



Student Success Handbook  
for  
Online Learners

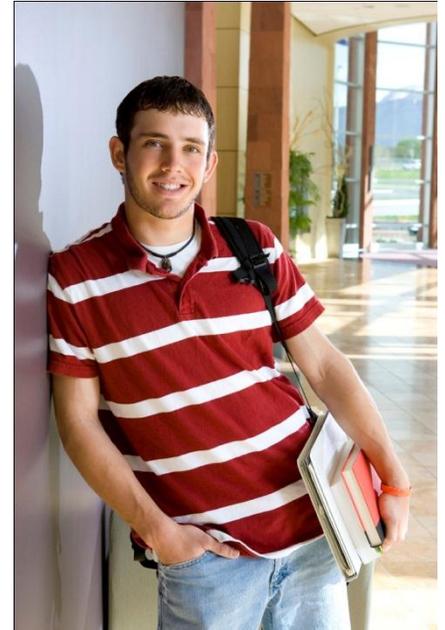
## Is Online Learning Right for Me?



You may be interested in taking an online class but aren't sure if the format would work for your learning needs and expectations. There are many things to consider when deciding to take any course, and there are special considerations when deciding to take your education to "the cloud."

### **Some Questions to Ask Yourself Before Enrolling in an Online Course**

- Do I have constant access to a computer and the internet?
- Am I self-disciplined?
- Determine your learning style. This information can help you choose an appropriate course subject to take online based on your learning style.
- Do I have at the very least moderate experience using the internet and various software applications (word processor, email, Java, browsers, etc.)?
- Do I have between 8-10 hours a week to reserve for an online course?
- Would I feel comfortable participating in the online environment, which almost always require written communications to share with the entire class?
- Do I feel comfortable using Blackboard, the Learning Management System used at NCC to participate in an online course?
- Am I an independent learner?
- Am I resourceful and a problem-solver?
- How are my time management and organization skills?
- Am I a self-starter and motivated?



Once you have decided to take an online course, there are a few things to consider while picking which course(s) you will register for. Find out about the course prerequisites, expectations, objectives, etc. While reading a course description, be honest with yourself about how much time you are willing to dedicate to the course. Online courses require exceptional organization and time management skills, as well as the ability to self-motivate and seek assistance as soon as a problem or issue arises.

### **Tips for Taking an Online Course**

You're enrolled in an online course! Great! Below are some proven characteristics and habits of successful online students.

- Make sure your computer meets minimum hardware and software requirements.
- Become a master of the course subject matter; explore all available and provided resources.
- Choose to take online course that are part of your major and/or personally interesting to you so that you will want to stay engaged and dedicated to the course.
- Read and re-read the syllabus often and check the Announcements on Blackboard.
- Make efforts to internalize course expectations, procedures, and material.
- Create a personalized schedule that you will follow throughout the semester, specifically reserving time for the course and stay determined to stick to this schedule.
- Know that last minute work will not cut it in an online class!
- Ask for help as soon as you realize you need it, online instructors expect students to seek them out for assistance.
- Realize that an online course often requires more patience than a face to face course as you navigate through materials and expectation and possibly encounter technical difficulties.
- Stay Organized:
  - ✓ Most instructors will open a course and post required texts/materials and software prior to the first day of class. Take advantage of this opportunity to prepare and get a head start.
  - ✓ Record due dates of assignments in a calendar
  - ✓ Create dates and record in calendar to work on assignments, breaking down the various tasks and setting goals.
  - ✓ Create a realistic and unalterable schedule. Include school, work, family and other obligations.
  - ✓ Make your family/roommates aware of your schedule and ask them to respect it.
  - ✓ Find a constant study space that is stocked with all the essentials needed to complete course work.
  - ✓ Set a timer when you sit down to do your work, and don't stop until the timer goes off.

