

## **Online Courses: Best Practices for Success**

**Dale Gamache/La Clase Divertida [www.funclase.com](http://www.funclase.com)**

### **Pros:**

- Online classes are more convenient. Some classes allow students to learn at their own pace (either faster or slower).
- Schedules can often conflict, but most online classes offer flexibility.
- They can prepare students for future courses online, both in high school or college, by teaching them self-reliance and deadlines.
- Since the class only requires having a laptop and internet, a student may take the class anywhere from Starbucks to China!
- Online classes are great ways for children to learn about the cultural differences in various regions of the country.
- They give students the chance to learn from an experienced teacher who is not their parent, which may be a good change of pace.
- Online courses teach kids accountability and honesty.
- Using a computer during class helps young people to become tech savvy.
- If students miss a class, they can watch the recording and not worry about falling behind.
- Parents don't have to worry about grading work in subjects in which they don't feel comfortable.

### **Cons:**

- The workload can be more demanding, especially in classes without live lessons, where the teacher can adjust the pace.
- It can be challenging to find a class that fits into your schedule, as most live classes are at a specific time and may be inflexible.
- Computer and internet issues are inevitable.
- Even though they are live, it can be harder to get to know the other kids in the class.
- It can be challenging to catch up if you miss a class that is not recorded.
- The fees for the course and textbooks are usually paid upfront.
- Each online class is structured differently, and it takes time to get used to the new format.

### **How on Earth do I choose?**

- Pray for guidance.
- Make sure that the teacher's worldview aligns with yours.
- A live and interactive class is a definite must.
- Make sure that the teacher is certified.
- Speak with the teacher personally before committing.
- Visit a class before paying for it to make sure it's the right fit for you.
- Read reviews about the class.
- Make sure that a syllabus is available.
- Get recommendations from other homeschooling parents and friends.
- Research the materials used and their prices, along with the course's price.
- Make sure that the course will be accepted by high schools and/or colleges.
- Check to see if there are any prerequisites to the course.
- Make sure that your student's aptitude is in line with the expectations of the classroom.
- Choose a class that records the classes so that your child can keep up when absent.
- Make sure that your student has the necessary maturity level for the workload.
- Make sure that your student understands the time commitment or workload of the class.

## **What to Avoid:**

- Choosing a class where your student will need constant outside help.
- Overloading the time or abilities of your student.
- Choosing a class where the teacher doesn't make themselves available to the parents and the student.
- Choosing a class that cannot answer a student's questions through live interaction.
- Taking an online class without teacher interaction if a parent does not feel competent in that subject.
- Pushing a child to take a Level 2 course if they did not master the Level 1 course.
- Choosing a course that meets infrequently.
- Taking a class where the schedule makes you miss classes frequently.

## **Nuts and Bolts:**

### Different Course Requirements:

- In some cases, the homework is submitted online.
- Non-live classes simply have questions at the end of a lesson, which can be ineffective.
- Most tests are done on websites.
- Some teachers require parents to be in the room while the student is taking a test.
- The student's grades are not always accessible.
- Some classes have an available answer key for grading the student's homework.

### Things to do as a parent:

- Check to make sure the grades are in an official report card format.
- Realize that computers and teachers make errors.
- Understand that teacher prepared tests are as beneficial as text generated tests.
- Check in on students when they are taking tests.
- Teach children to review tests before submitting.
- Make sure the teacher provides feedback on homework and tests in a timely manner.
- Encourage each student to take notes during class.

## **Learning Environment:**

### For Students:

- A quiet space is preferable.
- TURN OFF YOUR PHONE!!
- Prepare for class to avoid wasting class time.
- Communicate with your fellow students about assignments.
- Make sure you have a good computer, reliable internet, reliable printer, and a functioning headset.
- Turn off your television.
- Don't surf the web during class.
- Make sure your room is clean and your hair is combed if you're on camera. 😊
- Expect challenges with technology and class structure early on in the class.
- Sit in a chair, not on the bed or the couch.
- Be timely and diligent with all assignments.
- Make sure to put your books and phone outside of your room while you are taking a test.

### For Parents:

- Check your child's progress and grades regularly.
- Parents should feel free to contact the teacher with ANY concerns.
- If your child has a hard time focusing, they should be monitored.
- Exhort your child to develop participation skills, even if they are introverted.