



## *Orienting Students to the Online Learning Environment*

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Dedicate time and energy to orienting students to your online course. Students need to know how you will teach, test and communicate. Students need to know what technology tools they will be required to use in the course.

For *traditional courses* which are Web-supported or supplemented or for hybrid courses, if you are not already in a smart classroom or computer lab classroom, schedule a lab classroom for at least one class session.

For a *fully online course*, publish this information in your course Website and employ strategies to hold students accountable for the information. Faculty teaching fully online courses should also include this information in a pre-course postcard or mailing sent to the student's home address.

You may need to share any or all of the following information to help successfully orient your learners to your online learning environment. Strong orientation methods can lead to improved retention!!

**A. Usernames** – students may or may not already know this information. If they need to look it up, provide the following steps:

1. Go to [www.icc.edu](http://www.icc.edu)
2. Click on Find Login ID/Username
3. Search by student last name – username is in AB123 and sometimes AB123a format

**B. Passwords** – default passwords for all student systems are the last four digits of their social security numbers. Encourage students to login and change their passwords. Systems and passwords include:

1. Computer Network and Student Email  
To change: login to any computer on campus. Hold Cntrl+Alt+Delete on the keyboard. Click Change password.
2. PeopleSoft – Online Registration and Transcripts  
To change: login to ICC eServices Login and go to PeopleTools
3. Blackboard  
To change: login to Blackboard. Click the Personal Information link under the Tools panel of the main Blackboard @ ICC page.

Any problems with usernames or passwords should be directed to the ICC Help Desk at 694-5457 (M-F, 7 am to 10 pm), L154 or [helpdesk@icc.edu](mailto:helpdesk@icc.edu).

### C. Accessing Blackboard from ICC and Off Campus

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1. [www.icc.edu](http://www.icc.edu) Click on the Blackboard link on the left side of the page
2. <http://www.icc.edu/onlineStudents/> Click on the Blackboard link on the right side of the page
3. Go directly to <http://courses.icc.edu> \*\*Note: This is the direct route to the Blackboard course server when the ICC Website is down but Blackboard is still accessible. Provide this address to students so they may try to access Blackboard even if the ICC Website is not accessible. Students may set this URL/address as a “bookmark” or a “favorite” in their Internet browsers.

### D. Computer and Internet Access

Students engaging in an online course or a course using the Internet to support or supplement instruction should plan access to a computer with access to the Internet. ***Students should have a backup plan if their primary computer or method of accessing the Internet fails.***

### ICC Campus Computer Lab Hours - <http://www.icc.edu/currentStudents/computerLabHours.asp>

#### East Peoria Campus

Monday through Thursday	7 am-10 pm
Friday	7 am-4 pm
Saturday (Library, L312)	9 am-4 pm
Sunday	12 pm-4 pm

#### Peoria Campus

Monday through Friday	7:30 am-9:30 pm
Friday	7:30 am-9 pm
Saturday	8am-4:30 pm
Sunday	11am-4 pm

### E. Minimum Hardware/Software Requirements

- Computer with a connection to the Internet
- Internet browsing software (Internet Explorer 6, Netscape or other)  
NOTE: Students with AOL access to the Internet are advised to connect to the Internet using AOL’s service but then use Internet Explorer or another browser (not AOL’s browser) to access Blackboard.
- Word Processing Software
- PowerPoint or the PowerPoint Viewer (if necessary)
- Other software, plugins or players required for a specific course

### F. Resources and Downloads

[http://www.icc.edu/currentStudents/net\\_resourcesDownloads.asp](http://www.icc.edu/currentStudents/net_resourcesDownloads.asp)

1. MS Word Viewer
2. PowerPoint Viewer for Windows
3. PowerPoint Viewer for Macintosh
4. MS Office Converters and Viewers
5. Adobe Acrobat Reader
6. Macromedia Shockwave & Flash Player
7. RealPlayer

**G. Blackboard Orientation** (Course Site in Blackboard – All students enrolled at ICC have access to this site, even if they are not enrolled in a course using Blackboard.) The Blackboard Orientation course site has the following content areas, tools and links:



**H. Email in Blackboard** – Students must have a valid email address in their Personal Information to receive email messages sent by the instructor or other students through Blackboard. To verify or change the email address a student has saved in Blackboard:

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1. Login to Blackboard
2. Click on the Personal Information link under the Tools panel on the main Blackboard @ ICC page.
3. Click on Edit Personal Information
4. Verify the email address is correct or change the password here.

