Fairways and Greens!

Golf drills are excellent ways of working on parts of your game in a way that can improve your skills and prepare you for a specific course. For example, if you are going to play a course that has thick rough, it makes sense to practice hitting a lot of shots out of thick grass. Or a course that has a lot of bunkers—time to work on your sand game! Drills, while somewhat repetitive and tedious, are crucial to revising different parts of your game so you have the confidence to hit certain shots you might not otherwise practice. If your home course doesn't have thick rough or a lot of bunkers, you might not be used to playing those shots. So, drills can help get you in shape!

What we like about this chapter is how Lynn Reid conceptualizes a readiness program for students to prepare them for taking online writing classes. Using sample exercises, Reid provides a solid framework for helping students prepare for taking an online class. These mini "drills" are good practice for students as the semester takes on more complex topics and spaces.

Chapter 18. Literacy Loads, Readiness, and Accessibility: Addressing Students' Perceptions of OWI through Pre-Course Modules

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Abstract: Despite considerable scholarship in online writing instruction (OWI) about literacy load, students are often unprepared for the extensive literacy demands in online courses. When students are invited to consider their "readiness" for online learning, it is often through self-assessments that inquire about skills in areas such as time management, motivation, self-efficacy, and access to digital resources. Students who score well on these types of readiness assessments may begin a course with an inaccurate perception of how to be successful, and students may find themselves in a situation that is not accessible to their needs as learners. This chapter proposes a series of pre-course modules that allow students to experience the different types of learning and literacy demands they might encounter in an online writing course (OWC). The results of these modules can help students to select a modality of learning that best meets their needs.

Keywords: online writing instruction, e-learning readiness, literacy load, writing program administration, access

In *Reading to Learn and Writing to Teach: Literacy Strategies for Online Writing Instruction*, Beth Hewett (2015) presents something of a profile of what she identifies as the "new" nontraditional student, one who comes to online learning with a range of prior experience with technology, much of which may not be terribly helpful as they attempt to meet the literacy demands of their online writing course. While the complex of factors that can impact online learning was certainly brought to the forefront during the COVID-19 pandemic, there has long been a correlation between students who are drawn to online learning and those for whom caretaking, employment, or other responsibilities are paramount, leaving them with unpredictable schedules or limited opportunities to pursue postsecondary education (Griffin & Minter, 2013; Hachey et al., 2022). With that, however, is also an increased likelihood that students who are burdened by personal challenges that strain economic and cognitive resources may struggle with the independent learning that is often required in asynchronous online writing courses.

For these reasons, *access* is important in online writing instruction research and is a critical part of the PARS framework. In composition studies, access is frequently discussed in the context of disability (Konrad, 2021) and/or access to technology (Ruecker, 2022), but Jessie Borgman and Casey McArdle (2019) also recognize that the term *access* extends beyond both compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and availability of digital resources:

> Creating . . . truly accessible online courses means considering schedules, holidays, technical support for you if your computer goes down, or the LMS goes down, and a myriad of other underlying support systems that many universities fail to realize the importance of when offering online courses. (pp. 36-37)

In this view, creating an accessible course means considering the ways in which online coursework may intersect with students' lived experiences, other responsibilities, and existing resources (Giordano & Phillips, 2021).

Of course, students follow many paths to college composition, and any number of things might impact their academic performance, including prior experiences with trauma, mental health, socioeconomic factors, family responsibility, illness, disability, and learning a new language, to name a few, so it can be challenging to determine whether a student is struggling with an academic skill or simply a life circumstance at any point along the way. When considering the needs of students who are facing the types of scenarios listed above, the concept of access in regard to an online writing course (OWC) can be fraught. On one hand, the availability of OWCs absolutely provides access to college-level coursework that might not otherwise be available for a student with a complicated personal situation, including things such as military deployment, relocation to care for a family member, or an on-call work schedule. The flip side of this, however, is the unfortunate reality that students whose attention is divided between several demanding tasks often struggle to keep up with coursework. These students may not have had the same opportunities as their classmates with more socioeconomic privilege and stability to develop the academic skills that will ensure their success at the college level (Giordano & Phillips, 2021).

Below, I argue that providing pre-course exercises can create opportunities to make the literacy load in OWCs more transparent to a range of institutional stakeholders, including academic advisors, instructors who may plan to teach an OWC course, and tutors, all of whom play a role in fostering student success. Moreover, data gleaned from pre-course modules can shift agency from writing program administrators (who often determine whether or not it is appropriate to offer asynchronous versions of particular writing courses for distinct populations of students) to students, who will be better equipped to select OWCs based on their understanding of how learning takes place in an online environment.

