



Learner Self Assessment for Participating in Online Language Learning

One of your responsibilities as an online facilitator is to help your learners develop their own sense of responsibility for their learning. Once learners embrace having more control over their own learning, they can then start to guide their actions more directly in association with their own unique reasons for studying. Each learner has their own professional, academic, and community-based reasons for wanting to develop their language skills, and as much as a facilitator can help learners connect course objectives to individualized needs, no one will be able to connect and guide learners' own efforts as effectively as themselves.

As learners become more responsible for their learning, they become more invested in their learning, and they become more engaged in the course or activity. Increased engagement for one learner is infectious and can help others in the course or activity do the same, building on more frequent purposeful interaction to help foster community in the online space.

There is no one strategy to achieve a high level of responsibility in your learners – it is an overarching goal of a course, program, or even of the academic career of a life-long learner.

You can help to promote learner responsibility by challenging learners to think about their own language development and by making explicit the decisions and responsibilities they face.

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Informing learners about the unique features of the online space is an effective way to get learners to think about their own presence. Challenging them with strategies is also a good way to make their actions and decision points in online language learning more explicit. On the next page is a checklist of learner strategies that can help learners consider the online space and pursuit of learning more explicitly.

Distribute the checklist early on in a course to your own learners, or adapt it to suit your own content. This information is also presented in video.



Self Assessment for Participating in Online Language Learning

The online space can be an excellent place to improve your language skills. Whether you are new or experienced at online language learning, you need to consider the online space before and during your course or activity. You should know and understand the benefits of online learning, the challenges to online learning, and some of the strategies that can help you learn language effectively online.

Your facilitator will continue to support and guide you through the course or activity; however, you must develop your own sense of responsibility and ownership over your own learning. Below is some information on the benefits and the challenges of online learning. Following that is a checklist of strategies that you can use to self-assess your own participation in an online language learning environment. Finally, at the end, you will have a chance to set some of your own learning goals.

BENEFITS OF LEARNING ONLINE:

Convenience

The online classroom is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Flexibility

You can engage in the learning activities when it fits your schedule, as long as the work is completed within the time requirements.

Accessibility

It is possible to attend classes that are not available close to your home.

Connection to the global village

Learners from various locations can attend the same class and share different perspectives and ideas.

More individual attention

You can connect with instructors/facilitators through email and get questions answered directly.

Consider how these benefits may affect you.



UNIQUE CHALLENGES OF LEARNING ONLINE

Time

Learning online requires more time than face-to-face learning. The online environment is text-based. To communicate, you must type messages and post responses. Typing is slower than speaking, and you must wait for others to respond.

Motivation

In an online environment, you do not need to arrive to class on time, and it is too easy to delay or avoid doing your reading and assignments. Unless you are careful, you can become demotivated.

Interaction

You may feel isolated in the online environment. Interaction may sometimes be too little or too much for your liking.

Consider how these challenges may affect you.

STRATEGIES FOR PARTICIPATING

Compared to face-to-face learning, being an online learner requires different strategies for maximizing learning and being successful. Use the following checklist of strategies to become mindful of your own participation during an online course or activity. As you read through the list, check each strategy that you feel you have completed. For strategies that you have not checked, think about what you can do to implement them.

Familiarize yourself with the online learning space.

The online space may have unique navigation and features. Becoming familiar with the space at the start of a course or activity will save you time later and ease interactions within the course.

Have a time-management plan.

Learning online requires good time management skills. Create a work schedule to set aside time to complete your work. Manage your time properly so you stay well ahead of your assignments and readings.

Have a place to study.

Create a quiet working area free from distractions to study. Setting aside a quiet space is essential for concentrating on language learning, especially if you have a busy lifestyle.

Clearly understand the technical requirements.

Review and understand any technology used in the course. Ask questions directly to your facilitator, if needed. Also, test your technology before an activity starts.



- Have a back-up plan for accessing the course.**
Consider what you will do if your computer breaks down or if the internet service is interrupted. You will be less stressed if you have already thought about what you will do if this happens.
- Get to know other learners.**
Respond to other learners' posts and ask questions. Building social relationships will enhance your learning, and it is good communication and networking practice.
- Stay active in the course.**
Keep up to date with the course and materials – try to log in daily, even if just for a few minutes to check on any new material or posts. Ask questions and do not hesitate to ask for clarification from your facilitator.
- Participate in the discussion forum.**
Post the required messages to the discussion forum and post early on in the activity. If you are silent or late to post, the facilitator may think you are not doing the work.
- Try new and unfamiliar language.**
Be open to the challenge of trying new and unfamiliar language in the online space. An online learning space is often a controlled, closed space where it is safe to experiment with language. Use the space to practice language and ask for feedback from classmates or from your facilitator.
- Meet the course requirements.**
Familiarize yourself with all of the course or activity requirements. It is your responsibility to know them.
- Communicate with your online facilitator.**
Develop a relationship with your facilitator. You do not need to become great friends, but check in with him/her from time to time. Ask questions about your work to confirm your understanding and ask for opportunities and advice about developing your language skills.

SET GOALS

Finally, take a moment at the start of the course to set your own personal learning goals. Think about what you want to accomplish, and think about what you want to try. Challenge yourself and write your goals down in the space below. Throughout the course, reread and revise your goals as needed.

