

Online Learning @ NJCU

The Guide on the Side for Students



Getting Started

Now that you have registered for your online course, you may be wondering if there is anything you can do to in the weeks ahead to prepare for it. The information in this manual is designed to help you understand what you need to do to prepare for your first online course and become a successful online learner.

Online Course Delivery Systems

Blackboard Learn

All online courses at NJCU use a learning management system called Blackboard Learn that is designed to provide you with a self-contained environment in which most of your online course activities will take place. Since Blackboard Learn is totally web based, you do not need to have any special software installed on your computer to use it. All communication with your professor and classmates (including e-mail) occurs within your Blackboard Learn course which you can access anywhere and any time you have access to the Internet and a supported browser.

Hardware and Software Requirements for Blackboard Learn

The first thing you should do to get ready for your course is to check to make sure that you have the proper hardware and software to participate. You can find an up-to-date list of the general hardware and software requirements for all courses that use Blackboard Learn at this location: <http://newlearning.njcu.edu/dl/requirements/>

The CyberPrimer Online Tutorial

To help you get started with online learning, New Jersey City University developed the CyberPrimer, a free, self-paced online tutorial designed to provide you with the information and skills you need to become a successful online learner. We recommend that all new online learners complete the CyberPrimer before logging into their online courses for the first time. You may access the CyberPrimer approximately two weeks before the start of the semester by visiting: <http://blackboard.njcu.edu>

Logging into Blackboard Learn

Follow the steps below to log into Blackboard Learn to access the CyberPrimer or your online course. Please Note: While the CyberPrimer will be available two weeks before the start of the semester, your online course will not be available until 12:00 noon on the first official day of the semester. Although it is not necessary for all students to log in simultaneously at 12:00, we do recommend that you access your online course at some time on the first day of the semester so that you may consult the syllabus and assignments that have been posted by your professor.

Follow the steps below to log into Blackboard Learn:

1. Use your Web browser (e.g., Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, etc.) to locate the following URL: <http://blackboard.njcu.edu>
2. Enter your GothicNet ID in the User name field, and your GothicNet password in the Password field, and click the Login button.
Note: This is the ID and password you use to access the NJCU GothicNet portal to register for classes, check your grades, or access other campus information.
3. All online courses in which you are enrolled appear on your My Web Courses page. To enter a course, click on its name.

Purchasing Textbooks for Your Course

If your online course requires a textbook, you may purchase it at the New Jersey City University Campus Bookstore located on the first floor of the Gilligan Student Union Building on the NJCU Campus. You may also purchase your textbook through the bookstore's website at: <http://njcu.bncollege.com>. The phone number of the bookstore is: (201) 200-3503.

Online students may also wish to browse major online bookstores such as [Amazon](#) and [Barnes & Noble](#) for textbooks and recommended course readings.

Course Cartridges

If your professor has adopted publisher prepared content called a "course cartridge" for your course, you may need an access key (in addition to your user name and password) when you enter your course for the first time. You will find the access key bundled with the textbook for your course. Be sure you purchase the correct text for your course. The access key is typically a series of letters and numbers and each access code can only be entered once (e.g., you cannot use another student's access key). If you purchased a used textbook, you may need to purchase the access key separately by contacting the publisher.

Course Access

Student access to online courses is available only during the official stated semester/session as indicated by the University's academic calendar. It is the student's responsibility to retain copies of his/her own work and/or correspondence posted to Blackboard Learn for any future reference. All Blackboard Learn course sites, including content, are routinely removed from the Blackboard server at the conclusion of each semester/session.

Learning to Learn Online The CyberPrimer

New Jersey City University's CyberPrimer Online Tutorial is designed to provide you with essential information about how to become a successful online learner and how to use Blackboard Learn, the learning management system used for most online courses at the University. When you access Blackboard Learn, you will see the CyberPrimer listed along with any other online courses in which you are enrolled. The CyberPrimer provides information on the following topics:

- E-mail and Netiquette
- Web Browsers
- Search Engines
- Downloading Software
- Blackboard Learn Communication Tools (E-mail, Discussion, Chat)
- Blackboard Learn Calendar
- Blackboard Learn Assessment

The Department of Online Learning recommends that all students complete the CyberPrimer before beginning their first online course.

Tips for Learning to Learn Online

So what do you need to make the most of your online course experience? While not all inclusive, the following tips excerpted from NJCU's CyberPrimer Online Tutorial may help:

Tip 1: Make a Date With Your Online Course

Take out your calendar now, before you begin, and block out specific times you have available to work on your online course. We have found that the most successful online learners log into their courses on a regular (if not daily) basis. Since each learner and course is different, it is impossible to estimate the exact number of hours a given course will require.

