

## Reference Guide for Success in World Language Classes

Learning another language can be a very rewarding experience both in terms of improving your analytical and communication skills, and gaining valuable competencies for a global marketplace. However, in order to reap the benefits of studying a world language, you first need the tools to be successful in doing so. Here are some tips for succeeding in your world language course.

### Getting started

- Although you may be taking this course to fulfill a degree requirement, you should still confirm why studying a language is important to you and/or your future aspirations.
- Make sure that you have all the necessary materials and technology required for the course. This will involve having reliable computer and wi-fi access. You may also need an actual textbook.
- Be prepared to start on Day 1. For a face-to-face class, this means showing up on the first day, ready to begin communicating in the language. For an online course, you should log in on the first day the course is open and familiarize yourself with the format, the schedule, and upcoming assignments.

### Succeeding in a face-to-face class

- Commit to attending each class session. Attendance is likely to be calculated in your final grade, but more importantly, being in class gives you the opportunity to practice the new skills you are learning and to receive valuable and immediate feedback from your instructor.
- Come to class prepared with the materials you will need to participate. Do you need paper and pen to take notes? Will you need a textbook or computer?
- Actively engage with the material and your classmates. World language courses are very interactive and offer a variety of ways to practice the course content. Remember, you are learning to communicate in another language. Take advantage of all the opportunities to do so!
- Ask questions. If something is unclear to you, it is best to get it cleared up as soon as possible.
- Don't be afraid to make mistakes. Just like learning to play the piano, you will not have mastered the music the first time you attempt it. Learning from your errors helps you cement your understanding of the material.
- Don't compare yourself to other students. In every class there will be varying levels of experience; think of others' experience as a resource, not an unfair advantage, and find a classmate who can help explain and demonstrate what they already know.

### **Succeeding in an online course**

- Make sure to have the required technology (computer and high-speed internet) to be able to access easily and regularly the Canvas site for the course. Your computer should be equipped with a microphone for recording oral activities, quizzes, and tests.
- Begin the course the first week and stay up on all of the assignments to be submitted. The course will not be self-paced but will have deadlines to be met throughout the semester. If for some reason you are unable to meet a deadline, contact your instructor.
- Do not assume that an online class is the easy option: it demands discipline, concentration, and self-awareness. Be prepared to have the discipline and motivation to pace yourself over the course of 16 weeks (10 weeks for a summer course). It is important to realize that online courses typically require **more** work and preparation than traditional face-to-face classes.
- Taking an online course puts you firmly in charge as an independent learner. The course is designed to give you a structure, a template, and an agenda but it is entirely your responsibility to prepare, practice and perform. It can be alienating and disorienting to study a foreign language in a sort of 'vacuum' but it is also liberating and exciting to challenge yourself.

### **Succeeding outside of class**

- Learning a language requires practice, and practice requires time. You should devote on average an hour a day to preparing the material for your course. This is especially true for the beginning courses (101, 102) as they are four credits. Understandably, there will be some days when studying your language for an hour will not be possible but do try to space out your study times at regular intervals to not be cramming five hours in a day to complete assessments. Daily interaction with the material is key to becoming proficient in the language even if it is just for 15 minutes.
- Studying a language does not mean simply studying the grammar rules or memorizing vocabulary (though that is part of it!) Your study sessions should include some kind of practice in all of the skills you are honing: listening, writing, reading, speaking.
- Form a study group or find a study-buddy. There are many more ways to practice the language if you have someone else to work with.
- Avoid translating, especially using online translators! Word order and structures are different in other languages, so you cannot translate word for word. For a writing assignment, don't compose something in English intending to translate it into the target language. Your level of English will likely be far above what you can do in a beginning world language course. You should have in your textbook all the necessary grammar and vocabulary for a writing assignment. By utilizing that resource, you can practice what you are learning, apply what you are doing in class, and demonstrate familiarity with the current topics and structures. Your instructor will expect your written work to be simple and contain mistakes.

- Although you should first complete the necessary work for your course, there are many other ways to immerse yourself in the language you are learning and to hear how the language is actually spoken outside of the classroom. Join one of the PVCC language clubs or International Club. Consider taking advantage of one of PVCC's travel abroad programs. When you have the opportunity, watch movies, listen to the news or a podcast, enjoy music in the language. You can even search for the lyrics and sing along to your favorite song! There are also websites and apps to play games to make learning more fun.
- Seek help when you need it. Learning a language is not easy for everyone and you may run into difficulties. Your first line of communication should be with your instructor. Make use of office hours to get help or simply to practice. There may also be tutors available for free in the PVCC Tutoring Center.
- Have reasonable expectations. Consistent and conscientious work will result in gaining proficiency in the language, but you will not be fluent after two, or even four, semesters. At the completion of 202, you should be able to function in the language and interact with native speakers about everyday topics. Hopefully you will continue your path to mastery by continuing to study the language after 202!
- Have fun! You learn best when you are enjoying what you are doing. Learning a language can be a very rewarding experience and you can make it so by finding and using a variety of methods to develop your proficiency.