Learning from Personal Experience

In my own experience teaching asynchronous online writing courses, I have observed that students who are drawn—or sometimes are directed by advisors—to enroll in OWCs are often enrolled in programs that are identified for what my institution terms "academically at-risk" populations. I have taught asynchronous OWCs designed for a range of students, including those who began in developmental writing courses and needed to "catch up" with the rest of their cohort over the summer; those students in a short-lived associate's degree program, many of whom had never imagined attending a four-year university until their senior year of high school; and those students who began in a bilingual program and were continuing on an ESL track as they simultaneously enrolled in the second of our two gen-ed comp courses. Additionally, my asynchronous summer courses are popular among students in a conditional admissions program who are trying to make up credits after enrollment in developmental courses. With that, any time I have taught an asynchronous writing course, regardless of the term, the number of students who are retaking the course has been disproportionately high compared to other courses. While all of these students opted for or needed online asynchronous sections of writing, nearly all represented a growing trend of students taking distance courses while participating in face-to-face courses simultaneously (Allen & Seaman, 2018), and who may therefore have more experience with in-person learning. In short, at least at my institution, asynchronous courses are often most attractive to students who may be deeply emotionally invested in doing well but who are also inexperienced with academic and digital literacies as well as online learning.

What does all of this mean for a writing program administrator (WPA)? For starters, WPAs are often tasked with deciding whether or not a writing course *should* be offered in an asynchronous modality. Thus, a WPA may be asked to weigh the potential benefits of an asynchronous course in terms of access and accessibility with their knowledge of how students generally respond to the literacy load of in-person classes in order to determine the courses in which students are most likely to succeed without real-time interactions with their instructor. Of course, issues pertaining to access and accessibility have been widely studied by OWI practitioners, and just about every online writing instructor is familiar with concerns related to students' access to technology, which can vary widely depending on students' socioeconomic circumstances (Hewett, 2015). However, the term *access* also invokes the need for online courses to adhere to universal design principles so that students can have equitable opportunities to engage with course materials, regardless of disability status (Coombs, 2010). Sushil Oswal (2015) additionally highlights the extent to which the technologies in OWCs can serve as barriers to access for students who may rely on assistive technologies in order to complete their coursework. As the work by these scholars indicates, determining who should have the option to enroll in an asynchronous online course is complex.

Yet, while there may be legitimate reasons to recommend against an asynchronous course for a particular population of students, it is important for WPAs to note that placing limitations on students' ability to utilize technology in their learning "is ultimately a political choice, even if the motive behind such a move appears benign" (Jonaitis, 2012, p. 39). In the case of OWI, the decision about whether and to whom they should be offered can have a significant impact on students' ability to complete their degree requirements. While WPAs may of course be motivated to reduce high attrition rates in online writing courses, particularly for students who are already deemed by the institution to be "academically at-risk," decisions about whether and to whom OWCs should be offered should be evidence-based, and simply examining retention and failure rates in these scenarios can obscure the learning needs of students and factors that may inhibit their success.

Theory and Practice

Conceptualizing Readiness for OWI

One topic that stands out in the existing scholarship about student preparation for online learning is the notion of "readiness." Readiness for online or distance education is often evaluated in terms of areas such as motivation, technological ability and self-efficacy, self-direction, and effective strategies for communicating online (Hung et al., 2010, p. 1080). These factors are generally measured through online readiness assessments, which are frequently among the first things that students encounter as they search a college website for fully online course offerings (Reid, 2022).

Penn State's Online Readiness Questionnaire serves as one example of an online readiness survey that has been widely adopted by other postsecondary institutions across the U.S. This survey asks students if they agree, somewhat agree, or disagree with statements such as "I am good at setting goals and deadlines for myself," "I am willing to send an email to or have discussions with people I might never see," "I plan my work in advance so that I can turn in my assignments on time," and "I have a printer" (see https://pennstate.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_7QCNUPsyH9fo12B for the full survey). In a similar vein, Lisa Melonçon and Heidi Skurat Harris (2015) also suggest that success in OWI is more likely for students who are "self-motivated, goal-oriented, and good at time management" (p. 419). However, because most readiness assessments do not account for the pedagogies and learning needs of particular disciplines, WPAs who are interested in addressing student expectations in an online writing course must instead find strategies to assess the additional components of "readiness" that may be relevant for OWCs in particular.

