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Introduction

In this course, you will learn about our web environment and how to use the tools that are at your disposal. Then we will introduce you to some ways to improve your abilities as an online learner.

These are the topics that you will cover:

- How to Use the Course Interface
- Strategies for Learning Online
How to Use the Course Interface

Welcome to How to Use the Course Interface. In this lesson, you will learn how to find your way around the course and make use of the tools that are designed to help you.

This lesson takes 10 minutes to complete.

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to do the following:

- move through the course, using the Back and Next buttons
- use the Table of Contents to move directly to a unit or lesson
- recognize the different tools available to you, such as Printing, Take Notes, and Search
- identify where to get technical and academic support

Navigating the Course

There are two main ways to navigate through the course:

- clicking the Next or Back buttons
- using the table of contents

Using the Next and Back buttons

The Next and Back buttons are located in the bottom, right corner of the screen.

Click this button to go to the next page.

Click this button to go back one page.

Using the table of contents

The table of contents is on the left-hand side of the screen. You can use it to move from one part of the course to another. When you first access a course, you see just the course name in the table of contents. Once you click the course name, it reveals the Unit names.

- Click the closed folder icon to expand the list, to see the contents of a unit or lesson.
  
  When you expand a list, notice that the icon changes to an open folder.

- Click the open folder icon to collapse that list.

The table of contents also serves as a guide to your current location and provides a context so that you know where you are coming from and what is ahead. Notice that no matter what page you have selected, it is highlighted on the table of contents.
Scrolling through the Whole Page

As you work with the courses, you will notice that some pages, such as this one, are longer than one screen. To read all of the information, you need to use the scroll bar to move down. The scroll bar is located on the right side of the screen.

To use the scroll bar:

1. Place your mouse over the scroll bar at the right of the screen.
2. Click the scroll bar.
3. Drag the scroll bar down until you see the rest of the screen.

Tip: You can also use the Page Up and Page Down keys or the wheel on your mouse to scroll.

Try it

Use the table of contents to navigate to another page and then back. Follow these steps:

1. Locate the page you are on now. Note the lesson and unit name.
2. Go to a different page anywhere in the course.
3. Come back to this page.

The Course Interface

Here is an image of the course interface, showing all the navigational elements and tools that you can use. Click each part of the image below to read a brief description. You will learn more about them in the next pages.
Glossary
The Glossary provides you with an alphabetical list of the terms used within the course, together with their definitions. You will find that this is a useful reference and study tool.

Note, too, that some of the words within the course appear as links. If you click on these words, you can view a glossary entry for them.

Resources
The Resources feature offers you links to a number of different tools and sources of information. These include links to Web sites that have been used throughout the course, and you may want to refer to frequently.

The resources also include a financial calculator.
How to Use the Course Interface

Printing
We understand that in some cases a printed version of a section of the course can be useful for review when you are not at the computer. The Printing icon allows you to print a selected lesson or unit.

Take Notes
Take Notes provides a space where you can enter your own study notes. When you click Take Notes, an editor appears where you can write any notes on the course. The notes are saved for you to retrieve at any time. These are your private notes; they are stored with your profile.

Of course, if you prefer, you can use your own tools for taking notes. You can use a word processing tool that you use frequently, or write your notes by hand if you prefer.

Exit
The Exit button in the top right corner allows you to close the course, and return to the Virtual University home page. It is important to use the Exit button because it provides a bookmarking feature.

Just like when you leave a bookmark in a book, the Virtual University marks the last page you visited, so you can return there next time you open the course.
Assessments and Exercises

This course offers many opportunities for you to try things out and test your understanding of the content. There are different types of exercises and feedback built into this course. These are built to allow you to practise your skills in as realistic and memorable fashion as possible. The exercises range from simple matching exercises, to calculations, to more complex case studies that will require analysis and problem solving.

Throughout each course, usually at the lesson or unit level, you will find Assessments. The Assessment provides a series of multiple choice questions that allow you to test your mastery of the content you have covered. When you complete the Assessment, you receive a score. This is a useful tool for you to assess whether you are ready to move on or whether you should review the material again.

Links to Other Web Sites

One of the advantages of taking an online course is that the Internet connects you to many useful resources, just a mouse-click away. Throughout the courses, we have provided links to other Web sites that you will find useful for the most up-to-date information. These websites include the following:

- Canada Customs and Revenue Agency
- Department of Finance
- Bank of Canada

To go to a website, click the link. You will notice that a separate window appears, displaying the new website. You can look at the website for as long as you like, following any of its links. When you are finished with it, simply click the Close button in the upper right corner of the window, and you will return to the course.
Job Aids and Other Files
Throughout the courses, you will find icons indicating PDF Files. These are files that provide supplemental material, such as a financial plan or a checklist that you can use on the job. You can look at the PDF Files as many times as you like, and you can print them for reference.

To view the PDF Files, just follow these steps:

1. Click the PDF File icon.
   A separate window opens, and the PDF File is displayed.
2. View the PDF File. You can read it online, or you can print it to read and use on paper.
3. When you are finished with the file, click the Close button in the upper right corner of the window.

In order to view these files, you require Adobe Acrobat Reader. This is free software that you can download and install in just a few minutes.

Review
Each unit concludes with a review of that unit. Take the opportunity to read the main points and to assess if you are comfortable with each of them before going on to the next unit.
Strategies for Learning Online

Welcome to Strategies for Learning Online. In this lesson, you will learn some techniques for making the most of the online learning experience, as well as tips for avoiding some of the pitfalls of distance education.

This lesson takes 10 minutes to complete.