As a rule of thumb, you should plan on spending at least as much time in your online course as you would spend in an actual face-to-face classroom, plus whatever additional time might be required to complete out-of-class assignments.

Tip 2: Be a Good Communicator

Since written communication is vital to online learning, you will want to put your best foot forward in your communications with your professor and your classmates. It is generally a good idea to prepare all written communications in a word processing program (e.g., Microsoft Word) before copying and pasting them into Blackboard Learn. This will give you an opportunity, not only to review and spell-check your document, but also to reflect upon what you have written to make sure it communicates exactly what you want to say. Clear communication is particularly important in public areas (e.g., the discussion forum) where misunderstandings can easily occur.

Tip 3: "Speak" Up

There is no room (or reason) for shyness in the online environment. You will get more from your online learning experience if you are willing to share your ideas and comments with your professor and classmates through Blackboard Learn communication tools (E-mail, Discussion Forum, Chat, etc.).

Tip 4: Get Organized

In addition to setting up a specific time to log into your online course, you may also wish to develop some strategies to help you get organized. Some students find it helpful to print lengthy documents and put them in a binder or portfolio, while others prefer to do all their reading online. One thing we strongly recommend is that you establish a folder on your computer and save all the documents you create for your class to that folder. This will, not only help you get organized, but will also provide you with a back-up copy of your class work in the event that you should need it. If you do decide to print course materials, make sure you have the most up-to-date version since your professor may update course content, assignments, and announcements throughout the semester.

Tip 5: Take Charge of Your Learning

In an online course, the professor's role changes from "sage on the stage" to "guide on the side." Research has demonstrated that students learn best when they have an active rather than a passive role in their learning. Self-directed learners need to be disciplined, motivated, and able to work independently to succeed.

Tip 6: Make Sure Your Computer Is Ready

Before beginning your course, review the hardware and software requirements and do the "Browser Tune-up" to be sure that your computer will be ready to access your course on the first day of the semester. For further information, consult:

<http://newlearning.njcu.edu/dl/requirements>

If your professor schedules a chat for your course, be sure to visit the chat room early to make sure you can access it without problem.

Tip 7: Complete Our Online Tutorial

We suggest that all new online learners complete The CyberPrimer, our online tutorial designed to prepare you to be a successful online learner before logging into your class for the first time. Access to the CyberPrimer will be available to all enrolled online learners approximately two weeks before the semester begins.

Tip 8: Seek Help When You Need It

If you need help with an academic issue, it is usually best to use Blackboard Learn's self-contained e-mail tool to e-mail the professor within the course or follow specific instructions that your professor may provide for contacting him/her. If you have a non-academic course support issue you may contact the Department of Online Learning via e-mail 24 hours a day, seven days a week by sending an e-mail message to dlsupport@njcu.edu or by completing the Online Course Support Request Form at http://newlearning.njcu.edu/dl/tech_support_form.htm . A response will be made to you within 24 hours.

Communication in Your Online Course

There are two types of communication that generally take place in an online course: synchronous and asynchronous. Synchronous communication (like synchronous swimming) requires that all participants engage in an activity at the same time. This is similar to the type of communication that occurs in a traditional classroom environment where faculty and students are physically present in the same place and at the same time. Synchronous communication can occur in an online course when a professor schedules a chat which would require that all or specific groups of learners be logged into their course at the same time.

Although synchronous communication is valuable, it is not the primary way that communications occur in an online course. Most online communications take place asynchronously – meaning that learners and faculty do not need to be logged on at the same time for learning and communication to occur. Much of the communication that takes place in your online course will occur in the Discussion Forum (sometimes called a Bulletin Board). Just like a corkboard, it provides a place for the professor to tack up questions for student discussions and allows students to post their responses. The Discussion Forum provides an effective way for you to participate in class discussions online.

A major advantage of online learning is the flexibility and convenience it affords in allowing you to work on your course according to your individual schedule and needs. Unless your professor has scheduled a chat or some other learning activity that requires all students to be logged in synchronously (at the same time), there is no prescribed time for you to log into your course. We do encourage students to check into the courses frequently (on a daily basis if possible) in order to keep pace with required discussions, activities, and assignments.

Viewing/Uploading Files for Your Online Course

Most of the pages that are contained in your online course were prepared in HTML format which makes them viewable by all users on the Web. Occasionally, you may encounter a page that is created in another format that your computer cannot understand. Should this occur, the first thing you should do is to check the hardware and software requirements for your class to determine if your professor has requested that you purchase or download (see list below) a specific software application or plug-in for your course. If it appears that the file will not open, you should check to see whether you have pop-up blockers installed on your computer and follow the instructions on page 10 to disable them. You may also be able to open the document by holding down the CTRL key while you double click on the icon or file name.

