Southern State Community College

Using Blackboard – 2/22/09

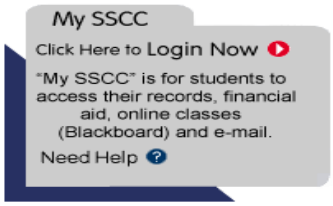
Blackboard Orientation Information – Julia Basham

There are a few things you should be aware of before enrolling in an online class. They are not easier than face-to-face classes. They are just convenient and you don't have to drive to campus. You are going to have to read, comprehend and basically lead yourself through the course and the course materials with the instructor's guidance and assistance. In some cases 100% of the communication between you and the instructor will be in written form. Here are the minimum computer and Internet skills you should have before enrolling in an online course. Keep in mind that most students who enroll in online courses possess these skills and if you do not have these skills it can be a barrier to success and completion of the course. Online courses have a very high drop out rate because students think they can ignore these skill requirements and then find they are unable to succeed or complete the online course.

Minimum Computer and Internet Skills

1. You should have good keyboarding skills. (If you are a hunt-and-peck typist, you will find online courses very time consuming.)
2. You should know how to create, save, and manage files.
3. You should know how to find files on your computer and have basic computer file management skills.
4. You should be familiar with the use of file extensions.
5. You should know how to use attachments and upload and download files.
6. You should know how to run any application required by the course, such as a word processing program that your instructor requires.
7. You should know how to install software.
8. You should be comfortable using your browser software. Internet Explorer works best.

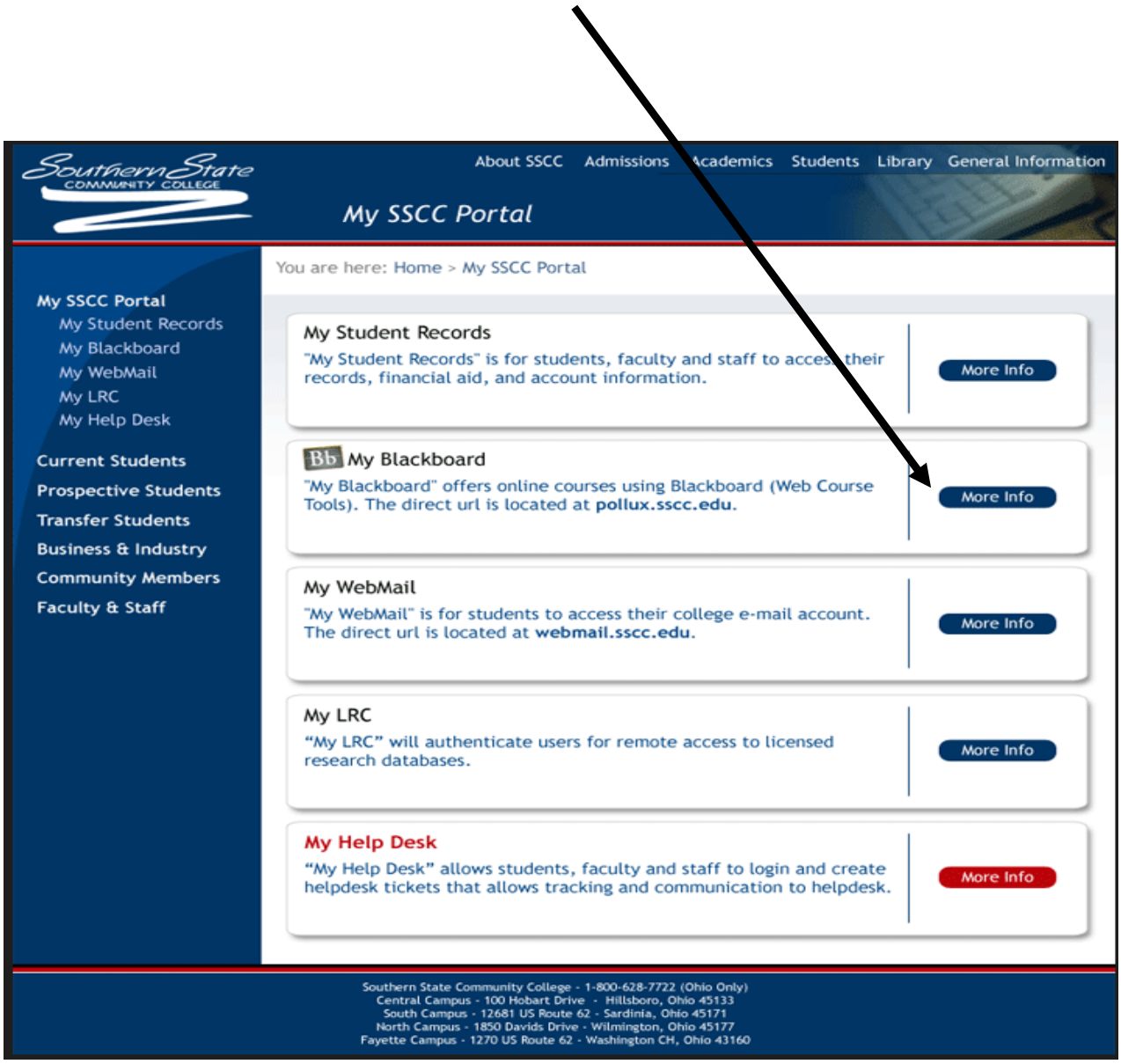
You should know as much about an online class as possible before enrolling in an online class. One way to find out if that online class is right for you is to check the course description in your schedule. Another great way to find out about the requirements and expectations of that online course is to check the instructor requirements for that given course. Some teachers require you install software on your home computer, some teachers require campus exams, some teachers require the use of specialized software for your course. You can ALWAYS find the instructor requirements at this website. Review the information provided by your instructor for your specific class. To login to your online class – go to http://www.sscc.edu and then click on



