



Introduction to Remote Learning

Remote vs. Classroom

If you are reading this, you're transitioning to remote learning as an alternative to a traditional or hybrid classroom. Here we will show you how it works, debunk a few common misconceptions, and explore some differences you will encounter when taking courses online rather than in a traditional classroom.

How Does it Work?

In a remote course, your instruction is delivered over the internet rather than in a traditional classroom. In fact, think of the learning management system (or LMS) as a virtual classroom. The LMS used by most Maricopa Community Colleges is [Canvas](#) while Rio Salado College uses [RioLearn](#). The video conferencing tool that the District uses is [WebEx](#). (You can find WebEx student resources here.) In Canvas or RioLearn your instructor will:

- Post all of the course materials
- Possibly conduct online discussions and perhaps other activities
- Receive your assignments

Additionally, it is where your instructor will expect you to:

- Read all of the course materials posted there
- Participate in the activities created
- Submit your assignments

Accessing Canvas or RioLearn is easy—you can log in using any internet-capable device such as a computer, tablet, or even your smartphone! You will be able to “go to class” whenever and wherever you'd like, as long as you have an internet connection.

Debunking Myths

Remote learning is not new and has been a part of education for many years and continues to evolve into a powerful learning tool. However, certain misconceptions about it continue to trip up students. We don't want that to happen to you! Here are some common myths about remote learning and what you can actually expect, along with some tips to help you excel!

Common Myths

Let's start by addressing the six most common myths about remote learning:

Myth #1: Easier

“I've heard that remote learning is way easier than taking the same course on campus. You just have to hand in assignments and you're done.”

THE FACTS: The workload for any particular course is the same regardless of the way it's delivered. In fact, there is more reading in remote classes because you have to read all of your teacher's instructions. There could also be more video viewing as your instructor may record and post lectures for you to view. In a remote environment, you need to be more self-disciplined and motivated because you won't be facing the instructor every session.

The good news is that remote classes will give you the flexibility to learn when you are ready to learn and at times that work with your busy schedule. In a remote class, you are not limited by “class times,” so you don't have to worry about conflicts with other classes you want to take, your work schedule, or other time constraints!

Whether you decide to take your classes in a traditional or an online setting is up to you; except in times such as now, where we're dealing with the switch to remote learning due to the [COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic](#).

Myth #2: Self-Paced

“I can turn in assignments whenever I want, right? I'll just blast through them in two weeks rather than wasting a whole semester.”

THE FACTS: Most remote courses are NOT self-paced. Some instructors reveal all assignments ahead of time while others may roll out course topics and assignments incrementally. The most successful students will concentrate on their work at the pace that the teacher has laid out. Give yourself time to really focus on the course material and put your best effort into your assignments — don't try to rush through the course just to get it done. The remote learning world is not much different from traditional campus courses: The more you put into it, the more you will get out of it.

The good news is students who successfully complete remote courses have found that the organizational skills they learned and used to complete their remote courses made them better students in traditional courses they took later on.

Myth #3: Participation

“Professors randomly call on students for answers in a lecture, but in a remote class I can fly under the radar.”

FACTS: Don't be fooled by the illusion of anonymity in your virtual classroom. Even though you and your instructor may not be able to see one another, he or she will be accessing reports on the quantity and quality of your course participation. Participation will definitely be a key component of your classes.

The good news is remote learning can provide you with the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships with your professors and with other students. Conversing online can seem strange or artificial at first, but once they get used to it, most people really enjoy online discussions. In an online course, everyone has a chance to provide their input, and you have time to craft your thoughts before “speaking.” You're not bound by the end of a class period or a limited discussion time. But you'll also need to commit to participating effectively, and you'll need specific strategies to make this happen.

Myth #4: Tech Skills

(Myth #4 actually comes in two parts, but both center on your technical skills.)

Myth #4A:

“I spend a lot of time on social media and I text my friends more than I talk to them. I don't need to learn any technical skills in order to take a class online.”

Myth #4B:

“I don't really know my way around a computer, but my instructor and online class will teach me the technical skills I need, right?”

THE FACTS: Remote learning generally does not require extensive technical knowledge, but you have to understand the basics about your computer, the internet, and how to use Canvas or RioLearn. You'll also need to understand our video conferencing tool, WebEx. Be sure to seek out information or tutorials provided by your college about Canvas or RioLearn student resources. Take the time to really understand your virtual environment before you get too far into the semester. You don't want to wait until minutes before an assignment is due to learn which buttons you need to push in order to submit it.

Myth #5: Communication Skills

“If I don't understand something or have a last-minute question about an assignment, I can email my instructor and she should respond right away, regardless of the time.”

THE FACTS: This is a misconception that we're sure all instructors would like to be cleared up from the outset. Most of your instructors

provide a maximum email response time of between 24-48 hours. If your instructor sets office hours out of class time, they most likely will keep those hours or inform you of the modified office hours.

Be sure to have an alternate solution if you don't hear back from your instructor before an assignment is due (remember, your assignments are your responsibility, not theirs). Some instructors include a “Questions About the Course” discussion thread where they encourage students to answer one another's questions. Another approach would be to reach out to another member of the class and exchange private emails or phone numbers to support each other throughout the semester. Because you're not meeting with each other once or more times every week, it's easy to feel isolated in a remote course. Try some of these tactics so you can connect with others - you will get a lot more out of your classes if you do. Building supportive remote relationships and friendships requires skill and practice.

The good news is students who develop good communication skills, learn to be assertive, and are able to cooperate and collaborate well in a virtual environment will find these skills highly transferable (and valued) in their personal and professional lives long after their course is over.

Myth #6: Excuses

“If I don't finish an assignment on time, I can just say that my computer crashed, that I accidentally deleted my finished assignment, or that I just sent in the wrong attachment.”

THE FACTS: Probably none of these excuses will work. Remember, your instructors have heard every excuse in the book, and they are also pretty tech-savvy themselves—they are, after all, teaching a college-level course.

Make sure you fully understand your instructor's expectations and that you comply with them in a timely manner, and keep an open channel of communication with them if you need help or have questions. Detailed information about your instructor's policies and expectations should be included on their course syllabus. Some instructors also provide checklists for all deadlines. If your instructor does not, it might be helpful to create your own assignment checklist.

The good news is the organizational and study skills you develop for your first remote course will put you on the road to success for all your future learning experiences, whether they are online or in a traditional learning environment.

Conclusion

So now that we've introduced you to some of the basics of remote learning, let's take the next step in your quest for online success.

Adapted from <https://apps.3cmediasolutions.org/oei>

The Maricopa County Community College District (MCCCD) is an EEO/AA institution and an equal opportunity employer of protected veterans and individuals with disabilities. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, or national origin. A lack of English language skills will not be a barrier to admission and participation in the career and technical education programs of the District.

The Maricopa County Community College District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability or age in its programs or activities. For Title IX/504 concerns, call the following number to reach the appointed coordinator: (480) 731-8499. For additional information, as well as a listing of all coordinators within the Maricopa College system, visit: www.maricopa.edu/non-discrimination.