

# Ontario Online:

Being an Effective Online Learner Faculty Guide

## **Introduction**

Welcome to the Ontario Online “Being an Effective Online Learner” instructor guide.

This resource will include information on how to embed each sub-module into a course’s curriculum, including suggestions for engaging and assessing online students. This guide is broken down into four sections: Concepts, Why the Learning Module is Useful, How to Embed a Sub-module into a Course, and Suggestions for Assessment.

We hope that the suggestions in this guide will help you to implement these sub-modules into your online course curriculum.

## Table of Contents

Concepts.....	4
Why this module is useful.....	10
How to embed a sub-module into an online course.....	12
Activity suggestions.....	14

# Concepts

## **Sub-Module One: Effective Independent Learning**

The first sub-module serves as an introduction not only to online learning as a whole, but also focuses on whether the student is prepared and ready to take an online course.

Effective Independent Learning covers several topics, including:

- Metacognition
- Motivation
- Concentration
- Eliminating Distractions
- Self-Regulation
- Learning Preferences

This sub-module uses:

- The Online Learning Readiness Scale (OLRS) to help students self-assess their preparedness for online learning
- A Learning Styles Inventory (LSI) to help learners understand their own preferences for learning
- A Metacognitive Awareness Inventory (MAI) to help students understand their level of awareness of their own thought process

Suggestions and strategies for successfully negotiating the role of an autonomous online learner will be provided based on the ORLS, LSI and MAI scores.

The completion of this sub-module is comparable to 10% of a students' overall coursework in a regular online course.

## **Sub-Module Two: Time Management**

The second sub-module, discusses different time management strategies students can use to improve their scheduling and goal setting habits.

Time Management covers several topics, including:

- Understanding the syllabus
- Goal setting
- Scheduling study time
- Keeping on task
- Dealing with competing priorities
- Assignment and homework planning
- Motivation

This sub-module will:

- Introduce students to strategies for keeping on track with their learning in online courses
- Include an introduction to various planning strategies, approaches, and tools.
- Help students to identify the distractions and competing priorities they will face, and provide suggestions for ways to realistically plan for and manage those

Cobb's metacognition self-regulation, time and study environment management and intrinsic and extrinsic goal orientation subscales of the self-regulated learning inventory will be used to assist students in understanding their current time management approach and motivation locus of control.

The completion of this sub-module is comparable to 10% of a student's overall coursework in an online course.

## **Sub-module Three: Engaging Effectively with the Learning Material**

The third sub-module discusses how to put time in and engage with learning before, during, and after lessons efficiently and effectively.

Engaging Effectively with the Learning Material covers several topics including:

- Active listening for online lectures
- Getting the most from recorded lectures or tutorials
- Strategies for reading print and digital texts
- Critical reading
- Note taking styles
- Study aids

This sub-module will:

- Introduce students to the power of online learning using the tools inherent to online teaching
- Help students to understand how to take advantage of digital learning technologies to enhance their own learning
- Use the Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory to assist students in determining their current reading skills

Each of the strategies and activities in this sub-module work to teach students how to become more successful online learners.

The completion of this sub-module is comparable to 10% of a student's overall coursework in an online course.

## **Sub-module Four: Studying, Taking Tests and Learning from Mistakes**

The final sub-module includes content focused on strategies to help students prepare for, write, and learn from tests of exams.

Studying, Taking Tests, and Learning from Mistakes covers several topics, including:

- Effectively studying for different test types
- Study aid development
- Strategies for effectively writing online or in-person tests
- Post-test reflection and learning

This sub-module will:

- Introduce students to various test taking methods used by instructors
- Provide students with various strategies on how to adapt their studying to be most efficient for each test type
- Teach students the value of post-test analysis and reflection, in order to help them better prepare for future tests

Students will also be introduced to Bloom's Revised Taxonomy, and learn various strategies to assist them in memorization, comprehension, application, analysis, evaluation, and synthesis.

The completion of this sub-module is comparable to 10% of a student's overall coursework in an online course.

## Summary

These sub-modules can be used either independently or as a comprehensive module.

Each sub-module will be supplemented by a student workbook.

The student workbook will include optional readings, activities and additional content for each topic.

The online sub-modules are presented in an accessible format, complying with AODA standards.

Instructors can refer to the workbooks to find more ideas about activities that could be implemented into an online course's curriculum. The workbooks have also been designed to adhere to AODA standards.

The ideas that each sub-module is comparable to 10% of a students' overall coursework in an online course is simply a suggestion. It is at the instructors' discretion whether to grade all or portions of each sub-module in a course curriculum.

# Why This Module is Useful

Throughout this section, there is discussion about design of the module and its overall learning outcomes.

