How to Prepare Your Computer for Concord University Online/Blackboard Courses

To be an effective participant in Concord University's online courses in Blackboard, your computer needs to be up-to-date with the appropriate hardware and software. The following requisites exemplify the least acceptable requirements for students to participate in online courses. If your computer already has the recommended applications, plug-ins, and software, all you need to do is ensure that they are updated with the latest version.

The Computer Unit

1. Windows XP or higher or MAC OS-X or higher
2. 128 MB RAM or higher required
3. 2 GB or larger hard drive
4. Color video display running at least 800 X 600 dpi with 256 colors
5. Sound Card with speakers and/or headphones
6. Microphone (*Getting a combined Microphone and Earphones/Headphones is preferred*)
7. Stable Internet Connectivity - 56K modem (minimum); Broadband or DSL connection is highly recommended
8. Anti-Virus software with up-to-date virus definitions

Note: *Please avoid sourcing internet services for your online classes from restaurants, cafes, and other public spaces where wireless internet services are provided for free. These services fluctuate based on the number of people connected, and you could lose your class work or assignment.*

Web Browsers

To be able to access Concord University's online courses, at least two of the following web browsers are recommended to be installed on your computer:

- Internet Explorer [*Click on the title to download from an off-site link*]
- Mozilla Firefox [*Click on the title to download from an off-site link*]
- Google Chrome [*Click on the title to download from an off-site link*]

NOTE: *We recommend two so that you can have a backup browser when your favorite one crashes (this happens intermittently with all browser types).*

Pop-Up Blockers

For the best online experience, ensure that pop-up blockers embedded in your browsers and anti-virus software are disabled so as not to obstruct Blackboard and other course items/function such as Emailing, Discussion boards, Course messaging, Quizzes, and Assignments.

Browser Plug-Ins

In order to properly view all of the materials (lessons, assignments, discussions, and tests) required for online courses, the appropriate plug-ins for your Web browser need to be installed. Below are some recommended plug-ins:

- Java [*Click on the title to download from an off-site link*]: Many of the tools in Blackboard provide a built-in HTML editor to make it easier to create and edit content pages. The HTML editor requires the use of the Java Virtual Machine.

- Macromedia Flash [*Click on the title to download from an off-site link*]: It may be necessary to have the Adobe Flash player. In order to view animated flash files, the Flash player must be installed on your computer.

- Adobe Acrobat Reader [*Click on the title to download from an off-site link*]: Most step-by-step instructions are presented in Adobe PDF format in order to facilitate printing. In order to view these files, you must have Acrobat Reader installed on your computer.

- Shockwave Player [*Click on the title to download from an off-site link*]: The Shockwave Player is used to display Web content created using Adobe Director.

- Real Player Media Player [*Click on the title to download from an off-site link*]

- VLC Media Player [*Click on the title to download from an off-site link*]

- Windows Media Player [*Click on the title to download from an off-site link*]

- QuickTime Media Player [*Click on the title to download from an off-site link*]

Utility Software

In using a computer for academic work, most downloadable files come in compressed (or ZIP) formats. To un-compress (UNZIP) these files, the proper utility software needs to be installed on your computer. The recommended utilities are:

- WinZIP [Windows - *Click on the title to download from an off-site link*]

- Free Alternatives to WinZip [Windows - *Click on the title to download from an off-site link*]

- RAR for Mac [Macintosh - *Click on the title to download from an off-site link*]

- Stuffit Expander [Macintosh - *Click on the title to download from an off-site link*]

- iZip [Macintosh (*free*)- *Click on the title to download from an off-site link*]

Anti-Virus

Computers sometimes get attacked by viruses for various reasons. To help rid your computer of these viruses you would need to regularly deploy, and run anti-viruses. You can download one for free from Microsoft Security Essentials.

NOTE: *The best source of computer security is you. Don't open suspicious attachments. Be suspicious of most web sites etc.*

Spyware Remover

If your computer begins running slowly or your browser starts doing odd things, such as adding toolbars, changing your homepage, or displaying excessive pop-ups, your machine could be infected with spyware, adware, or malware. There are programs available for combating these infections:

- Spybot Search & Destroy [*Click on the title to download from an off-site link*]
- Ad-Aware [*Click on the title to download from an off-site link*]
- Malwarebytes [*Click on the title to download from an off-site link*]

These programs can be used to scan a computer's hard drive in search of potential threats and will aid you in removing them.

Note: *It is strongly recommended that more than one of the above listed programs be used on your computer; sometimes one application may detect a new threat that another program may not.*

Application Software

The following is a list of viewers for Microsoft Office, which may be used to view Office documents if you do not have the Microsoft Office Suite:

- Microsoft Compatibility Pack [*Click on the title to download from an off-site link*]: Installing the Compatibility Pack with Microsoft Office 2000, Office 2003, Office XP, or Vista, allows you to open, edit, and save documents, workbooks, and presentations created in the newer versions of Word, Excel, and PowerPoint.

- Microsoft Word Viewer [*Click on the title to download from an off-site link*]: With this viewer you can view, print and copy Word documents, even if you don't have Word installed. This download is a replacement for Word Viewer 2003 and all previous Word Viewer versions.

- Microsoft PowerPoint Viewer [*Click on the title to download from an off-site link*]: With this viewer you can view full-featured presentations created in PowerPoint 97 and later versions.

- Microsoft Excel Viewer [*Click on the title to download from an off-site link*]: With this viewer you can open, view, and print Excel workbooks, even if you don't have Excel installed. This download is a replacement for Excel Viewer 97 and all previous Excel Viewer versions.

Other Course Applications

Respondus [*Click on the title to download from an off-site link*]: Lockdown browser is a custom browser that locks down the testing environment within Blackboard Courses.

At Concord University…

Computers are available on campus for use by online students. These computers are located in:

Alexander Fine Arts Center

1. FA 206 – Graphic Arts Lab
2. FA M001 – Music Lab

Joseph Frank Marsh Library

1. B8 Computer Lab
2. Main Floor

Leslie R. and Ruby Webb Carter Center

1. CENTHL 301CR

Marsh Hall (Administration Building)

1. A 123 – Social Sciences Lab
2. A 124 – GIS Lab
3. A 135 – Education Lab
4. A 307 – Languages & Literature

Nick J. Rahall Technology Center

1. RH303 – Division of Business Lab
2. RH311 – Division of Business Lab
3. Rahall Atrium – Student Support Services Lab

Science Building

1. S104
2. Student Center

Student Center

1. Office of Multicultural Affairs
2. Game Room

NOTE: *Additional software/application requirements may be specified by your instructor.*

Blackboard HELP

Frequently Asked Questions for Concord University's students can be found at: http://www.concord.edu/technology/help-desk-support/faq. You can also contact the Technology Help Desk at http://www.concord.edu/technology/help-desk-support for specific assistance with your technology related questions.