

# **Success Strategies**

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**About the Author**

Katy Little holds a B.S. in Journalism and Mass Communication and an M.L.I.S. in Library and Information Science from Kent State University. Katy began her writing and editing career in the newspaper and magazine industries before broadening her talents in the world of academia. Katy has several years of extensive medical research experience in the library and information center of the Northeastern Ohio Universities College of Medicine, where she assisted medical students in their research endeavors. Recently, Katy has written and edited curriculum on subjects that include office administration, fitness and nutrition, health information management, psychology and English. Katy also serves as the U.S. Career Institute Virtual Librarian.

# Success Strategies

## Learning Objectives for Success Strategies

When you complete the instruction in this course, you'll be trained to:

- \* Define distance learning, and discuss how it works.
- \* Explain the U.S. Career Institute education process, including materials, schedules, payments, Exams and faculty support.
- \* Identify the advantages and challenges of distance learning.
- \* Apply yourself as a distance learner.
- \* Access and log in to the U.S. Career Institute Web site.
- \* Navigate the Web site and access its library services.
- \* Submit Assignments and view payments and grades online.
- \* Seek help from faculty and staff.
- \* Take math and English placement Exams.
- \* Apply proven success strategies.

Before you begin, take a moment to understand the concept of *course objectives* and *learning objectives*, which you'll see in each course. You'll see **course objectives** on each course syllabus; these are the concepts that you'll take away from the course. Within each course, you'll see learning objectives at the beginning of each chapter or section. The listed **learning objectives** are what you'll learn as you complete that chapter or section. Pay special attention to the learning objectives—they highlight the most important concepts in each area.

## Introduction to U.S. Career Institute

Welcome to U.S. Career Institute! You have taken the first step in making your career goals happen. Congratulations! You'll find our faculty and staff are dedicated to your education. We want you to successfully complete your coursework, earn your college degree, advance in your career or launch a new one. We are here to assist you every step of the way!

U.S. Career Institute was established to provide postsecondary distance education to people like you—adult learners who want to study independently. Whatever degree you choose to work toward, you'll find your coursework clear and easy to understand. Practice Exercises and Exams reinforce what you've read, while the Textbooks, Workbooks and Study Guides are filled with real-world examples to help you apply what you learn. Our course materials are designed to help you further your education and achieve your career goals.

U.S. Career Institute is accredited by the Accrediting Commission of the Distance Education and Training Council (DETC) in Washington, D.C. In addition, each degree program has been approved by the State of Colorado's Department of Higher Education, Division of Private Occupational Schools. U.S. Career Institute is also a member of the Better Business Bureau, the Fort Collins Chamber of Commerce and the Colorado Association of Career Colleges and Schools (CACCS), in addition to many industry-specific organizations.



We are here to assist you every step of the way!

## Introduction to Success Strategies

In *Success Strategies*, you'll become familiar with distance learning in general. You'll read about the advantages of distance learning, and you'll study tips about how to succeed as a distance learner. You'll learn about the materials you'll receive and how to use them. The terminology and process of submitting Exams will be discussed, as well as tools for efficient test-taking!



You'll study strategies for your success.

You'll study strategies for your success. We'll help you set course completion goals, develop systems of support and plan your own learning process. We'll also talk about how to take notes, manage time and stress and create a study schedule. We will discuss the topic of plagiarism, and how using proper citations will help you avoid it. Finally, we will look at the importance of proofreading your work, so that your coursework is professional.

