

Are distance-learning courses for me?

How well would distance-learning courses fit your circumstances and lifestyle? Circle an answer for each question and score as directed. The most successful students are self-directed and self-motivated in their learning and study habits. Answer honestly – no one will see this but you!

1. My need to take this course now is:
 - a. High: I need it immediately for a specific goal.
 - b. Moderate: I could take it on campus later or substitute another course.
 - c. Low: It could be postponed.

2. Feeling that I am part of a class is:
 - a. Not particularly necessary to me.
 - b. Somewhat important to me.
 - c. Very important to me.

3. I would classify myself as someone who:
 - a. Often gets things done ahead of time.
 - b. Needs reminding to get things done on time.
 - c. Puts things off until the last minute or doesn't complete them.

4. Classroom discussion is:
 - a. Rarely helpful to me.
 - b. Sometimes helpful to me.
 - c. Almost always helpful to me.

5. When an instructor hands out directions for an assignment, I prefer:
 - a. Figuring out the instructions myself.
 - b. Trying to follow the directions on my own, then asking for help as needed.
 - c. Having the instructions explained to me.

6. I need faculty comments on my assignments:
 - a. Within a few weeks, so I can review what I did.
 - b. Within a few days, or I forget what I did.
 - c. Right away, or I get very frustrated.

7. Considering my professional and personal schedule, the amount of time I have to work on a distance-learning course is:
 - a. More than enough for an on-campus course.
 - b. The same as for a class held on campus.
 - c. Less than for a class held on campus.

8. Coming to campus on a regular schedule is:
 - a. Extremely difficult for me. I have commitments (work, family or personal) during times when classes are offered.
 - b. A little difficult, but I can rearrange my priorities for regular attendance on campus.
 - c. Easy for me.

9. As a reader, I would classify myself as:
 - a. Good: I usually understand the text without help.
 - b. Average: I sometimes need help to understand the text.
 - c. Slower than average.

10. When I need help understanding the subject:
 - a. I am comfortable approaching an instructor to ask for clarification.
 - b. I am uncomfortable approaching an instructor, but do it anyway.
 - c. I never approach an instructor to admit I don't understand something.

Scoring

Add 3 points for each “a” that you circled, 2 for each “b,” and 1 for each “c.”

If you scored **20 or more**, a distance-learning course is a real possibility for you.

If you scored between **11 and 20**, distance-learning courses may work for you, but you may need to make a few adjustments in your schedule and study habits to succeed.

If you scored **10 or less**, distance learning currently may not be the best alternative for you; talk to your counselor.

Explanations

1. Distance-learning students sometimes neglect their courses because of personal or professional circumstances. Having a compelling reason for taking the course helps motivate the student to stick with the course.
2. Some students prefer the independence of Distance Learning; others find the independence uncomfortable and miss being part of the classroom experience.
3. Distance-learning courses give students greater freedom of scheduling, but they can require more self-discipline than on-campus classes.
4. Some people learn best by interacting with other students and instructors. Others learn better by listening, reading and reviewing on their own. Distance-learning courses provide less opportunity for group interaction than most on-campus courses.
5. Distance Learning requires you to work from written directions.
6. It may take as long as two to three weeks to get comments back from your instructor in distance-learning classes.
7. Distance Learning requires at least as much time as on-campus courses. Students surveyed say that distance-learning courses are as hard as or harder than on-campus courses.
8. Most people who are successful with Distance Learning find it difficult to come to campus on a regular basis because of their work, family or personal schedules.
9. Print materials are the primary source of directions and information in distance-learning courses.
10. Students who do well in distance-learning courses are usually comfortable contacting the instructor as soon as they need help with the course.

(This questionnaire is adapted from “Are Telecourses for Me?” from PBS-Adult Learning Service, The Agenda, Spring 1994.)