An important facet of this module is the use of engaging animations and video to retain students' attention. Since many of the existing online learning modules may not appeal to students today, to best engage them with this content, the developers wanted to create a dynamic series of videos that incorporate interactive components.

The module's format and design is fully accessible.

Each sub-module has activities and assessments built in; this ensures that every student is working to learn and retain information for every topic.

Overall, the module and each individual sub-module includes engaging techniques for students enrolled in online learning courses to support their success. The skills and strategies taught in this video are beneficial to any student in an online course and they can be easily applied to a student's academic career as a whole.

As a whole, the complete module will help students to develop skills to:

- Self –regulate their learning and mitigate distractions
- Communicate effectively and resolve conflicts
- Manage their time and avoid procrastination
- Read critically and create effective notes from lectures and readings
- Create study aids for different test types and learn from their experiences

The complete module was designed to work either as a stand-alone learning support resource or as an incorporated part of an online course to help online learners develop the skills necessary to be successful academically in an online environment.

The activities and content in the module are the equivalent of about 14 hours of coursework. We estimate that each sub-module would represent approximately 10%, or 3.5 hours of coursework.

# How to Embed a Sub-Module into an Online Course

This section discusses some recommendations on how to embed a particular sub-module, or all four, into an online course.

There are several ways for instructors to embed these sub-modules into their online courses.

The entire module can be used together in a course or instructors can opt to integrate one or several sub-modules.

The first sub-module, “Effective Independent Learning”, would ideally be integrated at the beginning of the online course, especially since the topics it covers help students to self-assess their preparedness for online learning. Completing this sub-module near the beginning of the online course would help give students the necessary tools they need to set them up for success in an online course.

The second sub-module, “Time Management,” would ideally be integrated during the first half of an online course. The topics covered throughout this sub-module do not necessarily need to be introduced at the very beginning of the semester, but it would be beneficial if the sub-module was completed before testing or exams begin.

The third sub-module, “Engaging Effectively with the Learning Materials,” would ideally be integrated sometime during the middle of an online course. The topics included in this sub-module would work well as online lectures or tutorials are still happening. That being said, students will benefit from this module being integrated into their learning early into a course, so that students can begin to implement the strategies and skills taught in this sub-module to complete their current class.

The final sub-module “Studying, Taking Tests, and Learning from Mistakes,” would ideally be integrated near the end of an online course. The study skills and strategies would have the greatest impact on the students as they near studying for exams.

# Activity Suggestions

The following section will provide suggestions for activities that can be integrated into an online course along with the completion of at least one sub-module.

Along with activity suggestions, this section will provide a list of suggested topics to use for each corresponding activity.

## Reading Learning Skills Related Material

After selecting which topic you wish to cover with this activity, select a related reading from the further suggested readings in a sub-module workbook to assign to students.

Instructors could also choose to select their own piece of related material.

Once the students have read the material, they could be required to respond in some way (e.g. discussion post, reflective writing, or critical review), which could be submitted, to the instructor for grading, or participation marks.

Suggestions of Topics:

Effective Independent Learning:

- Learning preferences

Time Management:

- Keeping on task

Engaging Effectively with the Learning Materials:

- Critical reading

Studying, Taking Tests, and Learning from Mistakes:

- Bloom's Taxonomy

Variation:

Instead of reading a piece of content, students could be required to view an image, video, chart, graph or drawing.

## Written Summary

After completing a sub-module, assign writing a summary about a topic covered in the material.

The topic could either be chosen by the instructor, by the student, or the summary could be an overview of the entire sub-module. The length of the summary would be up to the discretion of the instructor, depending on a variety of factors, including what percentage the summary is worth in the course overall.

Suggestions for topics:

Effective Independent Learning

- Self-regulation
- Learning preferences

Time Management

- Goal setting
- Assignment and homework planning

Engaging Effectively with the Learning Material

- Active listening for online lectures
- Getting the most from recorded lectures or tutorials

Studying, Taking Tests, and Learning from Mistakes

- Effective studying for different test types
- Strategies for effectively writing online/in-person tests

Variation:

Assign the summary topic before the students complete the sub-module to test their prior knowledge of the subject. Then, once the summary is complete, students can compare their summaries to the information in the sub-modules.

## Practice Activities

Practical activities are an excellent way to reinforce and grow the students' knowledge in a course.

Ask students to submit verification that they have completed the practice activities embedded in the sub-modules or create a unique practice activity related to the content for submission. This will ensure that students are completing the activities, and by allowing students to apply their knowledge, they are relating what they have learned in the module to real life application.