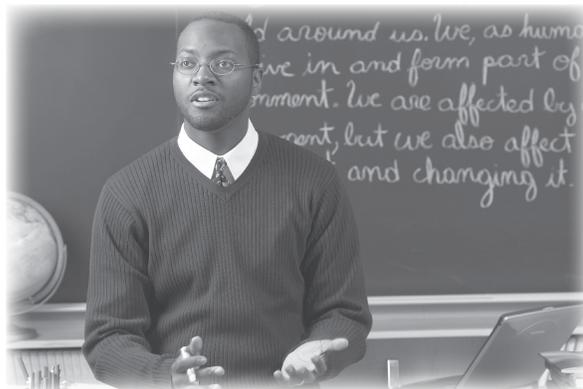
So, just what are success strategies? You will learn the answer throughout this course—although success strategies can mean different things to different people. Take a moment to consider one writer's list of strategies for success. Log on to the following Web site to read an article entitled, "10 Powerful Success Strategies," at: <http://www.lifehack.org/articles/productivity/10-powerful-success-strategies.html>. What did you think?

With U.S. Career Institute (USCI), you will learn from the best. Our experts, faculty and staff will provide you with an excellent education from the comfort of your own home. You'll earn your degree at your own pace from an accredited institution, and you'll be fully prepared to start your new career!

## How is Distance Learning Different than Classroom Learning?

It's a fair assumption to say that you've spent a good portion of your life in school—elementary school, middle school and high school. Perhaps you've taken a few instructional classes in pottery or woodworking, a computer class at your local community college or even started a traditional college education, attending classes on campus.

Now, stop and think about your educational experience up to this point. In class, was your teacher in the room with you? Probably. He likely lectured on various topics, wrote on the board, handed out Assignments and supervised you as you took Exams. Classroom learning is a good fit for children, and even some adults. However, most adults have jobs, families or other responsibilities that make classroom learning difficult. They need an education option that is mobile and flexible.



Most adults need an education option that is mobile and flexible.

Welcome to distance learning! You no longer need to be in the same room as your instructor—or even in the same town, state or country, for that matter. Technology has made it possible for people to learn just about anywhere. **Distance learning** is education that takes place when a student and teacher are not in the same physical location.

## Advantages of Distance Learning



Almost everything you need to begin working toward your degree is delivered right to your door.

What are the advantages of distance learning? Well, think about your lifestyle for a moment. You're busy, no doubt. Perhaps you have young children to care for. Maybe you have older children that must be shuttled to school, soccer practice and piano lessons at all hours of the day. Perhaps you also act as a caregiver to your elderly parents. Maybe your current job takes up much of your time. Or maybe you live in a rural area, and the nearest educational institution is simply too far away.

Yes, convenience is one of the advantages of distance learning, but it isn't the only reason for this form of education. Many students find that they learn faster, have better retention and actually achieve much more through distance learning. Why? Well, there are many reasons, but one of the most important is that students often discover that studying in the relaxed atmosphere of their own homes—rather than in a classroom where they must compete with many other students for the attention of the instructor—allows them the quality time they need for in-depth learning.

The U.S. Department of Education conducts studies that compare classroom instruction and distance education. For many years, the Department of Education has studied the viability of distance education versus classroom instruction. The latest report on the subject confirms that there is no difference in achievement levels between distance-education learners and traditional classroom learners. Consider the following points:

- \* Distance education is just as effective as traditional education in regard to learner outcomes.
- \* Distance learners generally have a more favorable attitude toward distance education than traditional learners have, and distance learners feel they learn as well as if they were in a regular classroom.
- \* Successful distance learners tend to be abstract learners who are intrinsically motivated and possess an internal focus of control.<sup>1</sup>

There are different types of distance learning:

- \* Self-paced correspondence courses are a type of distance learning. Students receive their materials in the mail, submit Assignments by e-mail or mail and interact with the faculty by phone, mail or e-mail.
- \* Online courses are another type of distance learning. Students use a platform on the Internet to access course materials, submit Assignments and interact with other students and faculty.

Many distance-learning educators, such as USCI, offer blended programs, or courses in which face-to-face time is replaced by online or distance-learning activities. Let's look at how the self-paced correspondence students receive materials, submit Exams and interact with faculty at U.S. Career Institute.

