

## What is distance education?

Basically, distance education happens when students and teachers participate in the same classes together, but from separate physical locations.

*Synchronous* (SING-kro-nuss) classes happen live, while in *asynchronous* (A-sing-kro-nuss) classes, students and teachers participate at different times.

ITV and videoconferencing, as well as live online chats or telephone conferences, are some examples of synchronous activities.

Online discussions, email, and pre-recorded lessons are examples of asynchronous activities.



## What is videoconferencing?

Also called “instructional television,” (ITV), videoconferencing is live, two-way video and audio across a digital network. Students and instructors can see and talk to each other in real time, from different “sites,” usually with a TV and microphones placed somewhere in the room. At SIPI, the instructor can talk with students at other ITV sites, while also teaching students who are present in the on-campus classroom.

At SIPI, Rooms BE125 in the Business building and ST222 in the Science and Technology building are equipped for videoconferencing/ITV classes with remote sites in several Native American communities.

To participate in a videoconferencing course, you must have access to a videoconferencing site. Many tribal communities now have videoconferencing facilities.

## What is online learning?

Online learning usually happens within special courseware, such as Blackboard (formerly WebCT). Students are given access to their online courses when they enroll at SIPI. Online activities can be synchronous or asynchronous. Some courses also use video and audio recordings. Students can check their class calendar, download reading materials, participate in discussions, take quizzes, and upload assignments.

To participate in an online course, you should have regular, reliable access to the Internet. You may also need to make minor adjustments to your web browser in order to use the courseware.

## What is a “blended” course?

Also called “hybrid” courses, blended courses are traditional, face-to-face classes that use Blackboard for some course activities, such as a repository for handouts and assignments. Your ITV or videoconferencing class might also use WebCT as a place to store or turn in course assignments, or other activities. Students meet on campus in regular class sessions.

## Am I a typical distance education student?

- Many distance education students are older, with jobs and families.
- Distance students have a variety of reasons for taking classes. Most distance students have practical reasons for enrolling in school, and concrete goals, such as the desire to finish a degree or qualify for a promotion.

- Most distance students are isolated, especially in online courses. That is, they are taking classes by themselves. It can be challenging for lone students to learn to ask for support and to feel part of a learning community. SIPI distance students are encouraged to communicate with classmates, community mentors, instructors and advisors to get the support that will help them succeed in school.
- Beginning distance students need time to adjust to the demands of technology and academic study.

### **Are distance education courses easier than traditional courses?**

No, not necessarily! There are advantages to taking distance education courses, such as being able to stay home or having access to courses not offered closer to home. However, distance education courses can actually take *more* time each week, especially in the beginning when students are adjusting to new technologies.

### **How can I succeed as a distance education student?**

- Attend class or log in *regularly* (3-5 times each week).
- Develop a routine that works for you, and stick to it.
- Stay organized. Make an extra effort to print your course materials, and organize each course into a binder or notebook. Keep a calendar/schedule handy. Create a checklist of tasks you'll complete each week, and other organizational strategies.
- Communicate with your instructor if you have questions or problems with the course material. Find out the best way to contact your instructor between classes.
- Make connections with your classmates. Study together online or face-to-face, and help each other to succeed.
- Use the technology. Practice early in the trimester, especially if you're a beginner.
- Give yourself time to adjust. Even experienced distance students feel confused or stressed in the beginning of a course.
- In online courses, let your instructor know as soon as possible if you're having technology problems.
- In ITV and videoconferencing courses, arrive early and stay for the entire session. Sit in view of the camera, near a working microphone. Let your instructor know as soon as possible if there are technology problems, such as poor sound or video quality.
- Ask for help and support. Take the initiative to email, telephone, or speak in person with your advisor, instructor, mentor, friend, or classmate. Get the help you need to succeed! Contact your instructor or advisor to arrange for tutoring, if needed.