Suggestions for practice:

Effective Independent Learning

- Learning preferences: demonstrate how you've tailored information in a way that helps you learn

Time Management

- Goal setting: for a course assignment, break down the steps into long-range, mid-range and short-term goals
- Assignment and homework planning: create a study schedule for the term

Engaging Effectively with the Learning Material

- Active listening for online lectures: submit notes taken during an online lecture
- Active reading: use the noting for gist technique to create an outline of the course readings
- Note taking style: try a different note taking style for an online lecture and submit your notes

Studying, Taking Tests and Learning from Mistakes

- Study aid development: create 4 (or other number) of self-generated mnemonic devices or examples of concepts

**Variation:**

A practice activity can be completed throughout the course's duration, if desired. Topics like "goal setting," could be extended longer than a single activity session in order to track the progress of the student over a longer period of time.

## Reflective Essay

Reflective essays allow instructors to have an in-depth view of a student's thoughts and knowledge about a particular topic.

Instructors can assign a reflective essay question for the class, allowing the students to brainstorm and present points and information while responding to the question.

### Suggestions for Topics:

#### Effective Independent Learning

- Metacognition
- Learning preferences

#### Time Management

- Goal setting

#### Engaging Effectively with the Learning Materials

- The difference between reading print and digital texts
- Mnemonic devices

#### Studying Taking Tests, and Learning from Mistakes

- Post-test reflection and learning

### Variation:

Instructors can allow students to get creative with their reflective essays by providing the option for a reflective photo essay or video essay. Photo and video essays contain all the elements of a normal reflective essay, but have the addition of creative elements, which expand the students' imagination and provide a more fun incentive for the assignment.

## Develop Practice Questions

Allowing students to develop their own practice questions is an excellent application exercise. This activity will require the students to practice skills and strategies taught in the sub-modules and apply that knowledge to their other course material.

After examining the practice questions created by the students, instructors could possibly consider using some of their questions on an upcoming test or exam.

\*Note: since creating study questions is a universal activity that can be used for practically any topic, the suggestions below are ideas for which topics students could use to practice the skills and strategies taught in the sub-module.

Suggestions for topics:

Engaging Effectively with the Learning Material

- Note taking styles
- Study aids

Studying, Taking Tests, and Learning from Mistakes

- Effective studying for different test types
- Study aid development
- Strategies for effective writing online/in-person tests

Variation:

Online group work could be an additional element to developing practice questions. Once the students are in groups, the practice questions they created can be circulated to all group members, or all groups, similar to the idea of a “study group”. Students can use these self-generated questions to test themselves as a study aid.

## Reflective Writing

Reflections are great activities to allow students to make connections and think critically about what they have just learned. As well, since reflective pieces are often shorter in length, they may not be as intimidating to a student, as an essay or literature review assignment.

Once students have completed a sub-module, you could assign an individual reflection activity for submission. This is an effective way to test their comprehension of the material and also reinforce their learning.

### Suggestions for Topics:

#### Effective Independent Learning

- Metacognition
- Learning preferences

#### Time Management

- Goal setting
- Keeping on task
- Assignment and homework planning

#### Engaging Effectively with the Learning Materials

- Active listening for online lectures
- Getting the most from recorded lectures or tutorials
- Critical reading

#### Studying, Taking Tests, and Learning from Mistakes

- Post-test reflection and learning

### Variation:

Instead of assigning individual writing reflections, instructors could create small groups and have each group hand in a group reflection after each student shares their thoughts on the assigned topic.

## Connections

Making connections between concepts and other knowledge or experience is an important strategy for students to help them remember information and course material.

In this connection activity, students are asked to make connections for a concept learned in a sub-module and connect it to something in their own lives.

Suggestions for Topics:

Effective Independent Learning

- Self-regulation

Time Management

- Goal setting
- Motivation

Engaging Effectively with the Learning Material

- Differences between reading print and digital texts

Studying, Taking Tests, and Learning from Mistakes

- Effectively studying for different test types

Variations:

A connection activity could also work for the topic of study aid development in, “Studying, Taking Tests, and Learning from Mistakes.”

To do this, ask students to brainstorm some connections from course materials found on a single page of their textbook. For there, students can create a chart linking each concept to its connection, making a very useful study aid.

## Evaluation

Several of the topics covered in the sub-modules involve strategies to help students figure out and understand how to prioritize and categorize.

In this evaluation activity, students are given a list with several items on it. Their goal is to order the items on a scale, generally from most to least or highest to lowest.

For example, if the topic were “Dealing with Competing Priorities,” students would be ordering items on the list from highest priority to lowest priority.

### Suggestions for Topics:

#### Effective Independent Learning

- Motivation- strategies to enhance motivation

#### Time Management

- Dealing with competing priorities- items on a daily task list

#### Engaging Effectively with the Learning Materials

- Getting most from recorded lectures or tutorials- cues to identify important information

#### Studying, Taking Tests, and Learning from Mistakes

- Strategies for effectively writing online/in-person tests- things to keep in mind for test-taking

### Variation:

An element of peer review could be added. Students could exchange their answers with classmates online. From there, each group of students would have to come to a unanimous decision about their answers to submit a group evaluation activity to their instructor.

