

# Online Learning FAQs

## Getting started

1. When does my class start?  
Most online classes start on the first day of the quarter. There are a few online classes in the early childhood education program that start on a different day.
2. Should I wait to hear from my instructor?  
No, don't wait. Your instructor will make the class available sometime in the week leading up to the beginning of the quarter ("week zero"). Go ahead and log in as soon as the class becomes available, or on the first day of the quarter at the latest.
3. How do I log in?  
On Whatcom's home page, click Canvas. You'll find it in the Academics menu and also in the quick links at the top of the home page. Your username is your ctcLink ID number (EMPLID). Your password is the ctcLink password you created. Click the name of your class in the Dashboard or Courses tab to open it.
4. What if I have trouble logging in?  
Contact the Student Help Desk at 360.383.3410 or [studenthelpdesk@whatcom.edu](mailto:studenthelpdesk@whatcom.edu).
5. What if my class doesn't show up in the Courses tab?  
That usually means your instructor hasn't made the class available yet. Log into Canvas using a browser (not the Canvas mobile app). In the Courses tab, if you click the All Courses link, you'll get a list of your classes that includes the ones that aren't published yet. If your class isn't there either, contact your advisor to make sure you're still registered.
6. My class is happening in WAMAP instead of Canvas. Why is that?  
Many math classes are taught using an online platform called WAMAP. It's designed for entering math from the keyboard. Canvas isn't very good for that. The method for entering math expressions takes a little getting used to, so log in as soon as you can to get some practice.
7. What do I do first when I get into my class?  
Complete any exercises labeled "read this first," "getting started," "week zero," or anything like that. If those exercises don't include reading the class syllabus, find it and read the whole thing. Also, post your picture and bio, and talk a little about yourself if there's a getting-acquainted discussion. Give your fellow students a way to visualize you as a human!

## How online classes operate

1. Is my class self-paced?  
No. You'll have assignments and deadlines throughout the quarter, just like in face-to-face classes.
2. How much time will this class take?  
Each 5-credit online class is a time commitment of about 15 hours per week. You should log in at least several times each week. The most successful students log in every day.
3. Will there be a textbook?  
It's likely. You can buy or rent books at the campus bookstore or from other booksellers. Sometimes the instructor will assign open education resource (OER) materials that you don't have to pay for.
4. Will there be lectures?  
A few online classes have recorded lectures, but most of them ask you to learn from readings, videos, practice exercises and other materials instead.

5. Do I have to log in at a certain time?

If your class has an "OL" or ONL" section code, it's an online class without any specific schedule. If it has a "WM" (for web-meet) section code, it's an online class where the students log in together at scheduled times. If it has an "HY" (for hybrid) section code, it's taught partly online and partly in the classroom. The classroom parts have scheduled times. Read your syllabus carefully to find out what your instructor expects.

6. Will I have to come to campus?

You usually don't need to come to campus for an online or web-meet class. The main exception is that math classes may have proctored midterm and final exams. If your instructor requires a proctored test, you'll have to come to Whatcom's campus or arrange another location where you'll take the test in person. Contact your instructor if you need to make those other arrangements.

Hybrid classes do have on-campus meetings.

7. How will I know what to do in the class?

In most online classes there's one module per week, organized in the order the instructor wants you to complete things. Usually a module starts with readings and other activities where you're learning something, followed by assignments where you demonstrate what you learned.

## How to be a successful online learner

1. What's the most important skill for success in an online class?

Time management. You're in charge of keeping up, participating every week, and turning things in on time. It can help to get out your calendar at the beginning of the quarter and schedule your study time.

2. How can I avoid being distracted by other things on my computer?

You might try downloading some site-blocking software, such as Cold Turkey. It allows you to block your worst temptations for as long as you need to. That might be 20 minutes while you start writing your paper, or the whole length of finals week.

3. How can I participate most effectively in online discussions?

- Read the discussion question and answer it as early in the week as you can, so you have more opportunity to get responses from other students. The earlier the discussion gets started, the more fruitful it is for everyone.
- Write your responses to other students using respectful and friendly language. That helps maintain an atmosphere that makes everyone want to continue posting.
- If your discussion post is going to be more than a couple of sentences, write it in a word processing program, save it there, and paste it into the text-entry box in the discussion. It's too easy to lose what you've typed directly into the text-entry box.

4. Is it really possible to learn math online?

Yes, but it calls for a high level of involvement on your part. Plan to spend the full 15 hours each week. Do all the homework problems, since that's how you get confident enough to do well on tests. More of your learning will be from the book, so check out the "Tips for Reading Mathematics" posted on the [Study Skills](#) page of Whatcom's website.

## Places to go for help

1. Won't asking for help make me look bad?

Not at all. Think of it as accepting and tapping into the resources the college has made available. We really want you to succeed! If getting more information or clearing up some confusion will let you take your next step, that's what we want. Please don't hesitate!

2. How do I ask my instructor a question?  
Check the syllabus for how the instructor wants you to contact them. There are messaging systems similar to email in Canvas and WAMAP, and many instructors use those. The syllabus will also say how soon you can expect a reply.
3. What if I have technical problems?  
The Student Help Desk is your best resource during the week. Call them at 360.383.3410 or email them at [studenthelpdesk@whatcom.edu](mailto:studenthelpdesk@whatcom.edu). They're not available on weekends, so do as much of your online work during the week as you can. On weekends, ask the most tech-savvy person among your friends.
4. Can I use tutoring services?  
Yes. You're welcome to use the in-person and remote versions of on-campus tutoring (math center, writing center, and individual tutoring) and online tutoring (eTutoringOnline.org). In Canvas, open the Learning Center's "course" to see all your options.
5. What if I need help with library research?  
You can get research help by phone at 360.383.3285 or by email at [libref@whatcom.edu](mailto:libref@whatcom.edu). There's also a 24/7 chat service called [Ask-a-Librarian](#).