First Time Students!

If you’re a first time student at WKU, you will need to set up your WKU accounts. Just follow the steps below, in the order listed, so you’ll be ready on the first day of classes.

Look up your WKU Student ID: Go to topnet.wku.edu, and select “What is my WKU ID?” on the right hand side of the page. Your WKU ID, also called your 800 number, is a nine digit number. Please note this number, as you will use it throughout your time at WKU.

Login to TopNet: Visit topnet.wku.edu to search course availability. The first time you login, you will use

Student Support Staff

Danita Reiger is the Student Support Specialist for Online Learning. She has been with Distance Learning since August 2009. Danita provides current and potential students with information regarding online courses and programs, helps them get connected across campus and provides needed assistance with navigating the university at a distance. If you would like more information on online courses and programs email Danita at learn.online@wku.edu.

Tanja Bibbs is the Coordinator of Distance Learning and manages the day-to-day office operations in Independent Learning. She has been with Distance Learning since February 2009. Tanja oversees involvement in promotional events, provides support to Independent Learning faculty, and works to ensure student success and persistence.
your ID number as your login ID, and the last six digits of your social security number as your PIN. You will be prompted to change your PIN during your first login.

Register for Courses: Once you have been cleared for registration by your advisor, you will be able to register for your courses in TopNet. Click the “Student Services” tab at the top of the page, select “Registration,” then “Register/Add/Drop Classes,” next you will select the term for which you wish to register. You may register using the 5 digit CRN for the course(s) or you may search for courses to add.

Look-up Your NetID: Within 48 hours of registration, you will be assigned a WKU NetID. Your NetID allows single sign-on access for WKU Email (webmail), TopNet and Blackboard through the WKU Portal. To begin, go to portal.wku.edu. Click on “What is my NetID?” Using your last name, date of birth and last four digits of your social security number, look up your NetID. Your NetID will be shown at the top of the page and will consist of three letters + five numbers.

Set your NetID Password: Once you have your NetID, click “Create/Reset my NetID Password” from the menu on the right. Using your last name, date of birth and last four digits of your social security number, you will be able to set your NetID password.

Activate your WKU Email: Within 48 hours of registration, you will be assigned a WKU email address. Your WKU email is particularly important, as it serves as the primary point of contact for your professors to reach you. To activate your email you will first need to look up your TopperMail Email address. Visit wku.edu/it/accounts/toppermail, select Lookup my TopperMail Email Address from the menu on the right.

Sign into the Portal: Go to portal.wku.edu and sign in using your NetID and NetID Password. Save the Portal to your favorites, so you will have one click access to your WKU Email, Blackboard, TopNet and more!

If you have difficulty, please call our Help Line at 270-745-7000.

Student Support for Distance Learners

As we approach a new school year, Online Program Services wants to remind all of you of the vast amount of help and support out there for distance learners. Many students learning at a distance are surprised to discover that they have the same access to student services as our main campus, face to face students.

The best place to go when seeking out help in any area of student support is the Virtual Student Resource Center www.wku.edu/online/src/. The Student Resource Center offers information on Academic Support, Library Services, Study and Testing Tips and a comprehensive student services directory.

WKU offers assistance to distance learners in the areas of tutoring, research assistance and career services to name a few. Academic Advising and Retention Center offers Online Tutoring in many subject areas! Simply call AARC (270-745-5065) to set up an appointment and get the help you need from the comfort of your own home computer!

Likewise, WKU has an Online Writing Center which enables distance learners to get direction and suggestions from trained graduate assistants in the English department on how to become a better writer. Papers can be submitted online and feedback is provided within 72 hours of submission. If you would like to utilize this service, submit papers here. www.wku.edu/online/src/writing-center.php.
WKU also offers extensive Library Tutorials that are easily accessible to distance learners. Information on finding articles, websites and writing resources including help with citing sources according to the style required by your instructor is at your fingertips at www.wku.edu/online/src/lib-get-started.php. For more individualized help, we offer a Ask Your Librarian section in our online community. Ask Your Librarian is a discussion forum where you can post questions about your research interests and needs, and a WKU librarian will provide help!

While being successful in your coursework may be the immediate priority on your mind these days, it is advisable to think about your future career opportunities! Career Services provides professional insight on current job market trends and helpful preparation with resumes and interviewing skills. Visit Career Services www.wku.edu/career/ for more details!

**Work Smart!**

We’re always looking for hidden treasures that we know you’ll find useful. As the “old saying” goes, the key is to “Work Smart, Not Hard!” It is in the spirit of this little piece of wisdom that we would like to share John Tedesco’s blog post.

