



# **Topic: Creating a Personal Portfolio for Distance Learning Success**

**Grade: Community College**

An integrated lesson plan covering 2 sessions of approximately 1 hour each.

Kathy Rousset

## **Lesson-Planning Approach**

Some learners perceive their “world” as a whole, where all things are interconnected and dependent upon each other. These “integrated” students face major challenges in coping with our dominant educational, social, and economic systems, which tend to present information in a linear fashion without the necessity of integration into meaningful context. Integrated students are at-risk of failing as they attempt to grasp information in ways that do not match their experience. Among large populations of at-risk students are many from Native American and similar cultures who do not regard their world as a sum of parts but as a blend of all that they experience.

This lesson plan does include some traditional, linear approaches to delivering information (checklists, rules, analysis, problem solving and organization). In addition to the traditional, linear delivery of information, this lesson plan also includes some of the following strategies, designed to appeal to at-risk students as they learn academic/life skills:

- ❖ Integration of technology
- ❖ Story telling/anecdotal information
- ❖ Non-competitive group and team work
- ❖ Performance-based assessment and rubrics
- ❖ Visual presentations and practice through technology and other means
- ❖ Project-based assignments that integrate family and community
- ❖ Activities appealing to multiple intelligences (Gardner)

## **Lesson Overview**

This lesson requires students to create a set of distance learning tools for their specific learning style and lifestyle. They prepare a schedule for the present semester, including the time required to complete a distance-learning course. They also develop a portfolio of tools to enhance distance learning with their learning style.

## Lesson Objectives

**Name of Project:** Creating a Personal Portfolio for Distance Learning

**Project Objectives:** When students complete this project, they will be able to...

- Plan their time to include time for their distance learning course commitment
- Utilize learning techniques specific to their learning style to enhance their distance learning
- Share their hints for success with other students at a distance learning website.

**Integration of Other Functional/Academic Skills:**

Students will be able to...

- Utilize websites to locate learning tools for their learning style
- Calculate time requirements for their distance-learning course.
- Create a time management plan that incorporates commitments to family, work, and school.
- Explain at least three techniques for success in a distance learning course.

## State/National Standards

Standards have not been adopted for community college students.

## Websites

**Required:** For students enrolled at Pueblo Community College:  
Teton.pcc.ccco.es.edu:8900

**Support:**

[http://www.monroecc.edu/depts/distlearn/minicrs/mod\\_3learn.htm](http://www.monroecc.edu/depts/distlearn/minicrs/mod_3learn.htm)

<http://www.active-learning-site.com/study.htm#study>

<http://www2.ncsu.edu/unity/lockers/users/f/felder/public/ILSdir/styles.htm>

## Pre-requisites

Ability to read at 10<sup>th</sup> grade level

Ability to use a computer to access the Internet

## Required Materials

Paper and pencil or pen

## **Handouts**

**That's My Style!**  
**The Time of My Life**

## **Required Equipment/Technology**

Computer with Internet access  
Word processing software

## THE LESSON

**Note: Students do not learn from what you do but from what you have them do.**

### Preparation

Activity	Instructor Notes	ET
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Determine the suitability of this lesson for your course.</li> <li>❖ Visit the websites listed in the resources. Add any other websites you would like your students to visit.</li> <li>❖ Post course materials to your college's online learning server if you will deliver the class via Internet.</li> <li>❖ Adjust the lesson plan to reflect your goals for your students.</li> <li>❖ Prepare handouts for classroom presentation.</li> </ul>	<p>The method of delivery (web, classroom, or combination of the two) how you prepare for the lesson.</p>	<p>1-4 hours</p>

### Presentation

Activity	Instructor Notes	ET
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Review the topic of learning styles.</li> <li>❖ Explain to students that they will be creating a portfolio of study skills for their personal use by cutting from various documents and pasting into their portfolio file. They will also develop a time-management plan that reflects study time.</li> <li>❖ Remind students that they don't learn in just one way, and encourage them to explore suggestions from other styles that they find interesting.</li> <li>❖ Suggest that they include general learning skills sites in their portfolios, as they may</li> </ul>	<p>Students who have not identified their learning style can prepare a portfolio of general study skills.</p> <p>Remind students that their learning style is a preference, not an exclusive means of learning.</p> <p>Encourage students to be honest in examining their learning habits (study habits and time commitment to learning). Their performance and grades will only improve if they make changes.</p> <p>Emphasize the self-responsibility that is central to distance learning success.</p>	<p>.5 hour</p>