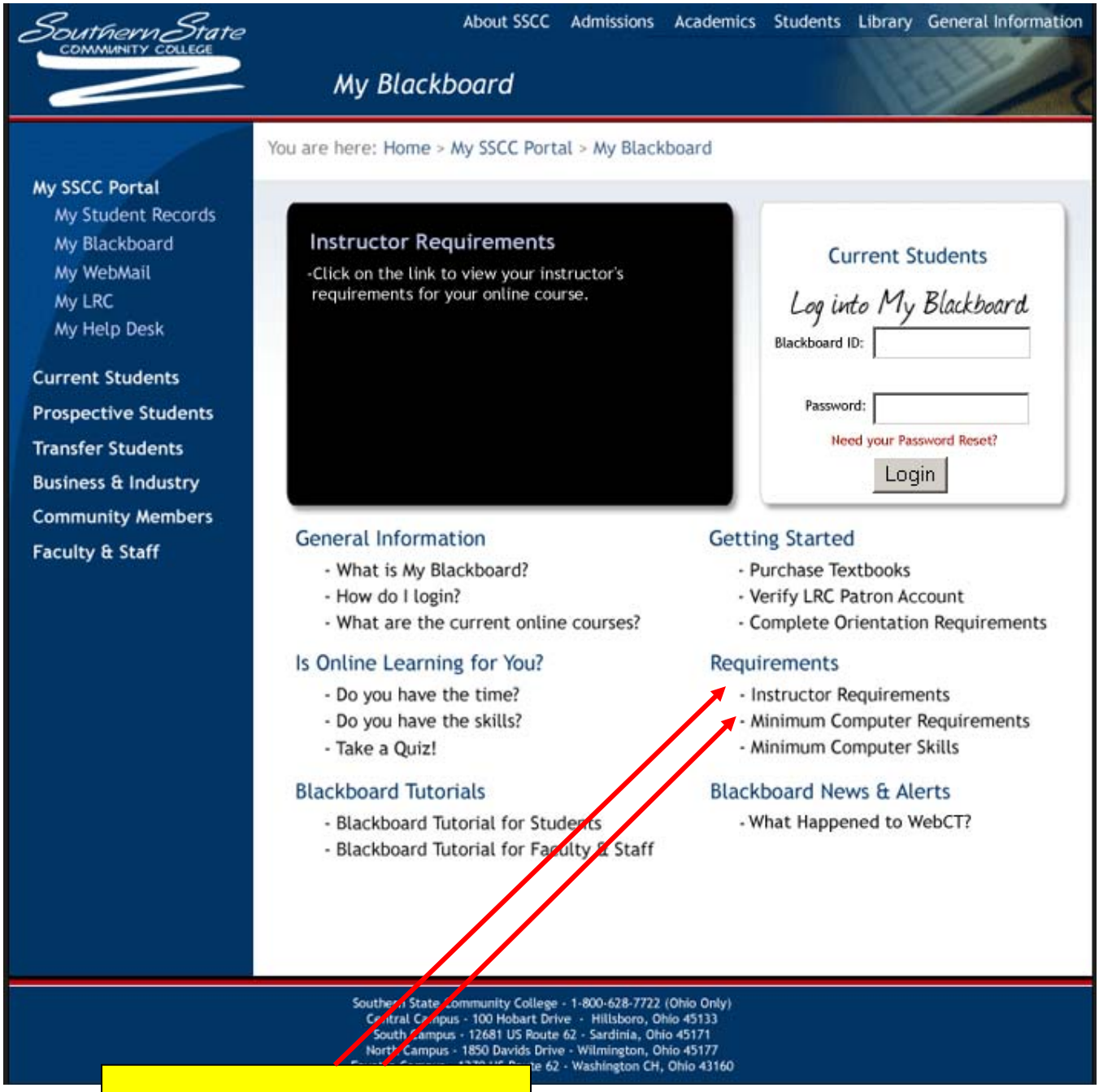
You can also log in by going to http://www.sscc.edu and then for the link for CURRENT STUDENTS and then ONLINE COURSES