Tedesco highlights one of the conference speakers, Daniel Russell (Research Scientist at Google) who shared more than 20 search techniques that as Tedesco points out, are “powerful but obscure, well-known but not fully understood.” Check out the list below.

1. Most of what you know about Boolean is wrong. Don’t bother typing AND in your search queries – Google treats it like any other word. But OR in all caps actually works. OR is great for finding synonyms and boilerplate language. Typing “Smith denied” OR “Smith claimed” OR “Smith argued” will find more pertinent websites about the controversy involving Smith. Avoid using NOT if you want to exclude a search term. Instead, type a minus sign in front of the word. So if you’re visiting San Antonio but don’t want to visit the Alamo, type: “San Antonio” -Alamo That will search for the phrase “San Antonio” on web pages that don’t have the word “Alamo.” There’s no space between Alamo and the hyphen.

2. Think about how somebody else would write about the topic. Search is all about someone else’s language. Think about synonyms and use OR operators. Google’s “related search” feature on the search page also offers suggestions. “Part of the skill here is being fascinated about language,” Russell said. “You’ve got to think about equivalent terms.”

3. Use language tools. Knowing which words to search for means understanding their meaning. Typing define [space] [search term] in Google search will offer dictionary definitions. “Define ‘space’ ‘word’ is your friend as a writer,” Russell said. “Trust me on this.” You even get a definition if you type define pwned and other lingo. “That means we have words that aren’t in the dictionary,” Russell said. What if you know descriptions but not the actual word? Find one of the many reverse dictionaries online. Type the descriptions you know and you’ll get the matching words.

4. Use quotes to search for phrases. Typing “San Antonio Spurs” will show you the websites with the phrase “San Antonio Spurs.” If you don’t use the quotes, Google will search for the terms “San,” “Antonio,” and “Spurs” individually and you might miss pages related to the basketball team.

5. Force Google to include search terms. Sometimes Google tries to be helpful and it uses the word it thinks you’re searching for — not the word you’re actually searching for. And sometimes a website in the search results does not include all your search terms. How do you fix this? Typing intext:[keyword] might be Google’s least-known search operations, but it’s one of Russell’s favorites. It forces the search term to be in the body of the website. So if you type intext:”San Antonio” intext:Alamo it forces Google to show results with the phrase “San Antonio” and the word Alamo. You won’t get results that are missing either search term.

6. Minus does not equal plus. Russell didn’t talk much about this but it’s worth noting. Since putting a minus sign in front of a word removes it from a search, many people, including me, incorrectly assumed that adding a plus sign in front of the word forced Google to include it. Actually, that search operator simply stops Google from changing the word into a synonym or correcting the spelling. It’s still possible that Google will drop
the word from some search results, so it’s different from intext:. (After Google+ was unveiled, Google dropped the plus sign operator and replaced it with double quotes. Typing “Alamo” is now the same as +Alamo.) That’s not to say the plus sign — now double quotes — is not a useful search operator. But note how it’s different from intext: If you want to force Google to include an exact word or phrase in all your search results, use intext:

7. “Control F” is your friend. Use this keyboard shortcut to find a word or phrase on any web page. It’s faster than reading the whole page for a specific word or phrase. “If you don’t know this, you’re roughly 12 percent slower in your searches,” Russell said.

For the full list of search techniques he shares, visit John Tedesco’s post at www.johntedesco.net.

Stay Connected!

The Online Community for Distance Learners

The Online Community for Distance Learners houses a great deal of relevant information. Members can view announcements that serve as reminders for upcoming news and deadlines. There are also sections with study tips and helpful suggestions on time management. In addition, there is a Library Resources section and a discussion board monitored by a WKU librarian, Ms. Roxanne Spencer. She is available to answer questions about research projects and point you in the right direction.

A current work in progress is our Events section. Here we post videos of on campus lectures, workshops and presentations that distance learners may find of interest.

If you have any suggestions on items you would like to see added to the community or if you hear of any on campus lectures or presentations that you would like to view from the comfort of your home, please let us know! We will do our best to find a way to make them available through the community! If you aren’t a current member of the Online Community and would like to become a member, simply email us with your student ID number and we’ll add you!

Top Tools for Online Learners

Pursuing your education online can be a great experience especially if you are equipped with some helpful resources! Here is a list of some great tools available for online students to help in various areas.

To increase collaboration with classmates:

Today’sMeet: Here you can create private or public online meeting rooms for outside class discussions, collaborations, and study groups.

To improve your online reading skills and comprehension:

Spreeder: An online speed reading tool designed to teach you how to silence your inner voice while reading. You can gradually increase the WPM counter to speed up your reading abilities.