## **Course Materials**

U.S. Career Institute, as you previously read, is accredited by the Distance Education and Training Council in Washington, D.C. But there's even more good news. The DETC performs an intensive, expert review of every single program it approves. This standard of quality not only ensures that you receive exceptionally high-level instructional materials through U.S. Career Institute; it also imparts an added dimension of prestige to the degree that you will earn upon graduation.

The school provides the student with access to required Textbooks, Workbooks and Study Guides at no additional charge. The school will choose the delivery format (electronic link or physical copy of required Textbooks, Workbooks or Study Guides). Should the school opt to send electronic links for Textbooks, Workbooks or Study Guides, the student will also be given the option to purchase the printed copy of the material. Take a look at the other course materials USCI provides.



The school provides the student with access to required Textbooks, Workbooks and Study Guides at no additional charge.

**Syllabus**—The syllabus is a great place to start when you receive your course materials. You will find the course code and name, credit hours and Words of Welcome on the syllabus. The program code and course code can cause some confusion. Your program code is composed solely of numbers and will remain the same throughout your studies, as it relates to the overall degree program you are completing. The course code includes a combination of two letters and three numbers. However, your course code will change with each Textbook. Refer to the top of the syllabus for the correct course code to route your questions and Exams to the correct department. The syllabus also lists the prerequisites; course description; course objectives; required materials; grading criteria and class Assignments; and the Academic Code of Conduct. If the course has a Proctored Final Exam, this information is found in the syllabus, as well. The time you spend reviewing the syllabus is considered part of your overall course time.

**Textbook**—Your degree program includes expertly authored Textbooks. USCI customizes all of its own material to give students the best education available. In the Textbooks written by USCI, you'll see that each chapter of every Textbook is written in general language. Everything is easy to read and understand—we write our courses with our students in mind. For Textbooks written by an outside publisher, we include a Study Guide to assist in the learning process. It is important for you to read the pages assigned so you can attain the learning objectives for the course.

**Study Guide or Workbook**—You will find a Study Guide or Workbook included with your course materials. Simply, the Study Guide will guide you through the Textbook. The Study Guide provides learning objectives, learning in action sections, reading assignments, Practice Exercises and Exams. Learning in actions provide real-life case studies or more in-depth learning of the topic you're reading about in the Textbook. For courses that don't include a Study Guide, you'll find Exams in the Workbook. **Make sure to keep your Textbooks and graded Exams** for reference in future courses and practicums.

When you enroll at USCI, you receive much more than just the course materials. The faculty and staff understand that you can benefit from effective learning aids. For example, a course in anatomy and physiology might include flashcards to help you learn about the body systems, while a patient care course includes virtual labs so that you can see the proper techniques used. A software program that assists in completing claim forms is included in the insurance reimbursement course.

## **Practice Exercises, Exams and Final Exams**

Let's take a few moments to talk about Practice Exercises, Exams and Final Exams. As you read your course materials, you'll encounter Practice Exercises to reinforce what you learn in each section. Practice Exercises are self-graded; the answers are found at the back of the Textbooks or Study Guides. Students are encouraged to complete the Practice Exercises, because they add to the learning process and can assist in the completion of an Exam. Answers to the Practice Exercises are not submitted for grading.

Exams and Final Exams are graded and account for a portion of your overall grade. Exams, found in the Workbook or Study Guide, are in chronological order. Usually, the last Exam is a Final Exam or project. The final provides you the opportunity to apply your knowledge and the skills that you've gained during the course. Throughout your degree program, you'll take a few Proctored Exams. Each Proctored Exam will be the Final Exam in designated courses in the semester. An approved proctor must administer all Proctored Exams. Refer to the catalog for more information about proctors and Proctored Exams. It is important to designate a proctor before you move on to your next course.

One important aspect of the U.S. Career Institute education process is that your Exams are open book. We don't want to test you on how much you can memorize. That's not how the real world works. We want to see that you've learned what you need to know and are able to find the answers to what you don't know.