NOTE: Students who have Hotmail, Yahoo or another email provider other than ICC may have problems receiving instructor email sent through Blackboard. The way the messages are sent is often perceived as SPAM. To ensure messages are delivered properly advise students to enter your email address ([username@icc.edu](mailto:username@icc.edu)) into their personal address lists or lists of trusted email senders. This should result in the messages being delivered and not being sent to the student's email junk or spam folder.

**I. Common Blackboard Functions** (In “How to...” instructions in Blackboard Orientation)

1. Send and Receive Files via the Blackboard Digital Drop Box
2. Print PowerPoint Slides from Blackboard
3. Post Messages to the Blackboard Discussion Board

**J. Technical Support**

ICC Help Desk  
309-694-5457

7 am-10 pm Monday through Friday  
[helpdesk@icc.edu](mailto:helpdesk@icc.edu) L154

**K. Academic Support and Blackboard Navigation**

ICC HELP Lab 234A

See [www.icc.edu](http://www.icc.edu) >Current Students >Academic Support for HELP Lab hours.

**L. General Navigation/Tour of the Course Website** – guide students through each area of the course site and explain what they will find in that area or how to use that tool. Do this in a face-to-face demonstration or through information posted in your course.

**M. Course Syllabus, Calendar, Policies and Procedures** – provide students with a syllabus, calendar, policies and procedures at the start of the course.

1. Syllabus – description, goals, objectives, materials of instruction, assessment, evaluation and course content.
2. Calendar – when the course begins and ends, due dates, testing dates, important dates in the academic calendar (scheduled breaks, last day to withdraw...)
3. Policies and Procedures – see the Quality Guidelines or “89 Things to Embed in the First 10 Days of an Online Course” for a complete checklist of suggested policies and procedures.

**N. Communication Processes** – when to use email, discussion board, telephone or other communication tools. Should students email you questions or use the public forum on the discussion board? Can students schedule a time to meet with you face to face? When are your office hours? Will you answer questions that can be answered by searching the course information and material?

1. Require students to send you an email to verify their email addresses and allow them to “practice” sending an email to you.
2. Design a non-graded forum on the discussion board to allow students the experience of posting messages and replying.

**O. Testing** - provide students with a “trial” experience in online testing. Provide students with the information they need if they experience technical problems during a test. Will you rest their attempts? Tell students how they can check grades after taking an online test. Strategies for orienting students to online testing:

1. Non-graded pre-test
2. Quiz over the course information

**P. Orientation Assignments**

1. Design a task that holds students accountable for the information they need to know prior to or as they begin the course. Suggested strategies:
  - a. Quiz (graded for points or pass/fail for completed/not completed)
  - b. Scavenger Hunt – provide answers via email or online test
  - c. “Acknowledgement Email” – name, alternate email address, phone number and typed statement, “I have read and understand the course information. I agree to the terms of this course and take responsibility for my learning.”
  - d. Introductory Discussion Board Posting
    - i. Personal introduction
    - ii. How the student is accessing the Internet
    - iii. Contingency plan
    - iv. Other background information relevant to the course

- e. Pre-test on course content, followed up by post-test at end of term
  - f. Face to face orientation
  - g. Other task to be completed by a specific date and time
2. Set terms for completing the orientation, *for example*:
- a. If you do not attend the face to face orientation you will be dropped.
  - b. If you do not complete the online orientation by {date} you will be dropped.
  - c. If you do not turn in the orientation assignment by {date} you will be dropped.
3. Other strategies (which may require additional assistance/technical programming):
- a. Interactive or video-based tutorials
  - b. Instructor welcome video
  - c. Interactive CDROM
  - d. Interactive orientation Website (outside of or linked to Blackboard)