



Learning online

When preparing to learn the first thing you need to do is to think about your environment. You need to be comfortable, not too hot or too cold; you need to be relaxed and ready to concentrate. You may find that you can quite happily concentrate on a busy train, or with children running around but equally you might need peace and quiet.

When viewing video materials you need to be comfortably seated where you can view the screen without issues of reflection. You also need to be able to listen with sufficient volume without worry about disturbing others. Consider your environment and decide what works best for you.

Once in your chosen environment the next step is to eliminate distractions. When studying part-time you are likely to have many other demands on your time and your thoughts. In order to learn effectively you need to block out other thoughts and fully concentrate on the learning activity. This is sometimes difficult to do but it is an important skill to master. Taking time to relax and focus before you start an activity will help – there will be certain times during your day where this is possible, choose these times to study.

Listening and reflecting:

Listening is not the same as hearing; you might hear what someone says but not register the meaning or process the information. If you listen effectively you reflect on what you have heard and put it into context; you build on your knowledge and question concepts that you don't fully understand.

The course materials are provided in a number of formats to suit varying learning preferences. If you choose to learn through video you need to ensure that the visual images do not distract you from what you are listening to. Well-designed video will help you focus by displaying key words or images that represent the points being made. Some learners find this enhances the learning process whereas others find it difficult to listen effectively and watch video.

If there are occasions when you find it difficult to concentrate when listening refer to the text version of the activity. If you read about the topic and then listen to the audio (or watch the video), you are more likely to be able to focus.

If on some occasions you find that your mind is wandering regardless of the media then take a break and come back to the activity when you feel fresher. The great thing about online learning is you can revisit the activities as many times as you like – it's often helpful to first listen to understand meaning and then listen again to reflect on what is being said.

Making notes:

You may find it helps to take notes while you are listening. This doesn't mean writing down everything that is said; you just need to summarise. You need to identify the important or key points and then present those points in a coherent and concise way. It's important to remember these notes are for you; they will help you to join in with the forums and provide prompts for the questions you want to ask. It's important that they are meaningful when you refer back to them.

There are different ways to record your notes; you might choose to make a list of the ideas that interest you or alternatively you might prefer a more visual approach such as a mind map.

Whichever approach you take you will find that the more you practise the more proficient you will become.

Communicating with others:

Once you have reflected on the information and made your notes you are ready to join in the forums. At first you may choose to just observe and then, when you feel ready, you can post your observations, thoughts or questions.

Communicating online takes practise; you don't have the benefit of gauging reaction or meaning through facial expressions, gestures and body language. You need to be aware of this when typing comments online; particularly when in a hurry to join in the conversation. It's always a good idea to pause before you press the Enter key and reread what you have written!

Don't forget we've included a helpful checklist in the Downloads section below which you can always refer back to.

We hope this video has helped you to think about how you learn and now it's time to have a go.

[end of transcript]