## Online Course vs. Face-2-Face Course Comparison Chart

	Online Course	Face-2-Face Course
Format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Both synchronous and asynchronous</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mostly synchronous</li> </ul>
Presentation of Material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the form of: videos, virtual lectures, podcasts, readings, web pages, etc.</li> <li>Lectures are often recorded and archived, easily accessible to students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Similar formats to the online course with the addition of in-class lectures and discussions.</li> <li>Students typically only hear a lecture once and mostly rely on memory recall and notes</li> </ul>
Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More solitary, self-directed.</li> <li>Students mostly control the pace of their learning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sometimes self-directed.</li> <li>Instructors mostly control the pace of learning.</li> </ul>
Communication with Instructor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Email, phone, virtual chat, Discussion Board postings, Skype.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Email, phone, office hours, before/during/after class, Discussion Board</li> </ul>
Communication with Peers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Email, phone, virtual chat, Discussion Board, Skype.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Email, phone, Discussion Board, before/during/after class.</li> </ul>
Submitting Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Through Blackboard tools like SafeAssign, Assignments and/or other digital methods, for example, email.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In-class, Blackboard tools like SafeAssign, Assignments, and/or other digital methods, for example, email.</li> </ul>

Although there are differences between an online course and one that meets face-to-face, overall many of the same tools, techniques, and opportunities exist in both formats. The student experience in either format relies heavily on the individual student and their time management and organization skills, and their level of dedication and motivation.



## **Taking a 100% Online or Hybrid Course at Nashua Community College? Links You'll Need!**

Below you will find resources available at Nashua Community College for online and hybrid learners.

- Academic Support Center  
<http://www.nashuacc.edu/academics/academic-resource-center>
- Blackboard Tutorials  
<http://ondemand.blackboard.com/students.htm>
- Bookstore Website  
<http://bit.ly/n2ctB2>
- CCSNH Policies and Services (for Online Learning)  
<http://www.ccsnh.edu/distancelearning/policies.html>
- Distance Learning Support Center  
<https://supportcenteronline.com/ics/support/default.asp?deptID=4208>
- Netiquette  
[http://www.ccsnh.edu/distancelearning/documents/april08\\_Netiquette.html](http://www.ccsnh.edu/distancelearning/documents/april08_Netiquette.html)
- Wimba Technical Support  
<http://support.blackboardcollaborate.com/ics/support/default.asp?deptID=8336>

# Hardware and Software Requirements to Run Blackboard 9.1



## Blackboard

### Hardware Requirements

- ✓ 128 MB of RAM (512MB or higher is highly recommended)
- ✓ 2 GB of free disk space
- ✓ Sound card with speakers (for courses with multimedia)
- ✓ Ethernet or Wireless network card (for high-speed Internet connection) or 56K modem (for dial-up Internet connection)
- ✓ T1, DSL, Cable, or Satellite high-speed connection (56K dial-up will work, but the online course system will run slowly).

### Software Requirements

- ✓ JAVA! <http://java.com/en/>
- ✓ **\*\*Java JRE plugin** (very important so that everything in the system works properly!)
- ✓ [Microsoft Office Viewers](#) (for viewing and printing Word, PowerPoint, Excel, and Visio files)
- ✓ [Adobe Acrobat Reader](#) (for viewing and printing PDF files)
- ✓ [Real Player](#) (for viewing streaming video or listening to streaming audio clips)
- ✓ [QuickTime](#) (for viewing QuickTime video)
- ✓ [Flash Player](#) (for viewing animations or using interactive content)
- ✓ [Shockwave Player](#) (for viewing animations or using interactive content)
- ✓ [Windows Media Player](#) (for viewing streaming video or listening to streaming audio clips)

### Platform

- ✓ PC (Windows 2000, XP, Vista)
- ✓ Mac (10.2, 10.3, 10.4)

### Other Helpful Hints

- ✓ Disable Pop-Up Blocker
- ✓ Delete browsing history
- ✓ Accept Security Certificates when asked



## Blackboard

Please see the compatibility matrix below to determine whether or not your operating system and browser support Blackboard 9.1

### Microsoft® Windows® Operating System

	Internet Explorer® 9	Internet Explorer 8	Firefox (Final Release Channel)	Firefox 3.6	Chrome (Stable Channel)
<b>Windows® XP (32-bit)</b>	Unsupported	Compatible	Compatible	Compatible	Compatible
<b>Windows Vista® (32-bit)</b>	<b>Certified</b>	Compatible	<b>Certified</b>	Compatible	Compatible
<b>Windows Vista (64-bit)</b>	Compatible	Compatible	Compatible	Compatible	Compatible
<b>Windows 7 (32-bit)</b>	<b>Certified</b>	Compatible	<b>Certified</b>	Compatible	<b>Certified</b>
<b>Windows 7 (64-bit)</b>	Compatible	Compatible	Compatible	Compatible	Compatible

