

Preparing Technologically for Learning Online

You do not have to be a technological wizard to succeed in online learning. Feeling comfortable using a computer and navigating the Internet are key. Specifically, if you can download from the Web, install programs, copy and paste, and manage your files, you should be fine technically.

Computer Requirements

Your computer's operating system should have Microsoft Windows (XP or above works best) or Mac (OS 10 or above works best).

Processor speed: Any computer with a Pentium, Pentium clone, or PowerPC should work. Of course, the faster your processor speed (300 MHZ or above), the better the performance.

Hard disk space: Make sure you have enough for all of your application programs, particularly your web browser. If you download a recent version of a web browser, you'll need ample space on your hard drive to install and run the program. You might also have to download and install free media players, such as RealPlayer and QuickTime. Shoot for at least 1 GB on your hard disk. 64 MB is probably the minimum, 128 MB is better, and 256 MB or higher is preferred.

Web Browser

Microsoft Internet Explorer and Mozilla Firefox work best with Moodle if your computer runs the Windows operating system. If you are a Mac user, you should use Firefox. For Windows users, it is best that you have both browsers installed because if something doesn't work in one browser, it should work in the other. Moodle requires that cookies be enabled in your browser. Cookies are small text files that are stored in your computer and contain information from web sites, such as your preferences when visiting those sites.

To enable cookies in Internet Explorer:

From the Tools menu, click Internet Options. Click the Privacy tab.
Move the slider to Medium, and click OK.

To enable cookies in Firefox:

From the Tools menu, click Options.
Click Privacy.

Under History, choose Use Custom Settings for History in the drop-down next to Firefox will. Make sure Accept Cookies from Sites is checked. Click OK.

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Plug-ins

In order to view certain multimedia elements and documents on the Web, you need specific plugins. The most popular are QuickTime, RealPlayer, Flash, Shockwave, Acrobat Reader, and Windows Media Player. They are all freely downloadable.

Internet Service Provider

It doesn't matter which ISP you use; just make sure it's reliable. In general, failure of your internet service is not sufficient reason for missing deadlines.

Modem speed

Moodle works fine at 56k, but a cable modem or DSL is preferred in order to get the best experience with multimedia content and with uploading and downloading materials.

Software

It's always best to have a word processing program, such as Microsoft Word, on your computer.

This way, prior to submitting assignments, you can check your work for spelling and grammar errors. When you are required to submit specifically formatted documents, submitting them using a Word document (.doc), or a Rich Text Format (.rtf) file. By doing so, you are ensuring that I will be able to open your assignment on my computer.

Other Tips

Before you upload a file into Moodle, make sure that the file name does not include special characters (!@#%&*). Moodle only accepts files with upper- or lower-cased letters, numbers, and underscores (_). If you are using a Macintosh, add a dot followed by the three-letter extension at the end of the file name. For example, email_assignment.doc.

Back up your work. Keep backup files of everything you submit for grading in case there is ever a question.

Add the Moodle Login page of <http://lawschoolmoodle.com> to your Favorites or Bookmarks. This will make it faster to access Moodle whenever you want.

Scan documents for viruses before you upload them to Moodle.