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## Online Course Readiness Information

Students taking online courses through Mount Aloysius College need to be prepared for the special learning conditions presented by such courses. The purpose of this document is to allow students to evaluate their level of readiness to succeed in online courses. Please take a moment to review the information below to determine your level of preparation.

Students are strongly advised to consult additional information regarding taking online courses at the Mount by consulting the Mount Aloysius College **Student Handbook for Online Courses**. This document is available online at the Mount portal web site at <http://portal.mtaloy.edu/>. From the Mount portal page, select **Documents, Forms & Policies**. Select **Policies**, then locate **Online Course Policy - Students** in the middle of the right column.

### Software Requirements

- MS Word
- Microsoft Office Suite highly recommended (MS Word required for all courses; other MS Office components may be required for other courses)
- Up-to-date antivirus software
- Adobe Acrobat Reader (free download from [www.adobe.com](http://www.adobe.com))
- Current version of Internet Browser (MS Internet Explorer recommended).  
NOTE: If AOL is your Internet Provider, download, install and use a compatible browser only. Do *not* use the browsers embedded in the AOL software.
- Cookies and current update of Java software installed in browser
- Screen “Popup Stoppers” (if installed) must be deactivated prior to using the Blackboard Course Management System (CMS) or taking Blackboard tests online.

Almost all online classes at the Mount will require students to submit assignments to the instructor in Microsoft Word format. In addition to MS Word, some online classes may require students to obtain and use other tools in the Microsoft Office Suite. For example, assignments in some classes may include development of PowerPoint presentations or Excel spreadsheets. Students in online classes should be prepared to obtain and to use these tools at a basic skill level. Working successfully within the Blackboard CMS will also require your browser to be current with its updates. The Blackboard system works most effectively with MS Internet Explorer. You’ll need to disable any popup blockers running in your browser; otherwise, tests and quizzes will not operate correctly. Finally,

your internet browser must have cookies enabled and a currently-updated version of Java installed.

The Mount Aloysius College portal page at <http://portal.mtaloy.edu/> has a link for information on purchasing software at student discounted prices. Select **Discount Software** on the portal page. Then select Mount Aloysius College on the JourneyEd Software homepage. JourneyEd provides deep discounts on software purchases to Mount students, including MS Office and other popular software programs and packages.

### **Equipment Check List**

The computer and technical criteria listed below are requirements for participation in an online course. If you are planning to participate in an online course, be sure your computer meets these standards. Please note that these criteria are standard minimums; your instructor or course may require you to have a computer that meets other types of technical specifications.

#### ***Windows Systems***

- 500 MHz Pentium III Processor
- Windows 2000 or XP with necessary critical updates and security patches (see MS download site for details)
- 512 Mb RAM
- Audio Card
- Printer
- 15 GB Hard drive space
- Internet service provider
- 56 Kbps or better internet connection for both audio and video (DSL or Cable preferred)

#### ***Mac Systems***

- Mac OS 8.5 or later
- G3 233 (or faster) PowerPC Processor
- 64MB of RAM
- Virtual Memory turned on, set to 128
- 60 GB hard drive space
- Printer
- Audio card
- Internet service provider
- 56 Kbps or better internet connection for both audio and video (DSL or Cable preferred)

If you cannot meet all of the standard equipment requirements above, your online experience may not be successful. We highly recommend that your computer equipment meet or exceed the criteria above before planning to participate in an online course.

If you have further questions about hardware or software requirements, please contact the Mount Aloysius College Help Desk at (814) 886-6502 or [helpdesk@mtaloy.edu](mailto:helpdesk@mtaloy.edu).

### **Are You Ready? A Self-Test for Online Learning Readiness**

If you're not sure whether you're ready to succeed in an online learning environment, take the following self-test.

1. To succeed as an online learner, you must be able to answer "yes" to each of the following statements.
  - a. I have ready access to a computer on a daily basis.
  - b. I have ready access to the Internet on a daily basis.
  - c. I know how to navigate in a computer environment.
  - d. Typing is an easy task for me.
  - e. I am readily able comprehend information that I read in an online environment.

If you have answered "no" to *any* of the statements in Item 1, you are *not* ready to participate in an online course. If you answered "yes" to all questions in Item 1 above, please proceed to Item 2.

2. To succeed as an online learner, you must be able to answer "yes" to most of the following statements.
  - a. I know how to complete basic software downloads.
  - b. I am comfortable with exploring new ideas or material independently.
  - c. I am comfortable with presenting some of my ideas or questions in a setting that all of my classmates can see.
  - d. I am comfortable doing academic work independently and without regular face-to-face interaction with an instructor.
  - e. I am prepared to set aside 15-20 hours a week to work on an online course.

If you answered "no" to two or more of the statements in Item 2, you are *not* ready to participate in an online course. If you did not answer no to two or more of the questions in Item 2, please proceed to Item 3.

3. To succeed as an online learner, you must be able to answer "yes" to most of the following statements.
  - a. I have the self-discipline to log in and participate in an online course several times a week.
  - b. I like to exchange ideas in a format that can be viewed by all of my classmates.
  - c. Sending attachments and uploading documents are computer skills in which I am very comfortable.
  - d. Taking a test online does not intimate me.

- e. I would find it educational and enjoyable to participate in group work in an online environment.

If you answered “no” to any of the questions in Item 3, that limitation could inhibit your success as an online learner. If you have answered “no” to two or more of the questions in Item 3 then it is highly recommend that you *do not* participate in an online course. On the other hand, if you have successfully proceeded through the statements in Items 1 and 2, have answered “no” to only one of the questions in Item 3, and you feel you can overcome that limitation, then *you are ready* for online learning. Enjoy your online learning experience!