1. The first step is to make sure your computer is Blackboard ready. You will have to turn off any popup blockers and check your browser setting. You can do that at http://pollux.sscc.edu/webct/entryPageIns.dowebct . Click on Check Browser which will check to see if your computer is set up to access your course management system, Blackboard, correctly. THIS IS A VERY CRITICAL STEP. DO NOT OVERLOOK THIS STEP!!!

2. This will take you to the actual login website for information you will need at SSCC. There is a tremendous amount of information on this website – to get to your online courses – use the My Blackboard More Info link. Click on My Blackboard More Info to get to your Blackboard courses – or you can directly log in using the url – which is http://pollux.sscc.edu/. Login to your online course at http://www.sscc.edu/Student_Portal/index.htm or https://helpdesk.sscc.edu/Student_Portal/index.htm

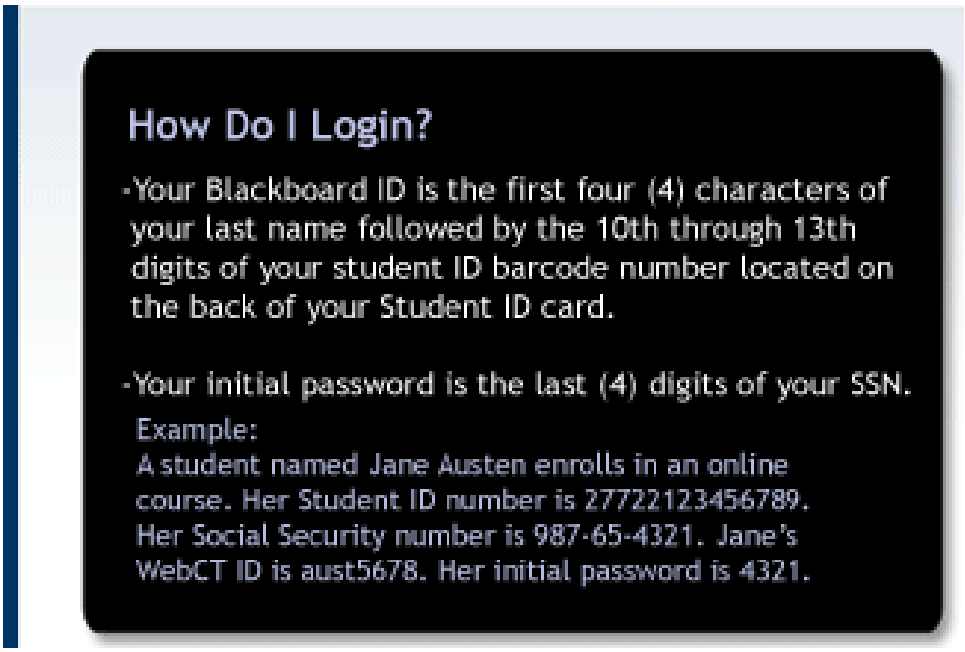


Take the time to read the information on this web page at https://helpdesk.sscc.edu/Student_Portal/bboard.htm. Pay very close attention to **Instructor Requirements and Minimum Computer Requirements** to make sure that Blackboard will work on your computer. If you fail to read this information and have trouble, you may be directed right back to this web page to answer your questions.



