

(Student's Name),

You are receiving this letter because you have registered for a section of Fundamentals of Speech Online (SPCH 191-INT). This letter is intended to give you a clear picture of what is expected of students participating in this section of the class. As with all of my students, I fully and honestly want you to succeed in this course. To better prepare you, I have found it helpful to be upfront and direct about the specific challenges facing a student in this type of learning environment.

To begin, this approach to the course is not for everyone. Self-starters and self-motivators tend to excel in this type of environment, but students who are not able to effectively and efficiently schedule their time tend to underperform. In an online learning environment, you must be diligent and self-reliant.

Especially with this type of class, you also must be very comfortable with technology. In addition to knowing and feeling comfortable with Moodle (our online course delivery system), you also must have access to and know how to operate a video recording device. While I can provide some basic level technical support, the incredibly broad range of recording devices available to the public make it nearly impossible for me to know how to troubleshoot your particular device. As a result, you must either know how to operate the equipment yourself, or take it upon yourself to find adequate help in that area.

Finally, as a potential online student, it is of absolute importance that you use and frequently check your Highland e-mail account. If you prefer to use another e-mail account (Gmail, Yahoo, etc.), that is fine; but be sure to set up your Highland e-mail account to forward any messages to your preferred account. For directions on how to do this, please contact me via e-mail. Your Highland e-mail account is how I will contact you from this point forward. This is the last non-digital communication you will receive from me. If that in and of itself makes you uncomfortable with moving forward in this class, then this format might not be a good fit for you.

In closing, please take a moment to take the self-assessment quiz found accompanying this letter. After answering the questions honestly, ask yourself if the format of this class is a good fit for you. In addition, to the quiz, you will also find the preliminary syllabus for this class to give you an idea of what kind of workload is expected from students in this class.

Now that you have a better idea of what is expected of you in this course, and if you are confident in your ability to work within its parameters, then you can look for an e-mail from me the week before the semester begins explaining your first assignment. I look forward to hearing from you and helping you become a more confident, polished, and clear public speaker.

Jim Yeager, Instructor
Highland Community College
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Online Learning Self-Assessment

1. Feeling that I am part of a physical classroom setting is:
 - a. Unnecessary.
 - b. Somewhat important.
 - c. Very important.
2. I generally:
 - a. Get things done ahead of time.
 - b. Need reminders, but get things done on time.
 - c. Put things off until the last minute.
3. I prefer to communicate:
 - a. In writing.
 - b. In person, but I'm comfortable expressing myself in writing.
 - c. In person, face-to-face. I do not like to write.
4. I would classify myself as:
 - a. A good reader, able to understand most text material without help.
 - b. An average reader. Sometimes I need help understanding the material.
 - c. A slow reader. I often need help understanding text material.
5. I think face-to-face classroom discussion:
 - a. Is helpful, but discussion via e-mail is equally engaging.
 - b. Is sometimes helpful.
 - c. Is vital.
6. I generally prefer to:
 - a. Figure out instructions myself.
 - b. Try to follow instructions on my own, then ask for help as needed.
 - c. Have instructions explained or demonstrated to me.
7. When faced with new technology such as gadgets and computer software I usually:
 - a. Look forward to learning new skills.
 - b. Feel some apprehension, but try it anyway.
 - c. Avoid working with new technology.
8. Taking into account my professional and personal schedule, I have:
 - a. Maybe even more time for an online course than an on-campus course since I don't have to commute.
 - b. About same amount of time for an online course or an on-campus course.
 - c. Less time for an online course than on on-campus course.
9. If I have to go to campus to take exams or complete work I:
 - a. Can make arrangements to do so almost anytime.
 - b. Will need to make an evening or weekend appointment.
 - c. Would have difficulty going to campus at any time.

Scoring:

Three points for each "a" answer

Two points for each "b" answer

One point for each "c" answer

21+ points: An online course would probably be a good fit for you.

15-20 points: An online course could work for you, but you should be prepared to make a few adjustments in your schedule and study habits to succeed. A hybrid course may be a good first step.

14-9 points: An online course is probably not the best way for you to learn right now. Your chance for success would be better if you enrolled in a traditional on-campus course.