

Is Distance Learning Right for You?

Taken from: How to be a Successful Online Student, by Sara Dulaney Gilvert

1. Which statement best describes you?
 - a. I am a self-starter with solid personal motivation.
 - b. I need occasional prodding to accomplish goals.
 - c. I don't work independently and require constant prodding or reminder.

2. I learn best:
 - a. When I hear material (auditory).
 - b. When I see it (visual).
 - c. When I can both hear and see the material.

3. As a worker:
 - a. I usually meet or beat deadlines.
 - b. I have a hard time getting focused by myself.
 - c. I procrastinate to the last minute and beyond.

4. On tests and other school assignments:
 - a. I figure out instructions on my own.
 - b. I can usually follow the directions, but I like them to be available.
 - c. I have difficulty figuring out instructions on my own and need to hear them read to me.

5. When I turn in an assignment, I like feedback from the teacher:
 - a. Within a reasonable amount of time.
 - b. Within a day or two, or I become distracted.
 - c. Immediately.

6. When it comes to the organization or the class material:
 - a. I can learn even if the class is not highly structured.
 - b. I like some structure in the class.
 - c. I feel very uncomfortable without structure.

7. Dealing with technology:
 - a. I have excellent computer skills.
 - b. I have some computer and Internet facility.
 - c. I am not very familiar with a computer and do not feel comfortable surfing the Net.

8. When I am asked to use VCR's, TV's, computers, e-mail, or other technologies:
 - a. I have little or no difficulty learning new skills.
 - b. I am glad to try and ask for help if necessary.
 - c. I frequently get frustrated and may prefer to avoid computer work

YES	NO	
___	___	1. I have access to a computer and /or the multimedia equipment required for a distance learning program.
___	___	2. I am not intimidated by using technology applications for learning
___	___	3. I feel comfortable using a computer for basic word processing, using the Internet, and sending/receiving e-mail.
___	___	4. I have strong time management skills and am able to meet deadlines and keep track of assignments, and I enjoy and am successful at independent learning.
___	___	5. I am able to learn successfully without face-to-face interactions with others.
___	___	6. I can easily express my ideas, comments, and questions verbally and in writing.
___	___	7. I am generally flexible and can easily adjust to changing schedules.
___	___	8. I do have some time to go to campus for tests and meetings.
___	___	9. I am a self-starter.
___	___	10. I am a good time manager.
___	___	11. I am capable of self-discipline.
___	___	12. I am good at comprehending what I read.
___	___	13. I am goal directed if I set my sights on a result, I usually achieve it.
___	___	14. I feel confident about my academic skills.
___	___	15. I am persistent and don't give up easily in the face of obstacles.
___	___	16. I believe in taking responsibility for myself and my education.
___	___	17. I am willing to try something new.
___	___	18. I am willing to work in a non-structured setting.
___	___	19. I enjoy actively participating in my learning process by working on projects, etc.
___	___	20. I have access to a computer with an Internet connection.

If you answered yes to at least 15 of these statements, online courses may be right for you! But, if you answered yes to fewer than 15, you might want to rethink your interest in an online program.

Keep in mind that:

- Distance and distributed learning situations, especially in an asynchronous environment, require the learner to be disciplined and motivated, to stay on task, and to complete assignments with minimal structure.
- While many distance and distributed learning environments may not include any face-to-face interactions between the learner and the instructor, you will find a need to interact with fellow students via e-mail and through audio and video conferencing- and a significant component of many courses is a team project or two.
- Despite the high-tech nature of distance education programs, writing skills are important, because all distance learning environments have written components. Verbal communication ability is also important when communicating via the audio components. It is also important to read competently, as all instructions, whether in print or on-screen, are written.
- Flexibility and adaptability are also important, as technology may require unplanned changes and reorganization may be needed fairly often.
- Technical skill are probably last on the list: while you'll be more comfortable accessing you course, classmates, and instructor through a variety of media, this is the aspect of distance learning that most students pick up most quickly.