Pay very close attention to Instructor Requirements and the Minimum Computer Requirements.

HOW TO LOG IN TO BLACKBOARD!!!



Access Your Blackboard Course

All online courses can be accessed through this portal. Online teachers, instructors and professors **expect** students to access their Blackboard course on the **FIRST DAY OF THE QUARTER**. You cannot log in before the first day of the quarter. Remember this is still a class and you are still required to attend just like any other class you are taking. The way an instructor knows you attended is that you have logged into your Blackboard class. For students who cannot log in at home on the first day of class, you need to go to a campus Learning Resource Center (LRC) location or to someone's house with Internet access and at least log into your class so we can see that you attended. Failure to log into your Blackboard class can result in you being dropped from the class. To access a Blackboard course, follow the instructions below.

1. My SSCC Portal – the DIRECT LINK you can type into your address bar of your browser (Internet Explorer, Firefox, Safari, Netscape) is http://pollux.sscc.edu/ if you should ever have any problem logging in through the My SSCC Portal. You can also use this link to check your Brower and JAVA Versions so you know your computer is ready for the Blackboard learning environment. The My SSCC Portal Link is http://www.sscc.edu/Student_Portal/index.htm or https://helpdesk.sscc.edu/Student_Portal/index.htm.

2. Use the My Blackboard link to access your classes.

3. Take time to read the very critical and important information on this webpage. If you have problem with a course or with My Blackboard, you will be directed back to this page for answers. Pay very close attention to INSTRUCTOR REQUIREMENTS AND MINIMUM

COMPUTER REQUIREMENTS before you begin your Blackboard Course.

4. Enter your Blackboard ID and Password in the **Log on to My Blackboard** area.

   Your Blackboard ID is the first four (4) characters of your last name followed by the 10th through 13th digits of your Student ID Barcode number. This number appears on the back of your Student ID card. Your initial password is the last (4) digits of your Social Security number. Change this initial password the first time you log on to your Blackboard account. Be sure to record your new password.

   Example: A student named Jane Austen enrolls in an online course. Her Student ID number is 2772212345678 9. Her social security number is 987-65-4321. Jane's Blackboard ID is aust5678. Her initial password is 4321.

   If you have not received a Student ID, contact the Student Records Office. If you have lost your Student ID, contact the Central Campus Learning Resource Center for a replacement.

5. After entering your Blackboard ID and Password, click the Login or Okay button. This will take you to your my Blackboard home area where you'll see a link to your course(s). Click on this link to access your course(s)

Very, Very Important: You will not be able to access your Blackboard online course **until the first day of the quarter.** If you have log on or access problems, contact the Help Desk immediately. Be sure to give the Help Desk your full name and the name of your online course. You can call the Help Desk at 1-800-628-7722 Ext. 2800 or call them at 937-393-3431 Ext. 2800 or fill out the HELP DESK FORM at https://helpdesk.sscc.edu/ Login to My HelpDesk. Follow the login instructions as noted.

1. Click on New Request
2. Click on the box to ACCEPT nonsecure items.

Fill out the information completely as requested in the form. Include your Internet Browser information. What browser software are you using for the Internet? Are you using Internet Explorer 6.0, Netscape, Internet Explorer 7.0, Firefox, etc? If you do not know, indicate in your form that you do not know. Keep in mind that they are very busy those first few days with dealing with log in issues and they may need a little time to get back with you so the best way you can assist is to give them as much information as possible as to the problem or error that you are having.

This document will provide you with information on the various tools you can expect to find in your online class. The following picture is a picture of the Home Page of an online class. When you log into your course, pay very close attention to all the information provided on your Home Page. Many classes provide the Syllabus, Orientation, Software Setup and other extremely important documents and information that you will need to successfully complete the course. Printing out necessary information for reference throughout the course will provide you with the first tools you need for success. Keep in mind that the course designs can be as different as the teachers that design the courses!! They will look different and they will have different expectations. It is up to you to familiarize yourself with your course and your course instructions.