use additional resources from the sites for other classes.		
--	--	--

### Performance and Practice

Instructions for students	Teacher notes	ET
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Have students read the handout of study suggestions for their learning style, cutting and pasting the portions they feel will be helpful to them.</li> <li>❖ Provide time for students to visit websites on study skills for their learning style, again cutting and pasting those portions they find useful.</li> <li>❖ Provide a means for students to share personal hints for success. Students who have experienced success in distance learning courses will have valuable experiences to share.</li> </ul>	<p>If class size allows, it is helpful to have a class discussion on the tips students think will be most helpful to them. Students may be placed in groups according to their learning style.</p> <p>A second discussion, with all learning styles represented in each group will allow students to identify behaviors that promote success for all learners (turn assignments in on time). It will also allow them to explore using learning styles other than their dominant style.</p>	2 hours
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Direct students to complete the activity diary for the past 24 hours.</li> <li>❖ Provide time for students to read the time management handout and visit the related websites.</li> <li>❖ Have students complete their monthly and weekly activity plans.</li> <li>❖ Have students complete a daily plan for the following day.</li> </ul>	<p>Recall of brief time periods is not necessary for students to grasp where their time is usually spent.</p> <p>If student are “too busy” to complete the assignment and submit it on time, they are probably too busy to be successful in a distance learning course.</p>	

## **Lesson Assessment Strategy (Formative – As the lesson progresses)**

### Preparation, Presentation and Overall Implementation (Instructor)

- ❖ Have I used the most appropriate media for delivery of this material?
- ❖ Are computers available for student use during the lesson?
- ❖ Do I have a strategy for bringing students back to the topic at hand after they explore the listed/linked sites ( if I'm teaching in a classroom setting)?
- ❖ Have I allowed sufficient time for students to explore appropriate websites?

### Performance and Practice (Student)

- ❖ Are students able to access the lesson online?
- ❖ If the lesson is being delivered in a classroom, do the students have access to the Internet?
- ❖ If the lesson is being delivered in a classroom, are the students staying on-task or are they visiting websites unrelated to the lesson?
- ❖ Are the students able to identify some information they can share with distance learners?

### Technology

- ❖ Do the websites load quickly enough to hold the students' interest?
- ❖ Do the students seem comfortable using the technology?
- ❖ Which students require a lot of assistance as they progress through the lesson?  
These students may not have the necessary skills for a distance learning course.

### That's My Style!

One of the skills all students should develop is learning to learn. Often, students and faculty are focused on content to the exclusion of the learning process itself. However the goal in all classes, whether they are delivered face-to-face or by distance technology, is for learning to occur. Developing good learning habits and effective learning techniques will reduce your study time and increase your retention.

The study techniques below are categorized by learning style. Remember that your learning style is a preference, but is not the only way you learn. None of us learned to walk using the auditory style, and none of us learned to swim using the visual style. We have all learned through a variety of means, we just find some ways of learning more “natural” than others.

After reading the suggestions for success in distance learning for your preferred style, read about the other styles, too. You will techniques under each heading that can improve your learning. As you try new techniques, you will increase the flexibility of your brain, just as stretching muscles increases the flexibility of your body. The more flexible you are, the more readily you learn! Studying will take less time and will be more fun.

In the previous lesson, it was suggested that you save the study guide for your learning style. If you forgot to do that, go back to the website and do it now.

[www.active-learning-site.com/vark.htm](http://www.active-learning-site.com/vark.htm)

<http://www2.ncsu.edu/unity/lockers/users/f/felder/public/ILSdir/ilsweb.html>

### Auditory Learners

Your learning style is well suited to telecourses, but less well suited to internet courses. You will need to create your own auditory stimulation while taking these courses.

1. Have music playing while you work on an online course.
2. Earphones may help you avoid being distracted by sounds in the surrounding environment. Since you notice sounds more easily than other types of sensory stimulation, you may find the noise of family, other students, or traffic a distraction. Replace the distraction with your study music.
3. Read your lessons from the Internet into a cassette tape, and then listen to them like a lecture. This process provides you with auditory stimulation twice—first as you record it, and again as you listen to it.
4. Talk about your lessons with anyone who will listen. Your dog or cat will appreciate the extra attention if you explain your course concepts to them. Your spouse or children may be interested in what you're learning. Call an old friend and ask their opinion on a controversial topic.

5. When you need to memorize information, try making it into a song or poem that you can repeat while you drive, shower, or shovel snow. It's amazing how many times a day you can review your notes using this method.
6. Use "sounds like" clues to remind you of words or concepts. Does your clavicle move when you clap? Do you think renaissance painters renovated their homes?
7. Answer the review questions in your textbook by talking to yourself. Hearing the information will reinforce it. You may also want to read portions of the textbook aloud.