Before you complete each Exam, be sure you have mastered the course content and successfully completed the Practice Exercises, so you are better prepared for success in each Exam. The Workbook or Study Guide provides detailed steps on submitting your Exams.

- \* Scanner Exams can be submitted online or by phone, mail or fax. You will receive immediate feedback on your grade when you submit your scanner Exam online or by phone.
- \* Handwritten or typed Exams are those that require faculty grading. You can e-mail, mail or fax your Exam for grading. E-mailed Exams are graded and usually returned within three business days.



All of your Exams at U.S. Career Institute will be open book.

Another benefit of an education with USCI is the option to “test out” of particular courses. If you feel that you already understand the material that a course covers, you can choose to take a Challenge Exam in that particular course. If you earn an 80 percent or above on the Exam, you'll receive credit for the course and be that much closer to earning your degree! To learn more, consult your school catalog.

## **Faculty Support**

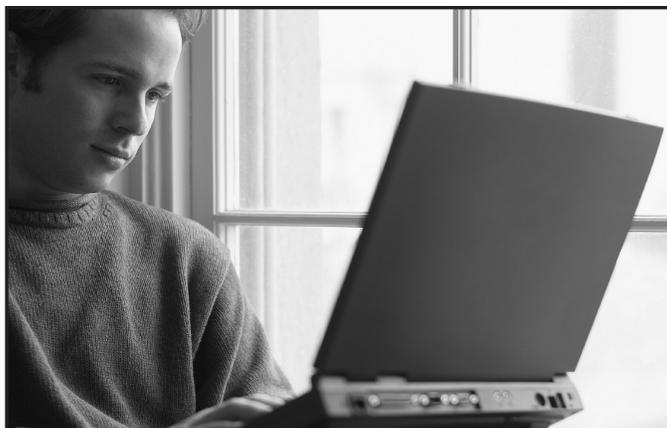
Because you're in a class of one, you can move through the material at your own pace. If you understand the material, you don't have to spend time sitting in class, listening to a teacher lecture about topics you already know. If you're still working on a topic, you don't have to struggle to keep up with the pace of classmates. Your learning always proceeds at the pace that is best for you!

### **Access Your USCI Account Online**

Did you know you can log in to view your account details, make payments, submit Exams and contact an instructor or Student Services? It's true! Simply head to a computer and visit: [www.westondistancelearning.com/student](http://www.westondistancelearning.com/student).

If you provided an e-mail address when you enrolled, you already have an online account set up. Check your e-mail for a message with your log-in information. If you need to set up your account, click on *Create an Account* and enter your information.

If you find yourself struggling with a new concept, confused by something you've read or simply in need of a little motivational talk, just pick up the phone or turn on your computer. Call toll free or e-mail your instructor to receive assistance, explanations and help. Remember that we're here for you. We will do everything we can to help you succeed!



E-mail or call your instructor for assistance.

By now, you know that USCT's self-paced course delivery option allows you to set your own schedule as you study. Perhaps you're a go-getter, eager to finish your degree. Great! You can have your degree and start your new career in as few as 14 to 16 months. Maybe you have obligations that allow you to devote only part of your time to your studies. No rush! Go at your own pace. Or maybe you have a full-time job outside the home or consider your spouse and children a full-time job. No problem! Just take your time. Because you study at home and are a class of one, your course materials are always waiting for you when you have time to spare—be it at 7 a.m. Tuesday, 10 p.m. Thursday or all day Saturday. Distance learning means you can fit studying in to your schedule, whatever your schedule may be. We strongly encourage you to complete each course in three months or less. This increases your chances of retaining the information to complete your program successfully.

## Learning to Learn from a Distance

So, how can you succeed as a distance-learning student? As you may have guessed, a lot of your success depends on what type of student you are. If you know your goal and are eager to achieve it, have a positive attitude and keep your studies as a high priority, you're likely to do well in the distance-learning environment. Why? Well, distance learning does require a certain amount of self-motivation. You must be able to work independently to succeed at distance learning.