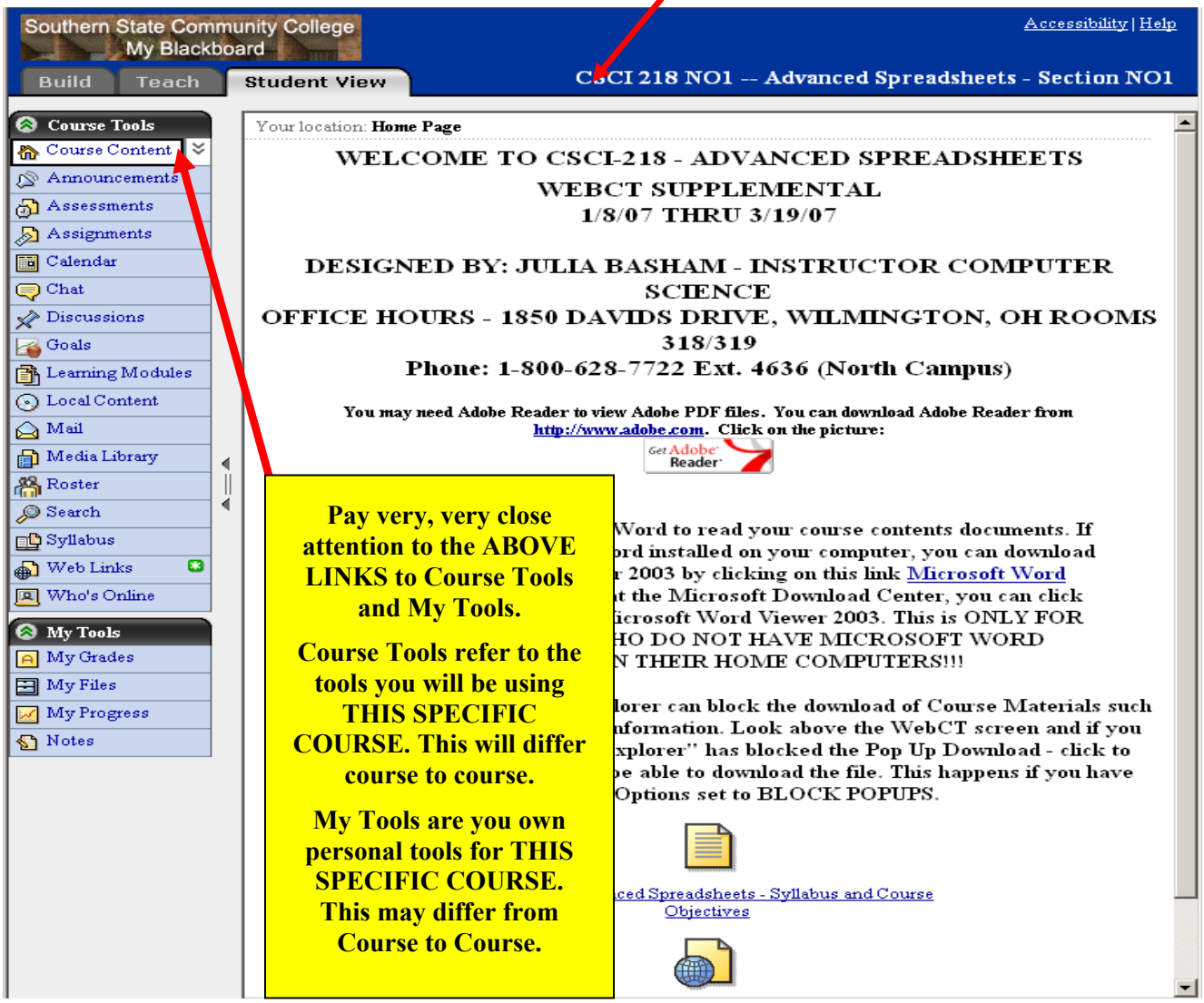
To the left of the Home Page you will find the Course Tools and My Tools. Get very familiar with your Course Tools and My Tools. Again, each class may have different Course Tools and different My Tools. Get familiar with the Course Tools and My Tools for each of your online courses.

The following information will guide you through how to use each of these tools. You can minimize these tools by using the arrows to the right of the actual words. . When minimized the words then become pictures or icons.

LOOK AROUND YOUR BLACKBOARD ONLINE COURSE!!! For many this is like opening the door and entering the campus building for the first time. You did not know your way around – you had to look and explore. You will look and explore your online classroom. You have to find your way around and you can do that by exploring and looking at the tools your course has available for you. Look at the different settings for different tools. Experiment and try different settings so you can learn how they work and what works best for you!! Don't be afraid to look and don't be afraid to ask!! You would not walk into a regular classroom with a blindfold and your mouth taped shut. Don't walk into an online class with a blindfold or your mouth taped shut either!! ☺

TAKE THE TIME TO LOOK AROUND YOUR COURSE!!!