Plug-Ins and Downloads

Sometimes, it may be necessary for you to download software or plug-ins in order to successfully participate in the online course in which you are enrolled. For your convenience, NJCU has compiled a list of some software you might need along with links to the sites where you will find the applications available for downloading.

Generally, all you need to successfully download files from a website is a web browser, such as Microsoft Internet Explorer or Mozilla Firefox, and space on your hard disk to store the application.

Software available for downloading from the Web generally falls into one of two categories:

Freeware is software that you can download and use without ever paying a fee.

Shareware programs may be downloaded without a fee for evaluation purposes. After the evaluation period, you are expected to pay a fee which is typically minimal. In some cases, you are "on your honor" with regard to submitting your payment. In other cases, the software will expire and become unusable after the evaluation period ends.

Downloading from a large company website is typically very easy, but there are a few general rules you should observe. First of all, before you download anything from the Web, you should make sure you have virus protection software installed on your computer and that your virus definitions are up-to-date. Read all the instructions before beginning the download process and make sure you are downloading the correct version for your specific operating system. Also, be sure to note where you save the application. When the download is complete, you will probably need to locate the file and run it in order to install the application.

Following is a list of some popular software applications available for download:

Software Title	WebSite
Microsoft Internet Explorer	http://www.microsoft.com/windows/ie/default.htm Easy to use web browser with tools for e-mail and newsgroup reading. Usually included with Microsoft Windows.
Mozilla Firefox	http://www.mozilla.com/firefox/ A free, cross-platform browser that is growing in popularity.
Adobe Acrobat Reader	http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep.html View and print PDF documents.
Quick Time	http://www.apple.com/quicktime/download/ Apple software available for both Windows and Macintosh for handling video, sound, animation, graphics, text, music, and more.
Real Player	http://www.real.com/player/index.html Allows you to enjoy streaming audio and video on networks and the Internet.
Windows Media Player	http://www.microsoft.com/windows/windowsmedia/default.mspx Another software designed to help you enjoy streaming audio and video.
Macromedia Flash Player	http://www.macromedia.com/downloads/ With the Macromedia Flash Player, you can view the best animation and entertainment on the Web.
Macromedia Shockwave Player	http://www.macromedia.com/downloads/ With Macromedia Shockwave Player, you can enjoy multimedia games, learning applications and more.
Microsoft Office Compatibility Pack for Office 2007	http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?FamilyID=941b3470-3ae9-4aee-8f43-c6bb74cd1466&DisplayLang=en
Spyware Detection	
Spybot	http://www.spybot.info/en/index.html
Ad Aware	http://www.lavasoftusa.com/products/ad_aware_free.php
Office Software	

Open Office <http://www.openoffice.org/download/>
A free office software suite for word-processing, spreadsheet, presentation, databases and more

Java When Java is installed on your computer, you can run applications and applets that use Java technology. Java is required for some Blackboard components.
<http://www.java.com/en/download/manual.jsp>

Getting Help with Your Online Course

The following resources are designed to assist you with your online courses. If you are in need of a resource that is not listed here, you may contact the Department of Online Learning at (201) 200-3449 for assistance and advice.

Blackboard Learn Online Help

When you are logged into your course, you can click on NJCU Online Course Support in the course menu in the left navigation panel in the Blackboard Learn top Menu bar for assistance with problems you may encounter in using Blackboard Learn application.

Contacting Your Professor

If you need help with an academic issue, you should contact your professor via Blackboard Learn e-mail or by the method indicated by your professor in the course syllabus. The University maintains a directory of faculty, staff, and departments which can be accessed at: http://www.njcu.edu/dept/it/njcu_directory/directory.html

The NJCU Frank J. Guarini Library

The NJCU Congressman Frank J. Guarini Library has a full range of print and electronic resources to assist you with academic research for your online course. The Library's home page provides access to its online databases and "Ask a Librarian" services. Most electronic resources can be accessed from the convenience of your home computer.