## **Kinesthetic Learners**

You learn most readily when you can use your body, not just your brain, in the learning process. You learn by doing, which means that you need to practice the things you are learning, and use them creatively in your daily life.

1. Using your hands for keyboarding is one way to use your body while learning. Don't just copy and paste to take notes; re-write the material, using your own words and your own hands.
2. Walk around while you read your notes to yourself. Use hand motions or body movements each time you repeat a particular piece of information you want to remember. Press your hand against the desk when you are working on the psychological concept of repression.
3. Visualizing a physical activity stimulates the same parts of the brain as actually performing the activity does. If your art class is studying pointillism, see yourself making a picture from many small dots. Be creative as you imagine moves to go with the concepts you are learning.
4. Dates in history are more easily remembered if you draw a time line, and draw a line at the time the particular event occurred. Writing a summary of the event below the line will link it physically in your mind.
5. Apply the information you are learning to another situation within 24 hours. If you are taking statistics, find the mean of the ages of your children, or the mean of the number of items on the shelves of your refrigerator. Talk to your dog in Spanish. Write your history notes in complete sentences to practice your English skills. Using your new knowledge will make it stick in your mind.
6. Stimulate your sense of touch by running your fingers through your hair as you study. Look up and to the left as you memorize things—it really does help you remember them later.
7. Review your notes while you are physically doing something. Prop note cards in front of you while you wash dishes. Repeat the muscles of the arm while you lift weights. Write notes while you watch your telecourse video. Any physical activity added to your mental focus will help you retain information



## **Reading/Writing Learners**

Your style is well suited to Internet courses, and will also find the many written assignments in telecourses a nice fit. You may find group projects and discussion groups more challenging.

1. Download course materials to your computer whenever possible because you are probably a fast reader and may find it frustrating to wait for pages to load.
2. Take notes by restating the material from the lesson in another document that is for your own use.
3. Use email to communicate with your instructor and fellow students, as you probably express yourself well in writing.
4. Combine information from your textbook and your online lessons into a single set of notes for studying.
5. Write questions about topics as you go through your lessons, and then test yourself by writing the answers to those questions. Trade questions with other students in the class in preparation for tests.
6. Your textbook for most classes will have review questions. Write out the answers, and then check them against the information in your book.

## **Visual Learners**

This learning style is readily suited to distance learning. Most distance education courses require viewing videotapes, websites, or other printed material. However, you may find yourself frustrated by download time on websites, or by poor TV reception. Here are some techniques that you may find helpful.

1. Read textbook assignments first. This allows you to scan material on the web, and to choose to explore in depth only those segments of the lesson that you want more information about.
2. Download lessons to your hard drive whenever possible. This allows you to read and explore at your pace, without waiting for documents to load.
3. Try to avoid peak times for Internet use. When your ISP and the Internet in general are very busy, download times are longer and you are more likely to be “kicked off” your connection. Try to schedule your Internet work for early mornings or late nights when fewer users may be online.
4. Another alternative is to sign up for a higher grade of service, such as DSL. If this option is available in your community and the cost is within your budget, it will reduce your waiting time.
5. Use the services of your college computer lab or the public library. Often these institutions will have faster connections than your home connection.
6. Multitask. If your connection requires time for sites to load, do something else while you’re waiting. You can paint one fingernail, look up one word in the dictionary, or even put one word into a crossword puzzle while a site is loading.

Almost anything you do for distraction will reduce your tension and therefore enhance your learning.

7. Use the color option in formatting text when you save notes from your course to your study file. Just as color coding your handwritten notes can enhance your learning, color coding your text notes can also make it easier to find a reference or remember a phrase that you have saved.

Now, create your personal learning guide by cutting and pasting the tips that you want to try into a document. Save it or print it so that you can review it easily and often. It will only help you if you use it!

The next step in developing your personal portfolio is to go to The Time of My Life.

## The Time of My Life!

What are the things you would do, if you just had enough time? Would you learn to paint, or would you play catch with your child? Would you visit your parents if you had time? Maybe your dream is to get a college degree!

We all have twenty-four hours, or 1440 minutes, each day. If each minute were a dollar, how would you spend it? Are you more willing to waste your time than to waste your money? Would that TV shows really be worth 30 dollars a day? When we consider what certain habits or activities are costing us, we see the potential for different choices.

The power of scheduling tasks is that it gives you free time to pursue the things that you want to do. Your mind isn't on the homework you've left undone while you play with your child. You don't fret over the paper that is due tomorrow while you attend your spouse's business dinner. By planning when and where you will fit the important items into your week, you can do more and also have more peace of mind.

