Tips for Middle School Online Success

Navigating online courses can be challenging for first time students. Here are a few tips to help your child find success in their online courses.

No one ever sets out to fail!

We know students want to succeed in their online course.

1. Role of Online Teachers

We are here to provide a great course and a positive learning experience with a teacher who is ready to support your student and give feedback to their work. Online teachers care about each student. We can only respond to students who show up, submit work, and communicate with their teachers. If your student is struggling, please contact the teacher involved.

2. Role of Students

Students are responsible for showing up, consistently, throughout the school year. That means being active in their course and being “present” with their teacher through assignment responses, Skype, email. Teachers are teachers because they love working WITH students. They are there to answer questions, to get to know your student as a person and to support your learning, but you must initiate the conversation. Smart kids ask questions, get help when they need it, and recognize that teachers are people too. Greet your teacher by name in emails and Skype, encourage your teacher by responding to emails, and say “thank you!”.

3. Role of Parents

Parents are an essential part of the learning process. The course and the Online Teacher are there to provide a great learning experience, but you must be involved throughout the school year. Your student needs your encouragement and interest. Plan to sit down together at the computer **every week**, click on the "GRADES" button and review progress. You will see when the latest assignment was handed in and what the teacher’s response was. Just asking, “Are you done?’ is not enough. It’s easy for a student to say “Yes, Mom” when they are not done at all. It happens all the time.

> You are your student’s supervisor and advocate, don't be afraid to ask questions of your student or their teacher.

4. Getting Started: The Course Home Page

The course home page is your GPS.

There you will find:

- Your teacher's name and contact information
- An overview of the course
- Resources
- Grades - Both parents and students are expected to check grades weekly
- The lessons and assignments. Different courses are set up in different ways. If you are taking more than one course, both parents and students need to understand how each course is designed
- Middle School courses are intended to be completed in the regular school year September till June. Please look over your course and set goals for yourself.

  > Complete the Manage Your Schedule file found on the course home page (**REQUIRED!)**.

  For example, English five has 30 weeks. Plan to be finished the first week of June. Where should you be by Christmas break? Spring Break? Be accountable for showing up! Consider creating a calendar with the due dates clearly labelled, post that by your computer, then have a weekly meeting to make sure the student is on track.
- Daily "class time": Develop a good work ethic. Students who attend brick and mortar schools are in their desks from 9 – 3. The freedom we enjoy in home school is a privilege to honour. You don't have to show up at 9, you don't have to be dressed, but you do have to put in an hour of work on a subject. If you read slowly, if you get distracted by younger siblings, if you start playing a game, that's not part of your learning hour. Parents and students need to design an effective learning environment. Headphones with music (no lyrics!!) help to block distractions. Ten minute cardio break before you start a new subject helps the brain to focus. Set a timer and be accountable for what you accomplish in that time.

5. Communication: It's all About Communication

- Most teachers prefer Zoom for all communication. You will get an answer much faster in Zoom than in an email.
- Use good manners. If you were in a classroom face-to-face, you would address your teacher by names. Please start all communication with a polite greeting.
- Teachers are committed to answering promptly. Please respect the fact that I may be unable to answer right away.
- Parents are encouraged to respond to grading comments, to report card comments and to communicate with the course teacher if the student is experiencing problems. The teacher only knows what you tell them.
- If you find you or your child is becoming overwhelmed by work load, or struggling due to a learning need, remember every course can be adapted to suit your child's learning needs – a conversation is all it takes to develop a plan for your student. Let's work together to provide the best possible learning experience.
- Teachers are human. Mistakes are possible. If your student has an assignment that has not been marked within a few days and the student cannot do the next assignment because of that, students are encouraged to contact the teacher and ask if they could

check on that assignment. Occasionally, an email notification my not be sent. The teacher may not even know the assignment is sitting there. A polite request is always welcome and shows initiative.

HCOS cares about your family's online experience. If you are thrilled with your experience, We would love to hear from you. Likewise, if you feel you are not being well served, please contact Sherie Seddon, Innovations Assistant Director sherie.seddon@onlineschool.ca

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Revision #15
Created 16 November 2018 16:26:15 by Bruce Hildebrandt
Updated 2 February 2026 21:55:52 by Sherie Seddon