

# Avoiding online traps

*There are some common errors that cause online classes to be harder than they should; here are some tips to make sure online school works for you, not against you.*

###

Attending online university is a wonderful option for many professionals wanting to further their education or give themselves an edge over competition in the job market.

While online education provides flexibility, it's easy to fall into some traps that could cause it to be more time-consuming than necessary or create unnecessary obstacles to attaining your educational goals.

## **Remaining silent**

Take advantage of the many channels for communication in online universities. Video conferencing, instant messaging, discussion forums, email and blogs are among the most common. By not taking advantage of these options, you set up a wall between your professor and peers. Increased communication will not only help your grades by taking advantage of others' experiences and knowledge, it helps you fully immerse yourself in the program, establish a relationship with your professor and, even better, enjoy your classes.

## **Discounting accreditation**

Earning a degree from an accredited institution is crucial and often required by employers. Taking classes from an unaccredited school is a waste of your time and money. It could also cast doubt on your credibility with an employer. Research a school's accreditation before enrolling at the [Department of Education](#).

## **Plagiarizing another's work**

It's tempting to just copy-and-paste an online source – especially if you've put off your assignment to the last minute. But, to put it simply, it's stealing. All schools use some type of program to check for plagiarism – so you will get caught. Submit your own work, written that particular assignment. If you use another's writing or quotation, cite it properly.

## **Eschewing assistance**

While strong academics are important in earning your degree, student services are a critical resource that offers extra support both while earning your degree and after graduation. Most student service departments offer tutoring, online tutorials and study pointers along with an online library, help in creating resumes and job search assistance.

## **Exploring all financial aid options**

Applying for federal aid is only the first step to finding financial assistance. Most states offer some form of educational funding, along with smaller government

programs, school-based aid and private scholarships are also great sources. Look into all funding opportunities to decrease the financial burden and stress of your degree program. There are also scholarship aggregate sites online such as Fast Web that search through a myriad of sites for aid tailored to your studies.

### **Putting it off until tomorrow**

Many online programs are asynchronous, meaning you can log on anytime to complete your course requirements. The flexibility that is one of online education's best features can also be your downfall with the temptation to procrastinate. .

Just because you're going to college online, doesn't mean you won't have to carve out a large amount of time for school. In most cases, for each hour of lecture in a college class, you'll need to schedule 10 hours of homework. Manage your time effectively by creating a class schedule, including time for lectures and time for assignments. Then stick to it so you can fully take advantage of the flexibility offered by online learning

### **Matching your style**

Not all online programs are organized in the same way. Look for one that matches your style of learning and the type of class you want to take. Some courses mimic brick-and-mortar colleges, while others are based on semester or quarter schedules. In some programs, students can only take one accelerated class at a time.

[Comment: I'm not sure what this last paragraph means - most brick-and-mortar schools use the semester or quarter schedule???)