

# Student Guide to Online Learning

Center for Distance and  
Innovative Learning

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# Introduction

## Welcome!

Dear Student,

Welcome to Online Learning at Rhodes State College and thank you for joining our online community. Online courses provide incredible flexibility for your busy, daily life as you continue your education. However, flexibility does not mean online courses are “easier” than face-to-face courses. Online students are held to the same standards and expectations as any Rhodes State College student. It is important that you are self-motivated and disciplined to ensure that your coursework is completed on time.

This Student Guide to Online Learning is intended to help you succeed by providing tips on the following:

- how to be successful online
- guidance on where to go when you have questions or need to complete academic processes
- overall general information about Rhodes State College

So, let's get started!



# Course Delivery

Rhodes State College offers blended courses and online courses. What is the difference?

- **Blended Courses**

Blended courses, sometimes referred to as hybrid, replaces portions of traditional face-to-face instruction with web-based online learning (e.g., video lectures, online discussions, or activities).

The amount of face-to-face instruction that is replaced by online coursework varies by class, discipline, and learning objectives.

- **Online and Face-to-face Blend:** Blends online and in-person formats on designated days/times. Requires a computer and high-speed internet for the online portion and the student is required to attend all face-to-face sessions on campus at designated dates and times.
- **Online and Remote Blend:** Blends online and remote formats and will have designated dates and times to virtually meet with the instructor. Requires a computer or phone with a camera, microphone, and high-speed internet.
- **Remote and Face-to-face Blend:** Blends remote and face-to-face formats, where the student is required to attend sessions on campus and virtually. Requires a computer or phone with a camera, microphone, and high-speed internet.

- **Online Courses**

Online courses offer all learning activities through Canvas, Rhodes State College's learning management system. Participating in online courses requires a computer and access to high-speed internet. You have the freedom to login and do your work when it fits your schedule. However, assignments have deadlines just like face-to-face courses. Good skills in time management, studying, communicating, self-motivation, and technology are necessary.



# Introduction to Canvas

So, where do you find your online courses? Rhodes State College delivers blended and online courses using Canvas. Faculty use Canvas tools to deliver lectures, post videos or podcasts, assign activities, hold discussions, give assessments, post grades, and send and receive emails. Online students are expected to complete all coursework in the online environment. To learn more on how to access and use Canvas, refer to the **Canvas Use** section of this guide.

## Technical Requirements (Computer)

While Canvas will run with the minimum specifications, you may experience slower loading times. See Canvas Community where you will find **recommended browsers and computer requirements** for Canvas.

## Technical Skills (You)

Online learners need basic technical skills to succeed. These include the following:

- Managing files and folders: save, name, copy, move, backup, rename, delete, check properties
- Installing software, security, and virus protection
- Using the following software applications: Word, PowerPoint, and Excel
- Copying and pasting, spell-checking, saving files in different formats
- Sending and downloading attachments
- Internet skills (connecting, accessing, using browsers) and performing online research using various search engines and library databases

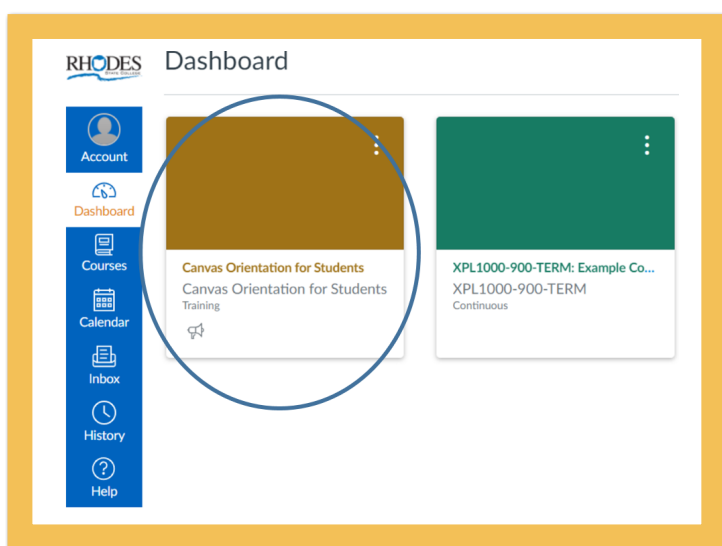


# Introduction to Canvas

## Canvas Orientation for Students

This course is automatically added to the dashboard on Canvas. The dashboard is the first screen on a Canvas account and where you will find your courses.