To address student expectations, Tess Evans (2019) suggests that instructors email students to explain the course expectations (including technology access, requirements for presence in the course, team projects and interactions with

peers, and due dates and requirements for major assignments) and attach a syllabus so that students can gain a better understanding of the literacy load for their OWC. While I fully agree that all of what Evans suggests are critical steps toward managing students' expectations of an online course, in that approach, the possibility for students to overestimate their ability to successfully complete assignments and demonstrate mastery of course concepts remains significant; indeed, students may be several weeks into a course before they realize that the instructors' expectations are not what they had anticipated.

The OWI Literacy Load and Student Success

Perhaps the most important element for WPAs to consider in regard to students' preparation for OWCs is the "literacy load," which June Griffin and Deborah Minter (2013) define as "the quantity of text to be read or written" (p. 153), and which I would argue extends to what students may be expected to *do* with the material that they read and write. For students who struggle academically, the literacy demands of OWCs have the potential to create a situation that, despite everyone's best intentions, can become wholly inaccessible (Griffin & Minter, 2013; Sibo, 2021). In my own experience teaching asynchronous online writing courses, students' expectations that an OWC will be easier, less time-consuming, and less scheduled than a face-to-face writing course often remain several weeks into the course, despite my attempts to note the requirements on the syllabus and provide consistent reminders that an OWC requires *more* independent work time to account for both the instructional time that they would spend on an in-person course and the time that is necessary for "homework."

This observation is further supported by the 2011 national survey on OWI, which found that 75 percent of respondents reported that "keeping up with the class" was the most significant challenge they faced in an asynchronous OWC (CCCC OWI Committee, 2011). Students' expectations for OWI are influenced by a number of factors, including potentially misleading advertising for fully online programs and the literacy demands—and related time commitment—associated with online learning (Hewett, 2015). Interestingly, despite these realities, the recently published *CCCC 2021 State of the Art in OWI Report* indicates that roughly half of the respondents to the most recent national survey noted that they prepare students for OWCs with information about workload and expected time commitments (CCCC OWI Standing Group, 2021). Given this fact, it is of little surprise that students may not accurately anticipate what the expectations for an online writing course will actually be. As Borgman and McArdle (2019) have noted, "the gap between online and in-person retention and achievement can be discouraging [to both faculty and students]" (p. 42). Despite this observation, to my knowledge, there is little scholarship that explicitly addresses student preparation for learning in OWCs (Melonçon & Harris, 2015) with regard to material that is developed with students as the intended audience.

This gap is surprising, given the attention that has been paid to the challenges that "literacy load" can pose in OWCs (Silbo, 2021). In one study, Griffin and Minter (2013) found that the reading load of OWCs was 2.75 times greater than that of face-to-face courses. This high reading load could begin to account for Di Xu and Shanna Jaggers' (2013) finding that retention and persistence in online English courses in particular is low (as cited in Hewett, 2015; see also Minter, 2015). Of course, the literacy load in OWCs should be complicated beyond a consideration of how much reading is required to also account for the *type* of reading that students must undertake in order to successfully complete an online writing course, which includes both instructional materials and the materials about which students will be writing (Hewett, 2015). The common expectation that students in college composition courses will engage in critical thinking and textual analysis further adds to the already heavy literacy load of OWCs with the requirement that students read instructional text to then make "a challenging cognitive leap from reading to action," particularly with respect to revising their own drafts (Hewett, 2015, p. 60).

This creates something of a perfect storm. We know that online courses may attract students whose time is constrained and who may, therefore, be disproportionately likely to struggle academically, and we know that the literacy load for OWCs is high and that managing that load is far more complicated than simply expecting that students set aside enough time to read all of the words associated with the course. We also know that students' perceptions are influenced by the ways in which online courses are advertised, which often emphasize flexibility and ease of learning. These conflicting priorities leave WPAs with the challenge of balancing students' needs for accessible course delivery with the very real challenges that online learning can pose for struggling learners.

