Tips for Learning Through Moodle

Ara courses may involve learning through Moodle, an online learning management system that provides access to discussion forums and course materials. Therefore understanding and applying effective strategies for learning via Moodle are important for successful study.

1. Accessing your Moodle course(s)

- Access the Student Moodle User Guide on Ara's Moodle Home page.
- Find out about other help e.g. your tutor's office phone number/ email address and office hours; and Ara's IT helpline number and hours.
- Find out early what equipment, software and skills you need to access your Moodle course reliably and easily.
- Subscribe to a reputable Internet Service Provider (ISP) for a reliable broadband connection.
- Use the recommended / optimal browser for better access.
- Keep your software up to date.
- Practise navigating (getting around) in the Moodle course environment. Navigate through course folders and files to ensure you can access course menus and materials.
- Print out course materials for easier reading, highlighting and note making.
- Make study notes and mind maps, focusing on main ideas and how they interrelate. Use headings to structure information. Organise your course materials well for easy access.
- Attend all face-to-face classes if you are on a blended delivery course.

2.   Motivating yourself

- You should take your Moodle course(s) as seriously as a traditional course.
- With little or no face-to-face interaction with other learners and the tutor, some students studying via Moodle can feel isolated and lose interest or motivation. Think about how to motivate yourself and maintain effective online learning, e.g. appreciate the benefits of online learning, like not having to commute to class, and flexibility of schedule. Schedule time to reward yourself regularly for consistent study.
- It might help if you make your Moodle course page your computer's home page, to avoid the distraction of another home page like your favourite website.
- You might wish to create motivational desktop backgrounds that might include**:**
  o   Your educational and career goals.
  o   Your successes e.g. academic or other achievements.
  o   The rewards that come from study success or from having a certificate, diploma or degree.
  o   Motivational quotes.
- Reinforce your success by ticking off items on a study to-do list. Self-motivation keeps you focused on learning.

3. Time management

Online courses offer a flexible learning schedule but you risk not doing enough study. Therefore**:**

- Ask your tutor about the expected amount of time (each week) to spend on your Moodle course.
- Draw up a realistic time schedule that also incorporates your other commitments.
- Maintain your motivation and follow your time schedule to ensure regular online 'attendance'.
- Log on to your course regularly, if not every day, to at least check discussions and course updates/ announcements.

- Schedule enough time to read and contribute to online discussions.
- If you face issues like procrastination or difficulty in prioritising tasks, seek help early from Learning Services.

4. Moodle learning environment

- Post your own introduction to a Moodle forum early. This enables other online students to begin to know you, which helps to promote the development of an online learning community.
- Be courteous, tactful and constructive to foster a supportive and productive online environment.
- Practise <u>active learning strategies</u>:
  - o Write down questions as soon as they come to mind. Find out or work out the answers. If needed, seek tutor help early.
  - o Allow time to post thoughtful questions to elicit answers that support insightful learning.
  - o In course discussions, learn from and provide insights to your peers.
  - o To contribute well, give yourself enough time for in-depth thinking.
  - o Check that you have written your ideas clearly and relevantly, as this reinforces your learning.
  - o Use your own words as far as possible, to show that you understand what you are learning.
  - o Take feedback on your contributions objectively, because feedback can improve your critical thinking skills.
- Try your best to write in a way that is unlikely to be misunderstood. Remember that when online, others cannot hear your tone of voice or 'read' your body language.
- Write your post in Microsoft Word first so that it can do a spelling and grammar check. Then copy and paste it into Moodle.
- Be patient as others also need time to respond or contribute.

5. Study environment

- Where do you best study? In the library? In a quiet room? You need a conducive study environment that is free from distractions like phone calls. Consider forming a study group with course mates who live near you.

6. Assignments

- Break up your assignment tasks into manageable chunks. Set your own deadlines for completing each chunk.
- Set an earlier personal deadline for assignment completion. Early completion of assignments often increases study satisfaction.
- Regularly make backup copies of your assignment drafts to safeguard your work.
- Many courses on Moodle need assignments to be submitted electronically. Find out what is required e.g. the type of document format.
- Drop-in at Learning Services for assignment and learning advice when possible. Distance students can obtain support by phone and/or email.

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Access Learning Services' handouts *Organising Your Time, Making Notes & Assignment Writing Steps* at http://library.ara.ac.nz/learning_services/learning_and_study_resources

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