If you are a beginner at online courses or have not used Canvas, Rhodes State College recommends completing the orientation course outlined below. This course will help prepare you to be a better distance learner. *Even if you are not a beginner and have used Canvas, the orientation walks you through how Rhodes State College uses the platform.*



You will also find periodic announcements about activities and services available to you at the College. Be on the look-out for them.

Students completing the “Canvas Orientation for Students” will:

- Learn how to access and view files
- Update profile and setting preferences
- Find Canvas Courses
- Learn the variety of ways to communicate within Canvas
- Be able to submit assignments and take quizzes/exams and
- Learn how to access grades



# Canvas Use



## How to Access

There are a few ways to access your Canvas account.

1. Go to the **Rhodes State College website** then Click on MyRhodes, go to Students, click Enter Portal, then click Canvas link.
2. Use the **Rhodes State College/Canvas direct URL**. You may want to make this URL a favorite in your browser.
3. Go to the **Rhodes State College website** then click Menu, Current Students, Canvas Login.

But first – you need a username and password. Where do I find my username and password?

## Username and Password

Your username is your Rhodes State College email address (username@rhodesstate.edu)

Your initial password for the RSC network, RSC e-mail and Canvas is your “R” number.

(NOTE: The R is capitalized and followed by all of the digits, including the zeros.)

For more information, check out the **Welcome to Rhodes State College** document which covers information about your PIN, which you need for accessing STARS, what to do if you forget your password, what services are available to students, new student orientation, and more.

## Tips for Canvas Use

Here are a few tips to help you use Canvas more effectively:

- **Set up your profile** so that your classmates can get to know you and vice-versa.
- Learn to **set notifications** so you can see announcements without logging into Canvas.
- Be sure to **check that your assignment** has been submitted.
- **Subscribe** to an entire discussion so you will know when another student has posted a comment. You may be required to respond to a certain number of posts, so this is a helpful idea.
- Type and save your discussion posts outside of Canvas in case your connection is lost as you work. Also, spell check before you post.
- **Check your grades** often so you know how you are doing. A final grade should never be a surprise.
- Learn to use the **“What If” grade tool** to predict what scores you will need to attain a particular final grade such as an “A”.



# Password Management

Ok, you have decided to change your password, or you have actually forgotten your password. What do you do?

Rhodes State College's Information Systems department has developed a **Password Management** system. Follow the directions to change your password. It is easy-to-use and yet, sometimes, something goes wrong and the system does not work. When that happens, contact Rhodes State College's Help Desk at (419) 995-8069 or email [helpdesk@rhodesstate.edu](mailto:helpdesk@rhodesstate.edu).

## Online Testing

Sometime during your online course, you will take an exam or quiz. It is one of the ways your instructors know whether you are mastering the content. It is possible that one or more of those assessments will require proctoring. A proctored exam means that you are to be monitored while you take the exam. Rhodes State College utilizes Respondus Lockdown Browser and in some courses, faculty also require Respondus Lockdown Monitor.

### Respondus Lockdown Browser

Respondus Lockdown Browser is a custom internet browser specifically designed for students to take online exams or quizzes. When you use the Lockdown Browser you are unable to:

- browse the Internet
- check your Canvas course for help answering questions
- take screenshots
- or print the screen



This is not an online proctoring service, but it is an optional added level of protection for assessments. Respondus Lockdown Browser is integrated into every Canvas course. You will be directed on how to download the software when you use it in your course.

### Respondus Monitor

In some courses, your instructor may require you use Respondus Monitor in conjunction with Lockdown Browser. Respondus Monitor is fully automated proctoring that requires use of a webcam to record yourself during an exam. You do not need to schedule a time to take an exam with Respondus Monitor. If you are required to use Monitor, you have to use Lockdown Browser as well. Review this **Respondus Lockdown Browser** video that explains how Lockdown Browser and Monitor works.