What are your favorite ways of wasting time? We all have activities we engage in that allow us to "zone out" for a while. Some people read magazines; others watch TV or hang out at the mall with friends. You can still do these favorite things! You will choose when and for how long you do them, and use them to reward yourself for doing the tough things like homework.

Time management begins with a long-term schedule. This is the schedule for your semester. Next, you schedule the upcoming week. And finally, you schedule the next day. With these pieces in place, you find that there is time for the things you've decided to do, and you know where the open time is for spontaneous things like a movie with friends. Remember that the schedule is a guide. Keep it flexible. Let's try it.

Get out a calendar, personal planner, or PDA, or download software for a calendar on your computer at <http://www.geocities.com/homeofmars/calenda/>

Enter the important dates for your school semester:

1. First day of classes
2. Last day to drop a class and get your tuition refunded
3. Midterm
4. Last day to withdraw from a class without a grade
5. Finals week
6. Last day of class

Enter the important personal events during the semester:

1. Family events like holidays, birthdays, or sports events
2. Church and civic commitments, meetings, or project work days
3. Work schedules
4. Any other long-term commitments

Schedule your study time: Remember that your mind is best able to absorb material when you study in 30 to 40 minute sessions with about 10 minutes break between sessions to do one of your favorite things. It helps to change subjects each session so that you don't get bored. Visit this website for many other study hints:

1. Schedule the classes that meet on campus
2. Schedule time for your distance learning class(es) equal to the time you would spend on campus for a similar class—15 hours per semester for each credit the class is worth
3. Schedule homework time—two hours per week outside of class for every hour you spend in class, whether the class meets on campus or by distance delivery
4. When you receive the dates for tests, papers, or projects that are due, write them on your calendar.
5. Plan which days and times you will devote to the assignments so that you're sure to have them done on time. Allow some extra time to cover unexpected problems like your computer hard drive crashing.

Schedule the time you will use each week to schedule the upcoming week.

1. This will require 20-30 minutes once a week.
2. For most people, Sunday is the least committed day and is a good time to plan out your schedule for the upcoming week.
3. Review the personal events, work and class commitments, and upcoming assignments.
4. Schedule in time for an activity you enjoy—and do it just like you do the other items you have committed to.
5. List the commitments and amount of work you need to accomplish for each. For example, "Buy Pat's birthday gift; 40 min." or "Read 37 pages of Literature book by Thursday."

Commit to the tasks you will do the following day:

1. Each day, write down the items you will achieve the following day.
2. Include the truly important things you didn't accomplish today, if any.
3. Be sure to prioritize tasks so that you get the most important things done first. (see www.
4. For some people, carrying the list with them and marking off the items as they are done helps them see their accomplishments.
5. Other people may find that having the list is sufficient—you can mark the items off as you plan for the following day.

When the unexpected happens, relax and know that you can compensate in the upcoming days.

1. Because you have been keeping pace with your commitments, you can accommodate changes.
2. Commitments to the things you enjoy are important. They keep you refreshed and motivated. However, in an emergency, they can be delayed without serious negative consequences.

Sometimes you can combine studying with another activity, like reviewing note cards while you wait for a doctor's appointment. Keeping some study materials with you at all times will allow you to use time that might otherwise have been wasted. These small study times can be deducted from your weekly study hours, freeing up time that you had scheduled for studying.

At first, a schedule may feel confining. You may feel that you can no longer "do what you want to do." By looking at your schedule for the week, though, you will be able to see where you have scheduled time to do what you enjoy. You will also discover that the things you chose as priorities are getting done. You may even find that you don't need all the study time you scheduled, and you can spend that extra time any way you wish.

Try different approaches until you find a schedule that works for you. If you can't study at night because the neighbors have their stereo on loud, try wearing earphones to listen to your music and drown theirs out. You could try studying early in the morning when they are sleeping. Maybe the best place to study is the library instead of your apartment. Experiment until you find the right solution for you. Enjoy your success!

With your personal learning style portfolio at hand and your calendar started, you're ready to begin your distance learning class. Best wishes!

If you have suggestions for improving the Distance Learning Orientation course, please contact [Kathy.rousset@pcc.ccoes.edu](mailto:Kathy.rousset@pcc.ccoes.edu)

## Activity Checklist

	Activity
	I read the lesson.
	I visited the recommended websites.
	I collected study guidelines for my learning style.
	I completed the activity diary for 24 hours.
	I created a semester calendar and committed study time for my DL class.

## Technology Checklist

	I accessed the lesson online.
	I visited the recommended websites.
	I followed a series of links within one or more of the websites.
	I saved the study guidelines for my learning style to disk or a computer file.

## Lesson Rubric

This lesson is designed for personal use and is not graded. No rubric is used.