According to the *Distance Learner's Guide*, edited by Sally M. Johnstone and George P. Connick, successful distance learners are also well organized and able to manage their time. They can study without being reminded by a teacher or other students, and are persistent when it comes to solving problems.



Through distance education, you'll save money because you don't have to commute.

At this point, you may think that distance learners are born, not made. But that's not true! You can teach yourself to succeed at distance learning. Let's look at a few tips.

- \* Remember to follow instructions as you study at home. Complete all of the readings and Practice Exercises—even if you don't think you need to do so.
- \* Review any mistakes you make, and be sure you understand why you made them. After all, doing so will only help you as you complete your Exams. And remember, mistakes are normal; they are part of the learning process!
- \* Find a learning place in your home that is comfortable and has adequate lighting. Doing this will help remove stress and tension and allow you to concentrate on your coursework.
- \* Keep all course materials close at hand, including writing materials, reference books and anything that you will need during your study sessions. This will prevent interruptions and loss of concentration.
- \* To keep your mind clear for learning, you will need to schedule study sessions in time periods when you will not be distracted. Remove yourself from your family's traffic and noise patterns, and inform family members that you are not to be disturbed during your study session. Also, schedule this time period when you are alert and likely to be at your best. Scheduling will probably be the biggest challenge that you have to face. But most everyone can find a one-hour time period during the day to concentrate on learning, especially if that learning will provide a new and satisfying career.



Find a learning place in your home that is comfortable and has adequate lighting.



Successful distance learners are well organized and able to manage their time.

- \* Your study sessions do not have to be long, bleary-eyed marathons. In fact, we all learn and concentrate better when study sessions are kept short—not exceeding one hour each.
- \* Your learning sessions should, however, be everyday activities. Regular study sessions will help you remember yesterday's material and tie it to the new activity. Also, when you do this, you will constantly reinforce your learning and solidify your skills to make them a permanent part of your abilities. Invest an hour of your day in your studies. The more regular you are in your study habits, the sooner you'll be able to taste the rewards of your new skills!
- \* Also, ask questions. As a distance learner, you're going to have questions from time to time. When you have a question, contact your instructor.

### Time to Think Critically

You'll see several "Time to Think Critically" activities throughout your Textbook. We designed these questions and activities to activate your mind and start thinking critically about what you're reading. These activities are not graded, so have fun with them!



### Distance-learning Strategies

Select a few distance-learning strategies that you'll put to use during your coursework, and think about how you'll incorporate them. Perhaps you'll discover your own distance-learning strategies that you can add to the list.



## Earn an A in Test-taking

Now that you know how to learn from a distance, it's time to discover some test-taking skills. Even though Exams are open book, it's good to have some strategies for how to approach multiple-choice and essay questions. We want you to be efficient test-takers and see you succeed. Let's get to it!

### Multiple-choice Questions

Multiple-choice questions are **objective** questions, which means that there is only one correct answer. In multiple-choice questions, the right or "best" answer is provided, but you must recognize it. Questions can be general or specific. General questions require a broader view and might include scenarios that allow you to apply what you learned. Specific questions could include terms or concepts.

Let's cover some suggestions for successful completion of multiple-choice questions:

- \* First, make sure you carefully read the Exam directions for the whole test and each subsection.
- \* Carefully read each question and possible answer.
- \* Change your answer only if you have reason to do so; research indicates that your first choice is probably correct 75 percent of the time.
- \* If the question is long and complex, underline the subject and verb to help you.
- \* Read the question and answer it in your mind, and then look for the matching answer.
- \* Read all the answer possibilities, saying "possible" or "not possible" before making a decision. Cross off the choices that aren't possible.
- \* If a question is in the negative (for example, "One of the following is NOT a cause"), look for three true answers, and the one remaining false answer will be the correct one to mark.