WPA Work and Student-Facing Resources

In their original discussion of the PARS model, Borgman and McArdle (2019) note that administrators need to consider how to "prepare [their] online instructors for the student demographic they'll face" (p. 77). Here, I extend that discussion to include some thoughts on preparing *students* for what they will likely face in an online writing course, which is often far more complex than what an online readiness assessment that measures their motivation, self-efficacy, and technology skills will reveal. To provide students with a more nuanced understanding of what an online writing course might entail, I propose a series of pre-course modules that will enable a clearer communication to students about what types of literacy and learning activities they might expect in an online writing course. These modules can serve the important functions of allowing students—rather than a WPA—to determine whether a fully online course is a good fit for their learning needs and, if data is captured, revealing patterns in students' responses to online course material that can influence online

pedagogy in a writing program. This is especially important to consider in light of our discipline's ongoing conversations about the struggles that students face as they transition from high school to college-level writing and discover that the strategies that served them well in high school may no longer be adequate (Fanetti et al., 2010).

Self-Assessing Readiness with Sample Course Content

Beth Hewett (2015) underscores the importance of effective orientation to online learning as a tool to support students' decision-making regarding OWI: "For example, when students have had adequate and timely orientation, they can make better decisions about whether their family situations, work schedules, and learning preferences will work for them in OWI" (p. 78). Those students who find an OWC to be a particularly burdensome experience often also comment that they would have made a different choice about the modality of the course had they really understood beforehand what it would entail. One strategy for achieving this goal is to provide sample modules that are easily accessible to students through the writing program's website.

This can be challenging for a WPA, given that in the absence of total standardization of content and structure across all sections, each instructor will create a unique pathway for students to work through the learning objectives of the course. This means that any resources developed with a programmatic perspective in mind must focus on introducing students to the ways that reading and writing will function in their OWCs to facilitate both instruction and students' own development as critical readers and writers. The tips for introducing students to the demands of OWCs by providing introductory material and clearly outlining expectations that are provided by Evans (2019) and Scott Warnock and Diana Gasiewski (2018) are critical to promote student success. However, my experience also suggests that students—particularly inexperienced students—may not be able to effectively use those materials in order to truly understand the kinds of thinking, reading, and writing the course demands. Instead, they learn these lessons after several weeks of working through the material and, depending on their credit load and institutional policies about issuing refunds for courses in progress, may choose to remain enrolled in an OWC even after realizing that it might not be the best fit for their learning needs. Thus, providing students with opportunities to practice learning in the format that an OWC might require has the potential to foster a more inclusive environment by helping to align students' expectations with the learning needs that a course demands. For some students, early practice modules might help them to better prepare for the time commitment that an OWC might require. For others, such modules may also allow students to determine that an OWC might not be the best choice for them *before* they have invested significant time, energy, and money into starting a course.

Designing Pre-Course Modules

Here I offer some examples of possible pre-course modules that have the potential to illustrate to students the types of work that is expected in an OWC. These modules are based on my own teaching, as well as on my observations of what other instructors have assigned when I've worked with students in a community college writing center.

Exercise 1

Following Directions

Open a blank Word document. Go to the Purdue OWL MLA Guide at this link: https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_formatting_and_style_guide.html

Click on the tab for "General Format" and follow the directions for formatting the first page of a document for Prof. Noname's ENG 1122 course.

Once you are finished, check your document alongside the annotated example available here.

Rationale: Sample Exercise 1 provides one example of a task that can be made available to students prior to enrollment in an OWC to gauge their ability to follow written directions. The initial two steps of following directions and finding important information will help students to see how well they can navigate the types of instructions that they are likely to encounter in an OWC. Following the directions on the Purdue OWL website requires that the student read carefully to find the necessary information on an otherwise crowded website and to apply that information to complete a concrete task. (And while directing students to simply find and duplicate models on a website is, perhaps, not a strong pedagogical move, it is something that I have found students are often expected to do in both F2F and online courses, so it is nonetheless an accurate representation of a potential learning scenario.)

Navigating the syllabus is a bit more complex, as here the student will have to sift through a great deal of material in order to locate the information that is needed. For students who are inexperienced readers, identifying the relationship between different details in a long document (such as a syllabus) can pose a challenge that would be uncovered during the activity.

Exercise 2

Locating Important Information

Open the sample syllabus provided here:

What assignments are due on September 23rd? How much do these assignments count for the overall course grade? Enter your information here and click "submit" when you are finished.