A good place to begin learning about what the library has to offer is the Library's Information Literacy Tutorial. This tutorial may be accessed from your Blackboard Learn page or by visiting: <http://www.njcu.edu/guarini/instructions/instructions.htm>

Further information about the NJCU Frank J. Guarini Library and its resources may be obtained by visiting the Library's webpage: <http://www.njcu.edu/guarini/home.htm>

NJCU Online Learning Website

The NJCU Online Learning website contains a full range of resources for prospective and enrolled students including hardware and software requirements and other helpful information. There is even an online learning self-assessment tool to help you determine if online learning is right for you. Visit the Online Learning website at:

<http://newlearning.njcu.edu>

Access the self-assessment tool at: <http://newlearning.njcu.edu/dl/assessment.htm>

DL Support

If you have read through all of the above information and you still cannot find the answer to your problem, you may fill out a request for online course assistance at the Online Learning website. See: http://newlearning.njcu.edu/dl/tech_support_form.htm

A response will be made to you within twenty-four hours. During business hours, you may also contact the Office of Online Learning at (201) 200-3449

Logging into Blackboard Learn: Common Problems & Solutions

User ID and Password Issues

The most common problem that students encounter when logging into Blackboard Learn is an incorrect user ID and password. Before contacting DL Support for assistance, please check to make sure that the user ID you have entered is correct (it is the same as your GothicNet ID) and that your password is entered in the correct case.

Changing Your Password

You may reset your GothicNet password by filling out the web-based form which can be accessed at: https://www.njcu.edu/activedir/change_pass2.asp. Any changes made to your GothicNet password will take effect immediately in Blackboard Learn.

Retrieving Your GothicNet ID

If you do not remember your GothicNet ID, you may retrieve it by filling out the form at the following location: <https://www.njcu.edu/activedirectory/findmyid.asp>

Course Access

If you do not see your course listed when you log into Blackboard Learn, it may be due to the fact that the semester has not yet begun. Access to your course will be available at 12:00 noon on the first official day of the semester.

Spyware and Deceptive Software

Many students report problems with Blackboard Learn that are actually caused by spyware, parasites and other deceptive software that may be inadvertently downloaded to your computer when you download and/or install applications from the Web.

For further information about spyware and deceptive software and how you can remove it, visit the following website: <http://www.doxdesk.com/parasite>.

To help you control this problem, you may wish to download and install a spyware detection and removal application such as:

- Lavasoft Ad-aware
<http://www.doxdesk.com/parasite>.
- Spybot – Search and Destroy
<http://www.spybot.info/>

Browser Issues

If you are having a problem accessing Blackboard Learn, you may wish to try using a different browser.

Common Error Messages

The problems listed below have been reported by a number of students. Please follow the outlined steps to correct the problem

PROBLEM:	You cannot open a Word or PowerPoint Document. The link doesn't open or a blank white page appears
SOLUTION:	1) Look to see if there is a pale yellow bar across the top of the Blackboard Learn window that stretches all the way across the page. If this is the case, click on the bar which will cause a prompt to appear asking you if you wish to download the file. Click download and the file should open automatically.

	2) If there is no bar across the top of the page, your problem may be due to the fact that you do not have Microsoft Word or PowerPoint installed on your computer.
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PROBLEM:	Your professor cannot open a Word, Excel, Or PowerPoint file that you created in Microsoft Office 2007
SOLUTION:	Select Save As and use the <i>Drop Down</i> menu to save the file in the Word 97-2003, Excel 97-2003, or PowerPoint 97-2003 format. You may also change a default setting in office 2007 so that all files saved thereafter are backwards compatible. See the following website for instructions on saving files: http://www.ms-office2007.com

NJCU Policies Related to Online Learning

Student behavior in online courses shall conform to the student code of conduct as described in the *Gothic Guide Student Handbook*. Students using the Blackboard Learn course management system at NJCU must also comply with pertinent policies including the Academic Integrity Policy, NJCU Copyright Policy and Related Guidelines, and the Responsible Use of Computer Resources policy.

For further information, please see the links below:

Academic Integrity Policy:

<http://www.njcu.edu/dept/senate/integritypolicy.htm>

Gothic Guide:

<http://www.njcu.edu/PDFs/GothicGuide3.pdf> (NOT WORKING)

NJCU Copyright Policy and Related Guidelines:

http://www.njcu.edu/dept/it/documents/Copyright_august_2004.pdf

Responsible Use of Computing Resources Policy:

http://www.njcu.edu/dept/it/documents/Responsible_Use_of_Computing_Resources.pdf

Statement on Students with Disabilities

Students with documented disabilities who require testing accommodations must register with the Office of Specialized Services for Students with Disabilities (OSS). Students are required to submit appropriate and recent documentation of their disabilities to the Director of the OSS. Documentation guidelines are outlined on the OSS website

<http://web.njcu.edu/programs/oss/Content/default.asp>. For further information, contact Jennifer Aitken, Director, Office of Specialized Services at 201-200-2557 or via e-mail

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