- \* General statements are more likely to be correct than specific statements, especially if you can think of one exception.
- \* Check the scanner answer sheet with the question sheet to make sure the numbering corresponds. You don't want to lose points because you filled out the scanner answer sheet incorrectly!
- \* You must select not only a correct answer, but the best answer. Some answers may seem partly true, but your job is to select the answer that is completely true. You must read all of the options and not stop when you come upon one that seems likely.

Are you feeling better prepared to answer multiple-choice questions? You'll do great! Now, let's cover essay questions.

## Essay Questions

You learned that multiple-choice questions are objective questions, so what do you think essay questions are? You're right, they're *subjective* questions! **Subjective** questions mean that the essay questions do not have one specific answer. Opinion is part of grading essay questions, but there are facts and elements that faculty want to see in your answers. Some students don't do well on essay questions—not because they cannot write, but because they fail to answer the questions fully and specifically. Other students don't organize their essays effectively.

Let's cover some tips for tackling essay questions:

- \* Carefully read the directions and questions.
- \* Note the number of items, point distribution and range of difficulty.
- \* Review the grading *rubric* to see what your answer should include. A **rubric** is a set of guidelines that instructors use to assess your work. Here's an example rubric:



Knowing more about the types of questions you may encounter on an Exam can help you succeed.

No credit	Partial credit	Half credit	Full credit
The student's answer is invalid and incomplete, demonstrating a lack of understanding of the principles being assessed. The student fails to incorporate material from the text in support of the answer.	The student's answer is valid but incomplete. The answer does not incorporate enough material from the text or demonstrate an understanding of the principles being assessed.	The student's answer is valid and generally complete (though the student may have missed minor aspects), demonstrating an understanding of the principles being assessed. The student applies material from the text to support the answer.	The student's answer is valid and complete. The student applies material from the text to support the response. Answers are unique and thoughtful, demonstrating a mastery of the principles being assessed.

- \* As you read each question, note any immediate answers that come to your mind. This can be a list, outline or just rough notes. Also, write down any other key information you might forget and include an example.
- \* Analyze the Exam question, and divide it in to its main parts and subparts. You can use this information to construct a rough outline. Use the outline as a “map” to answer the essay question. The outline also helps you to stay focused.
- \* Analyze, explain and illustrate questions require essays that are fully thought out and developed in as much detail for which you have time. Compare and contrast questions require an analysis in essay form that emphasizes similarities, differences and connections between ideas or concepts.
- \* Make your answer as specific as possible. If you know the answer, only include what you are asked, instead of expanding to make your answer longer.

The most important concept to keep in mind is that we already know what the Textbook has to say on the subject; we’re looking for your interpretation of the information presented. Avoid answering word for word from your Textbook.

Now that you know more about how to answer questions, let’s try answering a few. It’s time to complete your assessment Exams before we discuss more about success strategies in Steps to Success. Ready for your assessment Exams? Let’s go!

## **Success Strategies Exams 1 and 2**

U.S. Career Institute wants to help make your education path more successful. One of the best ways we can help you succeed in your degree program is to make sure you have the writing and math skills you need. Maybe it has been a while since you have been in school. Maybe you never really liked or performed well in English or math classes. No problem! You need to know two things. First, this is perfectly normal. And second, we can help you.

We have a quick and easy way to assess your math and English skills—the first two Exams in this course. And better yet, these Exams are “easy As.” All you need to do to receive a 100% on both Exams is to complete and submit them to us. We will not subtract points for any questions you may miss.

These multiple-choice Exams will help us quickly determine if you would benefit from our self-guided refresher tutorials in writing and math fundamentals. These refreshers can help you brush up on your writing and math skills and feel more confident as you use these skills throughout your degree program.

So, let’s get started on the first two As of your college career! Locate Exam 1 (English Mechanics) and Exam 2 (Math Placement) in your Workbook. Read and carefully follow the Exam instructions, and don’t forget to apply what you just learned!