

How to stay focused when learning online.

Discipline. Studying requires immense discipline, which should come naturally, once you've made an inroad; it requires commitment to stay on that road. This rule should apply in the library, at home with your textbooks, and on the web.

Unfortunately I've discovered distraction can happen without you knowing. On the internet, as part of a distance learning course, I once set out to get a simple set of statistics on employment change in my local area but somehow managed to spend two hours reading about the history narrow gauge railways in North Wales. How? Why?

Never mind. The same thing happens in the library, you just need to walk straight past the newspaper and CD sections, look straight ahead, straight to the non-fiction, find your book, sit down, read it, and learn the stuff!

Guidance is more important than you'd think if you'd never considered the Internet as a functional and viable studying tool. Simply typing in words relevant to your subject might not necessarily yield the most useful information.

I've just embarked on online [marketing courses](#), and although the syllabus, tutorials and classes are conducted via the Internet, research is primarily through this means. The guidance and suggestions from my tutor are crucial for using the Internet to help you study.

There are a range of management papers and reference materials available in easy to use formats such as PDF documents. Knowing how to find them and make the time you spend researching online is a skill in itself. Some you can learn as you go along, the more familiar you become with following links, straightforward web searches, and searching within specialist web sites.

The Internet is a great way to help you study, and familiarity with search engine techniques means you can go straight to the information you need. Cross-referencing is easy too, because searches will often yield multiple sources. For important statistical information, it's best to use bona fide governmental or academic resources online. You'll quickly learn what types of sources you can rely on, take with a pinch of salt, or dismiss, and importantly, without decisions taking you too much time!

If you're going to take a business degree online, or any online degree that can be done suitably via a range of web based teaching tools and learning methods then you'll find studying on the Internet to be a brilliantly convenient way to get the information you need.

Plus there is a range of ways to get in touch with your tutor or communicate with fellow students – email, forums, web chats, web video links etc. Communication over the Internet is cheap, easy and quick, and ideal for studying.

Of course, using time efficiently, especially when researching, is the key. There's no point just going online and wandering around web sites idly hoping you're going to get the information you need. By focusing your efforts on what you're looking for, understanding what it is you're looking for, the Internet will be an indispensable tool for studying.

About the Author

Sarah Maple writes about [marketing courses](#) and [distance learning](#).

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