Rationale: The goal of Sample Exercise 2 is for students to assess their level of comfort with locating specific information within one of the course resources. In my own courses, I typically forgo a traditional "syllabus quiz" with questions similar to the ones found here and instead follow Shelley Rodrigo's (2020) advice to assign the reading of important course documents on a shared Google Doc, requiring students to leave questions or comments on the document to indicate their understanding. While this is initially helpful, it is not necessarily a practice that all OWC instructors may adopt. Generally, however, instructors are expected to prepare a syllabus that includes a schedule of assignments and grade distribution. Particularly because some learning management systems can make it difficult for students to see how the material for the course that is located under, say, the "Assignments" tab is conceptually or practically related to the broader course requirements that are outlined on the syllabus, training students to not only read the syllabus but also to *use* the syllabus is an important preparatory step.

Exercise 3

Learning from Multimedia Content

Review the video linked below, which outlines some important steps for completing a rhetorical analysis. Once you have finished watching the video, attempt your own brief rhetorical analysis of the photograph provided below. What is the purpose of the photo? Who is the audience? How does the image use rhetorical appeals to convey its point?

Rationale: Although Hewett (2015) argues that OWCs are primarily text-based courses, instructors are increasingly using multiple modalities to provide instructional content to students (see Costa's [2020] *99 Tips for Creating Simple and Sustainable Educational Videos* for one example). Although students frequently request more audio/visual content, in my own courses and in conversations with colleagues, I have observed that instructors often find that students ignore this instructional content and skip directly to assignments that carry a clear point value. In my courses, I experimented with presenting the majority of content in the form of captioned video lessons and was frustrated to find that, when I checked the analytics on my YouTube page, very few students had even bothered to click the links. What's more, in individual conferences with students about their work, I found that even among those who did watch the material, almost none were able to explain it back to me in a way that revealed any depth of understanding. The latter group of students found this to be particularly frustrating, as they felt sincerely that they had completed the assignment by watching

each video through to the end. Yet, it was clear to me that they were not retaining much of the information they watched.

These student experiences are indicative of some of the major disconnects between students and their instructors in OWCs. Students often perceive assignments that carry points differently than they do assignments that contain ungraded instructional content and may fail to recognize their intended connection. Likewise, students who view all of the required instructional material may lack the study skills and metacognitive strategies to distinguish *watching* a video from *learning* the material. Some of this frustration could have potentially been mitigated if students had understood the expectations for *learning* from multimedia content better, as Sample Exercise 3 illustrates. The act of completing a practice exercise and receiving immediate results can help students to recognize some of the different behaviors that actively learning might demand, as well as the relationship between instructional material and assignments that "count" in the gradebook.

Exercise 4

Sample Exercise 4: Working with/from Model Texts

Another common component in composition courses is working with mentor texts that illustrate strengths and areas for potential growth in a sample of writing.

Sample paragraph from Amy Tan's "Mother Tongue"

Defining a Topic Sentence

A strong topic sentence does the following:

Sums up YOUR point in the paragraph: What will you prove with these details?

Uses keywords/phrases to unify the paragraph

Helps the reader to predict what is coming next by inviting questions that the paragraph will answer

Topic Sentences in "Mother Tongue"

Read the example topic sentences below. What questions do they invite for you as the reader? What do you expect the paragraph to PROVE based on the topic sentence?

Example 1

Topic Sentence: Recently, I was made keenly aware of the different Englishes I do use.

Keywords: different Englishes

Predicting What Comes Next: What are the different Englishes that you use? How were you made aware of them?

Here is the full paragraph from Tan's essay. The words in bold indicate some of the details in the paragraph that show WHAT the different Englishes are that Tan uses and HOW she became aware of the difference.

Recently, I was made keenly aware of the different Englishes I do use. I was giving a talk to a large group of people, the same talk I had already given to half a dozen other groups. The nature of the talk was about my writing, my life, and my book, The Joy Luck Club. The talk was going along well enough, until I remembered one major difference that made the whole talk sound wrong. **My mother was in the room. And it was perhaps the first time she had heard me give a lengthy speech, using the kind of English I have never used with her. I was saying things like, "The intersection of memory upon imagination" and "There is an aspect of my fiction that relates to thus-and-thus"—a speech filled with carefully wrought grammatical phrases, burdened, it suddenly seemed to me, with nominalized forms, past perfect tenses, conditional phrases, all the forms of standard English that I had learned in school and through books,** the forms of English I did not use at home with my mother.

Example 2: Try one to practice!

Identify the topic sentence.

Identify any keywords in the topic sentence.

Identify any questions that arise from the topic sentence that help you to predict what comes next.