### Apple® Mac OS® Operating System

	Safari® 5.0	Safari 4.0	Firefox (Final Release Channel)	Firefox 3.6	Chrome (Stable Channel)
<b>Mac OSX 10.5 "Leopard®"</b>	Compatible	Compatible	Compatible	Compatible	Compatible
<b>Mac OSX 10.6 "Snow Leopard®"</b>	<b>Certified</b>	Compatible	<b>Certified</b>	Compatible	<b>Certified</b>

Certified: fully tested and supported.

Compatible: partially tested but should function properly.

Provisional: future technologies considered supported by Blackboard Support.

Unsupported: either impossible or not tested.

The above matrix was obtained from <http://kb.blackboard.com/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=72810639>

## Test taking in the online environment

There are a few things to keep in mind prior to taking an assessment in Blackboard 9.1. Please review the tips below:

### Prior to Taking the Test:

- ✓ Use a supported browser, like Firefox or Internet Explorer
- ✓ Make sure your pop-up blocker is turned off to allow pop-ups
- ✓ Make sure cookies are enabled
- ✓ Make sure security settings on your browser are low
- ✓ Know the test taking policies and how to contact your instructor should you encounter technical difficulties. Ask for clarification regarding the instructor's test taking policy prior to entering the test.
- ✓ Do not take the test where there may be heavy firewalls. For example, at work or in a public library.

### While Taking the Test

- ✓ If a Java or certificate popup appears for permission, always grant permission
- ✓ Avoid using the refresh button the browser window
- ✓ Do not use the back or forward buttons
- ✓ Do not resize your browser window. This may cause your browser to refresh and attempt to reload the page, which could prohibit you from proceeding with the test.
- ✓ Only have Blackboard and the browser it is being used by open and no other browser or website open
- ✓ Do not have any other applications running while taking the test, close down all other programs
- ✓ Do not click outside of the test
- ✓ Do not double click on any buttons
- ✓ Use caution with a scrolling mouse. You may accidentally change your answers.
- ✓ Do not hit "Submit" until you have answered the question completely and to the best of your knowledge
- ✓ If a test is being timed, Blackboard will not kick you out when you have met the time limit. Instead your test will need to be manually graded by your instructor who will also be able to see how long it took you to take the test. The time begins the very first time you enter a test, so even if you log out of Blackboard note that the timer will continue running until you have submitted your test for grades.
- ✓ Do not double click the Save button.
- ✓ Click the Submit button once. Wait several minutes for the test to be received by Blackboard.
- ✓ In the event you receive an error message, write it down word-for-word. Also record the time and date you encountered the problem and exactly what you were doing when the problem occurred.
- ✓ After you have completed the test you will be able to check to make sure your score was recorded from My Grades.



Blackboard

## Distance Learning Support Center website:

<https://supportcenteronline.com/ics/support/default.asp?deptID=4208>

## Student FAQs:

### How do I get to Blackboard?

<https://ccsnh.blackboard.com/>

### What is my Bb username and password?

Your EasyLogin username and password, which can be found via SIS. (First initial, last name, 3 random numbers)

### Why is a course I am taking not listed on Bb?

When you register for a course it may take 48 hours before you see the course listed in Bb because Student Information Systems has to relay the registration information to Bb.

The instructor may not have made the course available. If you have been told to access your course on Bb and do not see it in your course listings, contact the instructor and let them know.

### I need support using Wimba Classroom.

Wimba Technical Support Phone: 1-866-350-4978 (24 hours)

Email: [technicalsupport@wimba.com](mailto:technicalsupport@wimba.com)

Website: <http://support.blackboardcollaborate.com/ics/support/default.asp?deptID=8336>

### How do I use the Discussion Board?

Forum: Topic/Discussion Board “room”

Thread: Represent different conversations within a forum.