THIS IS AN EXAMPLE OF THE HOME PAGE OF AN ONLINE COURSE. The heading you see is the course name and number.

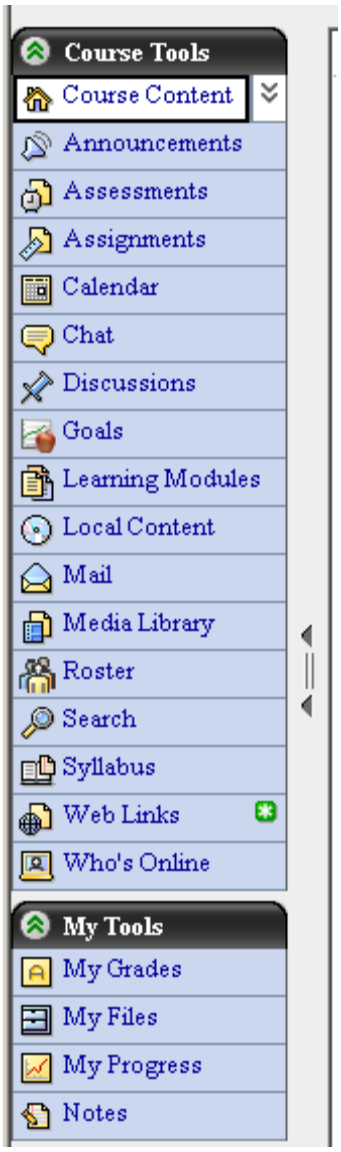


Pay very, very close attention to the ABOVE LINKS to Course Tools and My Tools.

Course Tools refer to the tools you will be using THIS SPECIFIC COURSE. This will differ course to course.

My Tools are you own personal tools for THIS SPECIFIC COURSE. This may differ from Course to Course.

Read your Home Page Carefully!!! This is your first guide to your online course!!! Print any necessary information or documents as required by your teacher.



Let's discuss each tool. Keep in mind when you see a green square with a star like you see below to the right of the word Web Links – that is an indication that new content or information has been added. You should **ALWAYS CHECK NEW INFORMATION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE**. It can be new Mail, new Discussions, new Announcements, etc. It will always clue you in on what is new since the last time you logged into your course. **THIS IS VERY, VERY IMPORTANT**!!! We communicate with you in written form of mail, discussions, announcements, etc. If you are not reading this information you will not be as informed as you need to be to succeed.

Here is a sample of how each tool might be used in your course.

COURSE TOOLS

1. **Course Content:** This is your Course Home Page. If you need to get back to your Home Page you can always click Course Content.

2. **Assessments:** Tool used for taking tests, quizzes, self tests and surveys designed by your instructor.

3. **Assignments:** Tool used for you to submit your assignments. Many teachers will ask you to **"UPLOAD"** your document or assignment using this Tool. Click on the Assignment Link and you will see the specifics and instructions for that assignment. If you are asked to upload your assignment it will require that you use the Add Attachments Add Attachments Button. You can then click on the My Computer and My Documents to locate the files you have saved on your storage devices (hard drive, USB Drive, etc.) Many teachers have cut-off dates on your Assignments. It is very important your complete your assignment by the cut-off date. In some cases missing a cut-off date will result in a zero for that assignment or reduced points for that assignment. If you miss a cut-off date, Mail your teacher as soon as possible for advice. Teachers may also use this tool to ask you to resubmit an Assignment with suggestions for improvement.

4. **Calendar:** Tool used by your teacher to provide you with important dates and deadlines. You can create your own event and the radio button should indicate "Personal" so that only you can see the event you posted. You can Add Entry, Create Printable View and set your own Calendar Settings. You can also view the Calendar by Month, Week or Day.

5. **Chat:** You can chat in real time with other students and/or instructor using this tool. Using this tool will check and let you know who is online and available to chat. Your teacher may use the Whiteboard to send you files or information while you are in Chat. You can also Chat with other students who may be in the Chat room as well.