Mitali often speaks for her older brother and their mother in public when Armen has a tantrum, and passerby think that their mother is unable to discipline her kids. Most children have bad days and throw themselves on the floor to scream and cry when they don't get what they want at a store. For Armen, though, it's different. Because he is unable to speak, this is the only way that he can communicate his feelings to his mom. When this happens and people begin to stare, Mitali will simply look at them and say, "My brother is special, and he needs privacy to show his feelings." This encourages strangers to walk away while also letting them know that Armen acts this way for a reason and that it isn't his mother's fault.

Try it on your own!

Write your own paragraph with a topic sentence. Explain one reason why your favorite restaurant is your favorite. When you are finished, answer the same three questions:

Identify the topic sentence.

Identify any keywords in the topic sentence.

Identify any questions that arise from the topic sentence that help you to predict what comes next.

Rationale: Sample Exercise 4 requires students to learn a concept, study an example of the concept, and then create their own version based on the model. This type of exercise reflects the sorts of cognitive leaps that Joanne Giordano and Cassandra Phillips (2021) indicate may be particularly challenging for academically underprepared students. Certainly, each of the above concerns are common in *all* composition courses. Even in face-to-face settings, some students will ask for clarification about directions for a task without looking at the assignment; some will skip reading that they don't deem to be important; and some will listen intently to a lesson without capturing its primary purpose. In OWCs, however, these problems are compounded in settings that often carry much higher stakes, and the very resources that instructors may use to clarify any misunderstanding (such as written feedback on student work) only serve to further increase the literacy load for the course, again posing a challenge for students who may not be prepared to navigate the volume of written text required for success in the course.

Conclusions and Takeaways

As Borgman and McArdle (2019) note, "the best way to encourage student success is to mitigate confusion" (p. 45). Although this statement was initially intended to describe efforts to make course material accessible, it can also apply to the ways that a WPA may attempt to ensure that students are prepared for the demands of OWI. As noted above, under the guise of providing access for students who may otherwise struggle to fit a college course into their daily lives, OWCs can quickly become inaccessible to the most academically at-risk students, many of whom will anticipate online learning as a way to alleviate a burden rather than add to one. To ensure that OWCs function as a pathway toward accessing higher education and not as a roadblock, it is essential that student-facing resources which illustrate some of the literacy demands of a course be available to students prior to their enrollment so that they can think strategically about how to best meet their own learning needs.

WPAs are in uniquely powerful positions to make large-scale changes based on the information that student-facing modules might reveal about the

ways in which students interact with the types of material that are common in OWCs. In departments with standard syllabi, information about how effectively students locate critical information can shape the redesign of these documents. In situations where linking to external sites for instructional material poses a challenge for students, a WPA may be able to argue for the resources needed to develop a programmatic website with material that is designed to meet learners where they are. In cases where either a video or a model text may be insufficient for student learning, WPAs can lead curricular committees dedicated to creating more robust resources that could combine modalities of instruction. Most importantly, however, with the results of pre-course modules for OWI, WPAs can be equipped to more specifically communicate the challenges of OWI to the range of institutional stakeholders who may have a hand in determining the viability of such courses and which students may best benefit from them.

Such an effort shifts the focus from the topics that are often the emphasis in discussions about accessibility and readiness in OWCs. Things such as captioning videos, streamlining the organization of materials, and simplifying directions are often at the forefront of discussion about accessible course design and user experience in OWI. Further, in terms of student readiness, much of the field's existing knowledge is derived from the research in online readiness broadly, which centers on areas such as time management, self-efficacy, motivation, and access to technology. While these are certainly essential components to help ensure student success, more emphasis on how students *learn* in OWI has the potential to help students consider whether or not an OWC is truly providing an accessible experience for them. At minimum, students will need to be able to adapt to the literacy expectations in the following areas:

- Following directions
- Locating and synthesizing important information
- Learning from instructional materials in multiple modalities
- Using a mentor text to guide writing

Rather than providing a broad readiness assessment for students to complete to measure their preparation for online learning, sample exercises that illustrate the way that learning takes place in an OWC can go much further towards ensuring that students who may already struggle with literacy skills or high literacy loads are provided with a low-stakes opportunity to test the waters before determining the course modality that best suits their needs without a WPA having to make the choice for them. What's more, the data from pre-course modules can provide valuable information to a WPA about the online instructional strategies that are/are not effective for learners who, for a variety of reasons, may struggle with the cognitive demands of online writing instruction, thereby opening possibilities for new approaches that could benefit learners who may most *need* the flexibility of an online course.

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