, either positively or negatively.
4. Professionalism. Do not use characters like smiley faces, and instant message abbreviations. Save it for personal conversations or definitely ask for permission before using them. They may be interpreted as childish or too casual for the online education environment. Last, always say please and thank you.
5. Ask for clarification. If you are unsure of what was said, or the instructor's directive, or are trying to interpret a person's expressions, then ask again. Do not sit in silence either misunderstanding or feeling offended. Do not interrupt though; wait until there is a break in the conversation, or until the open interaction occurs. Your instructor will appreciate your responsiveness and maturity. A simple way to do this is to say (or write), "I did not understand..." always keeping the onus for the misunderstanding on yourself.

Reference: Top Five Rules of Netiquette in an Online Course written by: Laurie Patsalides•edited by: Laurie Patsalides•updated: 9/4/2013