6. **Discussions:** Post and respond to messages and important topics in your class. Read and follow the instructions you are given by your instructor for correct use of the discussion tool. Many courses grade students based on their discussion activity and may have dates associated with those discussions. Pay attention to the cut-off dates because you may not be able to actively participate in the discussion **if you miss the cut-off date**. Discussions can be very, very informative tools for communication and learning!!! Many teachers ask you to **POST AN INTRODUCTION** using the Discussion tool – please do so as soon as possible when you log into your course.
7. **Goals:** Teachers may use this tool to establish goals they want you to achieve in this course.
8. **Learning Modules:** Teachers may design their courses using Learning Modules for specific information in a given module or concept of learning or to designate work by weekly timeframes.
9. **Local Content:** Teachers may allow you to readily access large files from a portable media such as a CD-ROM.
10. **Mail**: Post and respond to email messages you receive. This is again a **very, very important** communication tool. Learn how to use it for your course. Most teachers will only communicate through your course Mail. This is the mail they mean. They are not talking about your SSCC email or your Yahoo Email or your Hotmail Email. – they are talking about your course mail. Some teachers may require you to **UPLOAD** your lessons or work using the Mail Tool. To send a mail message, click on the Browse for Recipients

button. This brings up a list of everyone in your class. Click on the box to the right of the name under the To column. Click the Save box at the bottom of the screen. Complete the Subject and Message of your Mail message. If you need to Add Attachments, follow the same steps as noted in Step #3 above by following the Add Attachments steps.
11. **Media Library**: Teachers may use this tool for presentation files (lectures), music files, photos, illustrations, video, etc. This will be an area for you to view various types of multimedia files.
12. **Roster**: Teachers may use this tool to allow you to see the other students registered for this course.
13. **Search**: Teachers may use this tool so you can search for content in this course. You can use this like a search engine for this course.
14. **Syllabus**: Teachers may use this tool as your link to your Syllabus and Objectives. Some teachers may show your **Syllabus and Objectives on your Home Page**. Your course Syllabus should provide you with course objectives, policies and requirements for your course. **ALWAYS PRINT OUT YOUR SYLLABUS FOR REFERENCE THROUGHOUT YOUR COURSE!**!!
15. **Web Links:** Teachers may use this tool to direct you to Internet resources for research and information to supplement your course textbook and course provided information.
16. **Who's Online:** Teachers may use this tool for Virtual Office Hours so you can talk with them while you are online and in your course. You can show your status as Visible/Available or Visible/Unavailable. Click the Update button after you change your status. You can click on the box to the left of the name to put a checkmark in the box of the person you want to chat with online. Click the Send Chat Invitation

to chat with that person and you will have to wait for their response.

MY TOOLS

These are **Your Tools** for the course.

1. **My Grades:** Teachers will use this tool to communicate your grades on Assessments, Discussions, Assignments, etc. This is your personal grade book for your activity in this class. Email your teacher if you have any questions on Your Grades.
2. **My Files:** Teachers may use this tool to allow you to store you own personal files in the course instead of on your own computer. This way you could access your files even if you were not at your computer.
3. **My Progress:** Teachers may use this tool to allow you to see your own personal activity in the course. This is a tracking of your involvement in your online course and will reflect how often you logged into the course, the tools you used in the course and your time spent in the course. Teachers will use activity levels to determine student involvement and participation such as how often a student logs into their course, the files they read in the course, the tools they used in the course, how active you have been in reading your course documents, course email and staying active and reading the course discussion postings.
4. **Notes:** Teachers may use this tool to allow you to keep general notes for yourself and your course.

Keep in mind, there is also online help available in your course. In the upper right hand corner of the screen is your online course is the word "Help". Click on that link for references to many of the tools and how to use the tools in your course.

TIPS FOR ONLINE SUCCESS

1. **Manage your time wisely.** Many online courses require 12 to 16 hours per week. Do not wait until the last minute to complete your assignments. Your computer or the Internet may not cooperate and you will create stress for yourself by not planning ahead. Set up a certain time schedule to work on your online classes and stick to that schedule for success just like you would with face-to-face classes.
2. **Student accountability:** You are responsible for taking a great deal of the responsibility in online learning by getting your textbook before class starts, reading the material available to you, following instructions and guidelines and communicating. Not having Internet access or a broken computer are not viable excuses for missing assignments or not getting your tests/assignments completed. It is no different than having car problems when attending face-to-face classes. Most online classes do require textbooks – you should have your textbook the day classes start!
3. **Course expectations:** Each online course will have specific course expectations. Contact your teacher if you are unclear about any of your course instructions or if you need clarification on any instruction in your course you do not understand. Your teachers are there to help you

succeed. Keep in mind we cannot see you shaking your head or not understanding – you have to help us help you.