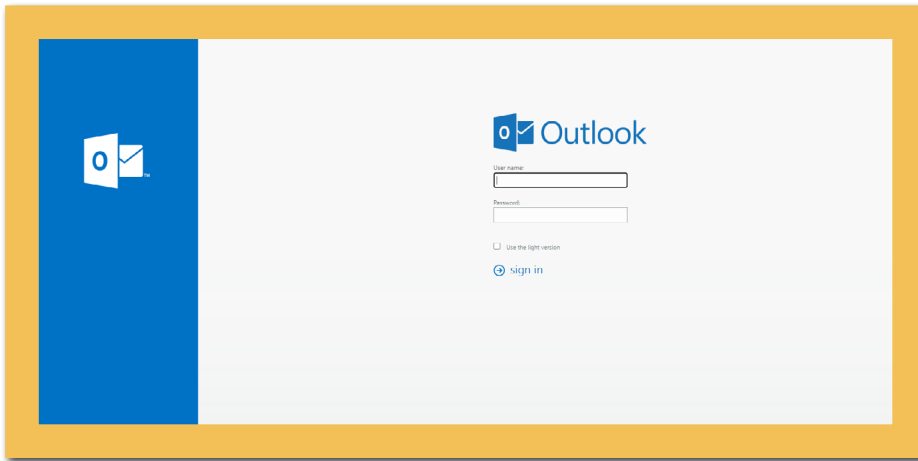
# Email Use

As a Rhodes State College student, you will be assigned an email address with a rhodesstate.edu extension. You receive the information about your email from the letter you receive in the mail.

## How to Access

Rhodes State College utilizes Microsoft Outlook for webmail service. Follow this [email link](#) to get to the webmail server.

**Note:** Rhodes State College's e-mail uses the same username and password as Canvas (one less password to remember).



## How often should you check your Rhodes State College email?

You should check your email a minimum of three times a week. However, it is highly recommended that you should check email at least once a day.

## Can I use my personal email account?

While it might be tempting to send an email to your instructor from your yahoo, Gmail, AOL email account, you are expected to use your Rhodes State College account when communicating with your instructor and Rhodes State College staff.



# STARS Online

STARS is your access to Rhodes State College's Student Information System which has great resources for you. STARS uses a different login (username and password) than Canvas, email, and campus computers. Typically, your username is the same as Canvas. However, the password is the two-digit month, two-digit day and four-digit year of your birthday. For example: 12/01/1900

## STARS Online contains:

- Class Schedule
- Final Grades
- Cumulative GPA
- Unofficial Transcript
- Search for online courses
- Registration for classes

## How to access STARS Online

Follow the **STARS Online link** to access the page. The STARS Online page has information about important registration dates and deadlines; be sure to look it over carefully. On this page you will find:

- Enter Secure Area – this is where you will put in your personal information, contacts, etc. Keep this up to date so you can be contacted
- General Financial Aid – this area provides links to financial aid opportunities for you to explore such as FAFSA
- Class Schedule – this is where you can search for online and other courses
- Instructions on how to register using STARS
- Important Registration and Payment Dates



# STARS Online

## Search for online courses

You will want to search for an online course to determine what you might want to take in your next semester. You can do that at STARS Online following the directions above or you can go directly to **STARS Online**.

- Once there, go to Class Schedule, choose the term (semester) in which you want to search for a class. For example, Spring 2022 or Summer 2022.
- The next screen is the search screen. You must choose at least one subject to search. Let's use Sociology. Since you are searching for online courses, you don't need to worry about a day or time. Click SOC for Sociology.
- Click class search and it will bring up all the courses scheduled for that semester – traditional, hybrid, and online specific to SOC. What you need to look for here is the section number. This is what you should look for:

Sociology - 30440 - SOC 1010 – 900

Course Name   CRN #   Course Designation – Course Section

All online courses have course section numbers of 900 - 949.

Blended courses have course section numbers of 950 and above. You can also find the book required for the class by clicking on View Book Information below the course.

## Register for classes

**Instructions on how to register using STARS** will walk you through how to register for courses but you need to keep in mind that once you've pulled up the course(s) you want to register for, be sure you are registering for online courses sections that are designated by 900 through 949.

Some courses, such as COM1110 English Composition, may have more than one online course section and you could see COM 1110-900, COM 1110-901, COM 1110-903 etc., choose any of those sections, and you will be enrolled in an online English Composition course.