## Compare and Contrast

For this activity, instructors can provide a situation or scenario to their students based on the selected topic. From there, students can create a brief writing assignment, comparing and contrasting two sides of the situation or scenario.

This compare and contrast activity can vary in length, depending on how long the instructor would like the written assignment to be. By providing a range of how many points students should make in their written piece (e.g. 3-5 points), the instructor is able to have some control over the average length of each assignment.

### Suggestion for Topics:

#### Effective Independent Learning

- Metacognition
- Eliminating distractions
- Learning preferences

#### Time Management

- Dealing with competing priorities

#### Engaging Effectively with the Learning Materials

- Differences between reading print and digital texts

#### Studying, Taking Tests, and Learning from Mistakes

- Effective studying from different test types

### Variation:

Instead of assigning a situation or scenario, or the instructor can choose to let the students decide their own. This provides some variety among the assignments and adds a creative element for the students.

## Student-Generated Rubrics

In this activity, the instructor is required to provide an example that would be considered extraordinary. The student's objective is to decide what the key components are that make this example great, and list them in the form of a rubric.

Student-generated rubric activities are excellent application exercises because these require the students to think critically about what makes the example extraordinary, and then apply that knowledge.

### Suggestions for Topics:

#### Effective Independent Learning

- Elimination distractions

#### Time Management

- Goal setting
- Scheduling study time
- Assignment and homework planning

#### Engaging Effectively with the Learning Materials

- Note taking styles
- Study aids

#### Studying, Taking Tests, and Learning from Mistakes

- Study aid development
- Post-test reflection and learning

### Variations:

This activity is great exercise to lead into another future assignment. By choosing an example that is relevant to another assignment, the rubric activity provides students the opportunity to get better understanding of the expectations of that future assignment. Instructors can also choose to use the students' rubrics to mark the future assignments if they choose.

## Problem Solving

For this activity, instructors provide their students with a situation. The students then have to identify what the problem is in the scenario and list suggestion about how to fix it.

Problem solving activities are excellent critical thinking exercises. Since the students completed the sub-module before the activity, they can use the knowledge they have gained and apply it to the current problem solving activity.

### Suggestions for Topics:

#### Effective Independent Learning

- Motivation
- Concentration
- Eliminating Distractions

#### Time Management

- Understanding the syllabus
- Goal setting
- Scheduling study time
- Keeping on task
- Dealing with competing priorities
- Assignment and homework planning
- Motivation

#### Engaging Effectively with the Learning Materials

- Active listening for online lectures
- Getting the most from recorded lectures or tutorials
- Critical reading
- Note taking styles

#### Studying, Taking Tests, and Learning from Mistakes

- Effective studying for different test types
- Strategies for effectively writing online/in-person tests

Variation:

Instructors could also provide other situations without the problem and let the students decide which scenario requires them to problem solve.

## Misconception

Misconceptions have a constant presence in our everyday lives. In this activity, students are given a common misconception based on the topic chosen by the instructor. The student's goal is to prove why this belief is untrue in the form of a written assignment.

### Suggestions for Topics:

#### Effective Independent Learning

- Metacognition
- Eliminating distractions
- Learning preferences

#### Time Management

- Goal setting
- Scheduling study time
- Keeping on task
- Assignment and homework planning

#### Engaging Effectively with the Learning Materials

- Active listening for online lectures
- Getting the most from recorded lectures or tutorials
- Differences between reading print and digital texts
- Critical reading
- Note taking styles
- Study aids

#### Studying, Taking Tests, and Learning from Mistakes

- Effective studying for different test types
- Study aid development
- Strategies for effectively writing online/in-person tests
- Post-test reflection and leaning

### Variation:

To make this activity more creative, ask the students to make a video about their misconceptions. Students often feel excited about creative assignments.

## Universal Activities

The following activities can work for any topic located throughout the four sub-modules:

### Suggestions for Universal Activities

#### Quizzes or Tests

- Testing assessments are a standard way to test a student's knowledge about any topic

#### Prior Knowledge and Current Knowledge Questionnaire

- For this activity, the instructor provides a list of short, easy terms or questions to the students before they complete the sub-module
- Answering questions about the topic before the sub-module helps instructors understand what prior knowledge students may have about the topic
- Once the students have finished the sub-module, instructors can then hand out a current knowledge questionnaire.
- The questionnaire after the sub-module serves as a form of reflection activity and helps students to recap what they learned in the sub-module

#### Tip:

Aim to have 2-3 open ended questions and try to avoid the specific vocabulary on the prior knowledge questionnaire.