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to do the following:

- describe techniques for effective distance learning
- identify your strengths and weaknesses with regard to distance learning
- develop a learning plan with milestones for completing the course

Learning Strategies

One of the first steps in devising your learning plan is to take stock of the learning tool you have before you: the course.

Some of its attributes are tied to the online medium and to technology, but others are more basic if just as important.

Learner control

You can move as quickly or as slowly as you wish: the pace is up to you. You won’t have to wait for the professor or the class to catch up with you in sections that you move through easily. On the other hand, when you need to take more time, that is also your choice; there is no “class” that you have catch up to.

You can also control the depth of your learning in many cases. There are examples, resources, and exercises that are available to you but that you can omit if you have already achieved the appropriate objective.

Course design for effective learning

This course has been designed according to modern adult learning principles. It provides you with all the tools and learning resources that you require but respects your responsibility to learn in your own way.

Practical application

There are two main goals that we set in designing and producing this course:

- You will be prepared to pass the exam.
- You will acquire the skills you need and effectively transfer them to your workplace in a practical and effective manner.

As well, our content addresses all of the competency requirements and learning objectives as presented by the MFDA.

Learning styles

In order to suit a wide range of learning styles, we have included material that includes:

- straight, factual text
- images and illustrations of concepts and processes
Strategies for Learning Online

- multiple-choice questions
- interactive exercises
- case studies

**Important Skills and Attributes**

No matter what your survey results are, there are methods of improving. In different studies about what makes a good online student, certain attributes are common. We will look at some of these and suggest some methods for addressing them.

Below are some of the attributes of a successful online student:

- Good attitude: has strong motivation to succeed
- Time management skills are strong
- Use of study aids is habitual
- Identifies what is most important/relevant from the content

**Be Self-motivated and self-disciplined**

With the freedom and flexibility of the online environment comes responsibility. The online process takes a real commitment and discipline to keep up with the flow of the process. Take a moment to identify what you see as your particular strengths and challenges for taking this Web course.

- What are my strengths and how can I use them?
- What are my challenges and how can I address them?

**Attitude Towards the Learning**

In the next pages, we will address some of the challenges that you may face as an online learner. To improve your success with the course, identify which of these issues or challenges you should consider and what methods would be best for you.

**Motivation and goals**

For the most part, you have to be self-motivated to achieve success in most endeavours. In taking an online course we can provide some extra support. To assess your motivation, think about the following questions. You may want to write your thoughts down to help motivate you as you work through the course.

- Why are you taking the course?
- List the achievements or rewards that it will bring.

**Learning objectives**

Another important tool at your disposal is the list of learning objectives at the beginning of each lesson.

The learning objectives give you strong clues about what is important in the lesson you are beginning. Read them and consider them. The more you know what you will cover in the lesson and how you will apply it, the easier it will be for you to master that content.

As you go through the lesson, refer to the list of learning objectives. Use them as milestones or benchmarks as you go through the lesson. Ask yourself questions such as:

- Have I achieved this/these learning objective(s)?
- How will I apply this to the workplace?
Ethical Questions to ask Yourself

The importance of self-discipline and time management is often repeated in discussions about online learning. After all, there is no teacher asking for your assignment as you enter or leave the classroom: you are responsible for your own progress. In many cases there may be no deadline or one that seems so far away that putting off the next lesson seems like the easiest thing to do.

So, what can be done?

Develop a plan

We recommend that you use a calendar or day-time to develop a learning plan. Your learning plan should identify milestones—what you want to achieve by a certain day. It’s very easy to say to oneself "I’ll do both those units next week." However you will get better results if you break the unit down by the number of lessons and realistically plan out how many you will go through in a specific amount of time.

To help you plan, answer the following questions:

How many hours a week will you devote to the course?

- When will you work on the course? (If you identify the days and/or times in advance it will be much easier to keep them from being eaten up by other demands or activities).
- How many weeks do you think you will need for each unit? (Estimate about 45 minutes per lesson of online time and maybe another hour or two of studying per week).
- When do you want to finish the course?

Assess your plan

Once you have developed your plan, it’s important to assess it to make sure it's realistic.

- Are you being too ambitious in your timelines, considering how much time you have to devote to the course?
- According to your available time, will you be able to finish the course by the deadline you have set?
- Are you possibly putting completion of the course off too much?
- Readjust any figures that require it so that you have:
  - A weekly schedule
  - A completion date for each unit
  - A completion date for the course.

Example

Sam has never taken an online course, but he is quite comfortable with computers and wants to be certified in order to be selling mutual funds before the coming RRSP season. Below, is the first part of his plan.
...and so on. But this is Sam's plan. Try it yourself. The online world can be very flexible: too flexible for many learners. By putting a reasonable plan together, you will be increasing your success rate enormously.

**Study Skills**

One of the most important success factors is your study skills. A few of the tools we have placed at your disposal include:

- Learning objectives appear at the beginning of each lesson so that you can identify the key information that you will learn.
- Note-taking allows you to take notes as you move through each lesson.

**Note-taking**

As with paper-based courses, note-taking is of great importance:

- It help you to identify what is most important to you.
- It highlights difficult passages or areas to be reviewed.
- It helps document clues, hints, or answers that you create for yourself as you go through the material.

**Why is note-taking important?**

By taking notes in this fashion, you are increasing your ability to remember the content. The more you implicate yourself with the content, the greater your brain’s ability to move it from the short-term memory to medium or long term memory.

The Take Notes function has been created in order to help with note-taking.
Review

Let's look at the concepts covered in this unit:

- the elements of the course interface
- navigation through different parts of the course
- how to use online resources
- techniques for effective distance learning
- the need to identify your strengths and weaknesses with regard to distance learning
- how to develop a learning plan with milestones for completing the course

You have now completed Learning on the Web. You are ready to take your first course.