

Frequently Asked Questions About Enrolling in Online Classes

Here is some information to help you prepare for taking an online course at **Alpena Community College**.

What are the Prerequisites for taking online classes at ACC?

Prerequisites for enrollment in online courses include moderate computing skills, an ability to learn independently of the classroom, have a reliable e-mail account on file with the college, and have computer availability with Internet access.

What is online learning?

Online learning is an option for students who wish to learn in their own environment on their own time. Also called distance learning or e-learning, this format allows students to fulfill education requirements at times that fit with their schedule. Because the bulk of instruction is offered via a computer and the Internet, the work can be completed anywhere there is an Internet connection at any time of the day or night. When taking an online class students rarely, if ever, attend face-to-face classes. Some instructors require students to come in to a proctored testing environment to take exams. All course materials, assignments, class discussion, and tests take place online using *Blackboard*, the college's Learning Content Management System.

This method appeals to some students who do not want to drive great distances to attend class, who have a busy personal schedule and cannot attend regularly scheduled live classes, and for those who may prefer the online learning environment over a live class.

Are you ready for online learning?

Taking courses online requires all the skills necessary to be successful in traditional college courses, plus students need the self-motivation and discipline to be independent learners. Online students also need to be comfortable with using a computer, browsing the web, using e-mail for sending and receiving file attachments, and have a reliable Internet connection.

More detailed information about technology requirements can be found by going to the website <http://bb.alpenacc.edu> and clicking on the link titled *Help and Support for Online Users*. From here, a self-assessment can be taken to see if you are personally ready for online course work and you can assess your computer to see if it is technologically compatible with taking online courses.

How do I register for an online class?

For ACC undergraduate students the first step in taking an online class is to submit an *Application for Admission* to Alpena Community College. Once accepted into the college, verify that the college has up-to-date information about you including your contact information and current e-mail address. You may register for your courses either on campus or online via *WebAdvisor*. It is recommended that students receive academic advising before registering for classes. Students that register online must meet the following requirements:

- Students must be "returning" students to utilize web registration.
- Students must have a new Admission application on file with the college if not in attendance in the past 2 years.
- Students must have an active WebAdvisor account.
- Students must fulfill placement testing requirements.
- Advising is recommended for 12 or more credit hours or enrollment in English or Math courses.
- Students with "financial obligations" will not be allowed to register until obligation is cleared.
- Tuition payment due at established deadline.

- Online registration is not available for Dual Enrolled High School students, restricted programs (Registered and Practical Nursing, Utility Technician, Automotive and Concrete Technology) or specialized courses such as internships, directed studies, etc.
- Students must complete course prerequisites.

I've registered for online classes – now what?

Your instructor will communicate the login procedures for Blackboard and start-up activities for you as you get closer to the beginning of the semester. Online classes are delivered using the college's learning content management system, Blackboard. You will be provided with a student account for accessing Blackboard. Typically, online student Blackboard accounts are made available to students on the first day of a new semester. Student Blackboard accounts use the same login User ID as WebAdvisor and the password is your college assigned student ID.

My instructor mentioned we are using Blackboard for my online class. What is Blackboard?

Blackboard is a Web-based Learning Content Management System designed to allow students to participate in classes delivered online or use online materials and activities to complement live classroom teaching. Blackboard enables instructors to provide students with course materials, discussion boards, tests, study guides, and more all via the Internet. The degree to which Blackboard is used in a course varies depending on the instructor. For example, instructors may supplement a live class by putting their syllabus and handouts on their course sites. In contrast, other courses may be conducted entirely through Blackboard, without any on-campus sessions.

How do I communicate with my instructors or fellow students?