4. **Having a dedicated computer:** Keep in mind that you are not required to have a dedicated home computer and can use the LRC campus computers for online classes. It is strongly recommended that you have a home computer, but it is not required. Students who are most successful in online courses are logging in and actively engaged a minimum of three times per week in their online course. If you are planning on completing your online course in the LRC between classes, you may have a very difficult time participating and being successful. Some classes require specialized software installation and it will be a much easier process if you have a dedicated computer. Assignments may be due on the weekend and the LRC will not be open during the weekend or on holidays. Using the LRC computers and trying to use the excuse that your assignments were late because the LRC was not open will not be considered a viable excuse. Here is a link to the LRC hours of operation: http://www.sscc.edu/Home/LRC_staff/Additional%20Information/Hours_of_operation.htm

5. **Software Installation:** For classes that require you to install specialized software **(OFIT-106, OFIT-107, OFIT-261 and CSCI-101)** DO NOT INSTALL THE SOFTWARE UNTIL YOU LOG INTO YOUR CLASS AND GET THE SPECIFIC SOFTWARE SETUP INSTRUCTIONS for your course. This can be the difference between success and failure in your online course. For students taking any of these courses **(OFIT-106, OFIT-107, OFIT-261 or CSCI-101)** contact your instructor **AS SOON AS POSSIBLE** for specific instructions for completing your lessons on a **NONDEDICATED COMPUTER – SUCH AS A CAMPUS COMPUTER**. The software setup instructions are only valid if you are setting the software up on a dedicated computer. If you plan on doing the work for these classes in the LRC OR ON CAMPUS you will require SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS FROM YOUR INSTRUCTOR. Email your instructor immediately if you are not using a dedicated computer for these classes.

6. **Read, "listen", participate**: Follow these words and you will be a success in online classes.

7. **Communicate:** You need to communicate in written form clearly and as concisely as possible. Don't think we can read your mind when you need help or assistance. Give us as much information as we need to help you resolve any problem or question you might have in your course. Fill in the SUBJECT AND MESSAGE as relevantly as possible.

8. **Understand class environment:** You may be in your home working on your coursework, but you are still very much a part of a class and you are not learning alone. Use the communication tools you have available in your course to communicate with your teacher and other students.

9. **Is online learning the best way for you to learn:** This is a tool you can use to access your skills for succeeding in online courses – click on this link Virtual Learning Collaborative Check your personal readiness for learning online. You can also check your Technological Skill Readiness — click on this link Technology Skills. The technology skill assessment is provided by Ivy Tech State College. (**See References links noted on Page 10**)

10. **Learning Resource Center (LRC):** You have a very valuable tool for research and help and assistance. The website address is: http://lrc.sscc.edu/ Use the Information Literacy Link to help you learn more about the resources you have available to you at a touch of your fingertips.

WHAT ARE THE 10 MYTHS ABOUT ONLINE EDUCATION?

PROVIDED BY THE MICHIGAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE ASSOCIATION VIRUAL LEARNING COLLARBORATIVE

Myth #1 – I can do assignments anytime.

Myth #2 – Online courses do not follow the regular quarter schedule.

Myth #3 – I can "hide" and remain anonymous in an online class.

Myth #4 – Personal attention doesn't exist in an online class.

Myth #5 – ONLINE CLASSES ARE EASIER…..BIG, BIG MYTH!!

Myth #6 – Broken computers, Internet connectivity issues, LRC or campus location was closed or not having your textbook are acceptable excuses for not completing assignments.

Myth #7 –The College will provide me with a computer for this class.

Myth #8 – I will be taught how to use a computer as part of my online class.

Myth #9 – Procrastination is OK in online classes.

Myth #10 – I can cram all my work into one login session.

Keep in mind these are all MYTHS for a reason
THEY ARE JUST NOT TRUE!!!!

References

(2005). Is online learning right for me?. Retrieved February 9, 2007, from Michigan Community College Association Virtual Learning Collaborative Web site: http://vcampus.mccvlc.org/index.asp?dir=%27welcome%27&left=%27leftYouReady.htm%27&content=%27YouReady.asp%27

Is Online Learning Right for Me?. Retrieved February 9, 2007, from Ivy Tech Web site: http://www.ivytech.edu/distanceed/orientation/orientation_skills/tech/