# Policies and Guidelines

You can find Policies and Guidelines in the **Student Handbook** located within the College Catalog. You will find out how many credit hours you can take in a semester, information about academic standing, how to change a program, and information about the grading scale. These policies and guidelines apply to all students, so it is important to read the handbook.

## Netiquette Guidelines

- Show respect for the instructor, other students, and for the privacy of those in the online environment. Nothing threatening is ever appropriate.
- Express differences of opinion in a polite and equitable way, maintaining a supportive academic environment.
- Stay focused by avoiding irrelevant topics in discussion or collaborative activities.
- Use proper capitalization and punctuation rules.
- Use humor carefully. It is hard to “read” tone; sometimes humor can be misread as criticism or personal attack. Feel free to use emoticons like :) for a smiley face to let others know you are being humorous.
- Text “speak” such as “ur” for “your” or “ru” for “are you” etc., is only acceptable when texting.

The final section of this guide covers Services Available to students. While you may never come to campus, these resources are available to you as an online student as well.



# Services Available

Each of the services titles are links to the corresponding website where you will find additional information. Every Canvas course also has a Student Resources page.

## Accommodative Services

Students with a disability who are interested in learning more about College accommodations should contact the Office of Accommodative Services.

## Testing Center

The Testing Center advances the access, student progress, outreach, quality environment, and lifelong learning mission of Rhodes State College for continuous improvement through support of high-quality testing and assessment services to a diverse student body, faculty, and administration.

## Advising

Assists students with exploring their academic interests, course selection, addressing academic difficulties, identifying resources for additional information and support, and understanding College processes and policies. Advisors provide more intensive academic and social support to students in need.

## Tutoring Center

The Tutoring Center is here to support your learning needs. Please refer to the Tutoring Center website for tutoring services and hours as they can change every semester. Please contact the Tutoring Center if you have any questions.

## Career Development

Assists students and alumni with resume and cover letter support, mock interviews, major and career exploration, general interview preparation, and the job search process.

## The Center for Distance & Innovative Learning(CDIL)

The CDIL oversees Canvas, the Learning Management System, used by students for traditional, blended, and online courses.

## Information System Help Desk

Central contact for technology issues/questions especially regarding computer access, Canvas, WiFi, email, password issues, printing issues, Office 365, and Teams and more.



# Services Available

## Student Engagement

Even though, as an online student, you may not be on campus, the College still has incredible ways for you to be engaged. All students are automatically enrolled in the Student Engagement and Activities portal in Canvas. Students will be alerted via announcements, student email and text regarding events and times.

## Business Office

Rhodes State College's Business Office assists with questions regarding tuition and fees.

## Financial Aid

Assists students with financial aid questions including FAFSA requirements, scholarships, grants, loans, and paying for college.

- Financial Aid General Questions
- Verification and Scholarships
- Loans and Satisfactory Academic Progress

## Bookstore

As an online student, you can order your books online.

Students who are CCP and paying with SFA (book voucher), are encouraged to place online orders for textbooks, school supplies, and other school merchandise online. All online orders include FREE shipping.



# Final Thoughts

You take your education seriously and Rhodes State College is here to support you every step of the way. No matter where you are in your journey towards an education, all the resources you need can be found online.

Your instructor is your strongest advocate and should always be the first person you reach out to if you have any questions about your course.

Other tips for being a successful online learner include:

- Take time to ask questions through email or on the discussion boards. Make sure you understand the answer you get if not, ask again.
- Engage with your instructor and other online students.
- Use alarms and calendars to ensure your deadlines and course milestones are met.
- Set a fixed time to engage in the course work. If you have children, you may need to wait until they go to bed or when they are taking a nap.
- Solicit support from your friends and family. Let them know how important it is for you to complete your education.
- Do not be afraid to let your instructor know if you are struggling or falling behind. He/she can point you in the right direction if you need more assistance.
- And above all, do not forget why you are pursuing an education.

You have come to the end of this guide. Hopefully, you've found it helpful.

Please feel free to contact the **Center for Distance & Innovative Learning** with any questions or comments you may have or if you just want to let us know how you are doing!

Email: [cdil@rhodesstate.edu](mailto:cdil@rhodesstate.edu)

Phone: 419-995-8008

*Good luck!*