Creating a post/reply to a post:

[http://ondemand.blackboard.com/r91/movies/bb91\\_student\\_creating\\_discussion\\_board\\_post.htm](http://ondemand.blackboard.com/r91/movies/bb91_student_creating_discussion_board_post.htm)

Creating a thread:

[http://ondemand.blackboard.com/r91/movies/bb91\\_student\\_creating\\_new\\_thread.htm](http://ondemand.blackboard.com/r91/movies/bb91_student_creating_new_thread.htm)

### How do I view grades?

Select the Grades tool and view. If this tool is not showing, contact your instructor who can make it available.

[http://ondemand.blackboard.com/r91/movies/bb91\\_student\\_checking\\_grades.htm](http://ondemand.blackboard.com/r91/movies/bb91_student_checking_grades.htm)

### What do the icons in the Grade Center mean?

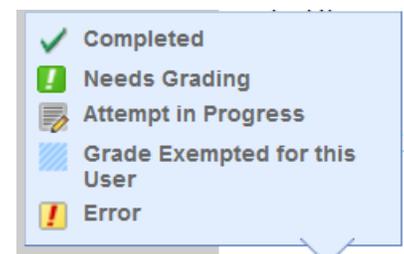
**Dash:** There is no information for the graded item. You have not submitted work to be graded or your submission was not complete.

**Green Checkmark:** Item has been completed and needs grading.

**Green Exclamation point:** Work that is waiting for a grade

**Pen and Paper:** Work in progress, for example if you are taking a test or have a saved draft for an assignment that you have not submitted yet

**Red Exclamation Mark:** There has been a system error. Contact your instructor.



**What hardware and software do I need to use Bb 9.1?**

<https://supportcenteronline.com/ics/support/default.asp?deptID=4208>

Java is essential and always accept updates from them! <http://www.java.com/en/>

**What browser(s) should I use?**

Internet Explorer or Firefox.

**What about pop-up blockers?**

You must disable them.

**What are the compatible file extensions I should use when submitting work through Bb?**

Firstly, do not submit files with the following characters in the filename: #, &, spaces, commas, question marks, equal signs, parentheses, and other special characters. Also, avoid using periods in their filenames except before the extension. The only characters that Blackboard will always recognize correctly include alphanumeric (A-Z, a-z, 0-9), hyphen (-) and underscore (\_)

Link to recognizable extensions:

[http://library.blackboard.com/docs/r6/6\\_1/instructor/bbbs\\_r6\\_1\\_instructor/file\\_attachments.htm](http://library.blackboard.com/docs/r6/6_1/instructor/bbbs_r6_1_instructor/file_attachments.htm)

**How do I submit an assignment?**

Assignment feature:

[http://ondemand.blackboard.com/r91/movies/bb91\\_student\\_submit\\_assignment.htm](http://ondemand.blackboard.com/r91/movies/bb91_student_submit_assignment.htm)

## **Things to Know PRIOR to Taking a Test in Blackboard**

### **Prior to Taking the Test:**

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- Make sure cookies are enabled
- Make sure security settings on your browser are low
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- Use caution with a scrolling mouse. You may accidentally change your answers.
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- In the event you receive an error message, write it down word-for-word. Also record the time and date you encountered the problem and exactly what you were doing when the problem occurred.
- After you have completed the test you will be able to check to make sure your score was recorded from My Grades.

## Things to Know Prior to Joining a Virtual Classroom Session

- Make sure your browser is up to date (Use Firefox or Internet Explorer)
- Popup blocker is turned off
- You have the latest version of Java plugin <http://java.sun.com/products/plugin/>
- You allow the program to “Run” if asked
- You “Allow” the application to use a program on your computer if asked
- You always allow the non-secure items to be displayed if asked
- If you are asked to accept a security certificate, you must select “Yes”/”Accept”
- Make sure you have enough memory on the computer that you are using
- If you are using Internet Explorer, make sure Active X is running. You do this by clicking the bar which may appear at the top of the screen indicating IE wants to run Active X.
- Check the settings on the Java Plug-in to disable caching. Windows users should go to the Start Menu, select Control Panel, and open the Java Plug-in. From the Java Plug-in window, click the Cache tab. Click the Clear button and then clear the checkbox for Enable Caching. Then click Apply. (from <http://help.unc.edu/5474> )
- You may need to clear your cache and cookies. If you are running IE as your browser, select “Safety” from the top menu and then “Delete History.” Make sure that the first box which says “Preserve Favorites Website Data” is unchecked and the cookies box is checked off.