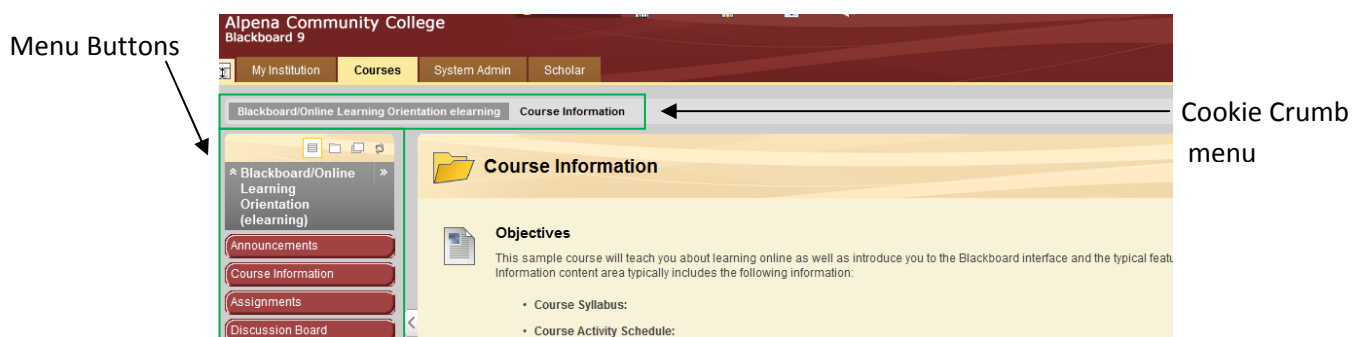
Communication with your instructor and classmates uses a combination of e-mail and the Blackboard Internet based communication tools. Students may contact instructors via the phone when necessary.

How do I navigate Blackboard?

A Blackboard course site is very similar to a web page. It contains buttons that can be clicked to lead you to additional pages or information. Blackboard also offers interactive features like tests that you can take on the computer which are immediately graded, and a discussion board that allows you to communicate with other students.

There are a number of different ways to navigate within a Blackboard course site. The two most common ways are:

- a. *menu buttons* at the left of the screen
 - i. The menu buttons at the left of the screen operate just like menu buttons on a website. Each button contains information related to the title of the button. For example, a button titled "Assessments" will most likely contain any quizzes or tests your instructor wishes for you to take.
- b. the *cookie crumb menu*
 - i. The cookie crumb menu indicates where you are in the unit and lists each area you went through to get there. Clicking on one of the links in the list will take you back to that area. This menu is located horizontally toward the top of the screen.



What are some tips for success in online learning?

The main thing to remember when taking an online class is that you will need to invest 2-3 hours of study time per week, per credit hour for the course. Online classes are not necessarily easier than a live class. They are different and require different types of study habits. Here are some tips to guide you toward success in the online classroom:

- a. **Stick to a schedule** - The best way to ensure that you will have enough study time to meet your goals in each course is to plan for it. Make a study schedule and stick to it.
- b. **Organize** - Understand assignments and write them down. Keep all assignments in one place to avoid forgetting something.
- c. **Night Owl or Morning Person?** Develop an understanding of your best concentration times. Arrange your schedule so that you have study time during your peak hours.
- d. **The word “study” wears many different hats** – Studying doesn’t just happen before a test. When instructors talk about the need to study, they mean you should review all material in preparation for class, complete all homework, and review class notes, text assignments and supplementary material on a regular schedule.
- e. **Understand the subject** - Realize that different subjects require different types of preparation. Lecture classes require that you review your notes right after class and preview the new topic just before class; recitation classes, like languages and math, demand more specific studying.
- f. **Don’t cram** - Schedule study sessions to fit your attention span. Try studying for 45 minutes and then taking a 10 minute exercise break.
- g. **Set a goal** - Begin each study session with an end result in mind. Predict specifically what you want to accomplish and then work to meet your goal.
- h. **Tackle the tough stuff first** - Leave routine and more mechanical tasks for last.
- i. **Add variety** - Vary subjects and type of study for maximum efficiency. Within a study session, try a variety of methods including reading, writing, and recitation to stay interested and engaged.
- j. **Use time wisely** - To retain information, you must review the information often. Use all of your available time. Even small bits of time, like waiting for the dentist, can be put to use. Don't be caught without something to read or study!

How can I learn more about online learning at ACC?

You may learn more about online learning at ACC by accessing the Blackboard Learning System web page (<http://bb.alpenacc.edu>). The Blackboard web page provides links to:

- Login to Blackboard.
- Login directions for using Blackboard.
- Help and support for online learners.
- Access to the Blackboard/Online Learning Orientation.