To help stay organized:

Toodledo: An online to-do-list for organizing tasks and improving productivity.

Time Tracker: A to-do-list with a clock. This tool lets you know when you’re spending all of your time on one item, and alerts you to re-allocate time wasted to other efforts.

Treepad Lite: Writers can keep track of their notes, e-mails, texts and reference materials with this all-in-one organizer. The program is easy to use and can be a great way to keep everything you need for writing in one place.

Password Hash: Have problems remembering all your passwords? This is an excellent tool that stores your passwords for you, and can autopopulate them when you visit that site for login.

For help with research and citing your references:

Citation Help: Son of Citation Machine helps students and professional researchers properly credit the information they use. The primary goal of this tool is to make it easy for student researchers to cite their information sources.

iCyte: An amazing research tool. You can mark, make notes and organize your thoughts on a topic on a webpage, or a few keywords in an article online. This tool stores the information for you so when you visit the site again, it pulls up the information you keyed in.

Diigo: A powerful research tool and a knowledge sharing community. You can annotate, archive, and organize. With this tool you can highlight and add sticky notes to web pages.
WKU Library Resources and Research Assistance:
WKU Libraries have extensive online databases and journals. They also have dedicated research librarians to assist you with your research topic!

Hopefully these aforementioned resources will help your productivity and help you work smarter instead of harder!

Other Points of Interest

Contacting Faculty, Staff and Campus Offices at WKU: Visit the Campus Directory to contact faculty, staff, or campus offices at WKU. If you need to reach your advisor and you don’t have their name, contact the departmental office for your major, or call us at 888-4WKUWEB.

Using Library Resources: We know many of you may have research projects coming due! We have online resources available through WKU Libraries that can help! Electronic journals, databases, e-books and more are available at www.wku.edu/library/. If you need assistance getting started, just visit our online library orientation at www.wku.edu/online/orientation/index.php.

We also have one-on-one assistance available through our Ask Your Librarian program. Ask Your Librarian provides easy access to a trained librarian through our Online Community. Roxanne Spencer, an Associate Professor in the Department of Library Public Services is available to answer any questions you may have about your research. So, whether you have a specific question, or just need some direction on the best place to start just Ask Your Librarian!

Not a member of the Online Community for distance learners? Joining is easy! Just email us at learn.online@wku.edu and let us know you would like to join!

New Programs

Instructional Design Master’s and Graduate Certification Available Online

The online instructional design program at WKU is expanding! The School of Teacher Education has added new faculty who offer vast expertise in the area of teaching and research in the field. Courses will be offered on a regular schedule and matriculation through the master’s program within two years, and the graduate certificate program within one year.

Instructional Design is a systematic process employed to develop education and training programs intended for learning and performance improvement in a variety of settings, such as business and industry, government, military, and educational institutions. The ID process involves analyzing learning and performance needs, and designing, developing, implementing, evaluating and managing instructional and non-instructional solutions.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates that instructional designers are in great demand, and have an excellent job outlook, with a higher than average projected growth rate of 20% each year through 2020. As an instructional designer, you may expect to find employment in corporations, universities, community colleges, medical centers, libraries, school districts, government agencies, and military services.

The median wage in the United States for instructional designers is $28.50 per hour, $59,280 annually.

The master’s program requires 30 credit hours. WKU also offers a 12 credit hour graduate certificate in Instructional Design, which may be earned as part of a master’s program or as a stand-alone certificate.

For more information, please refer to the following link: www.wku.edu/online/id/.
WKU Announces First Elementary Mathematics Specialist Endorsement in the State

Western Kentucky University now offers an elementary mathematics specialist endorsement, the first program of its kind in the state. Through a partnership between WKU School of Teacher Education and WKU Online Learning, the Elementary Math Specialist (EMS) Endorsement provides teachers, teacher leaders and math coaches with instruction in math pedagogy, problem solving and assessment with a concentration in technology and diverse learners.

The EMS Endorsement is designed to give professionals both a deep and practical knowledge of the content and pedagogy of elementary mathematics and skills for working with other professionals to develop their mathematical knowledge for teaching in P-5 settings.

The program is ideal for math professionals responsible for supporting effective math instruction and student learning at the classroom, school, district or state levels.

This 15 credit-hour program may be earned as a stand-alone endorsement, or incorporated into the MAE in Elementary Education, the Planned 5th year program in Elementary Education, the Planned 6th year/Rank I or the EdS in Elementary Education. Students wishing to pursue the endorsement as part of a master’s program must meet the admission criteria for that program.

Applicants must be certified in Elementary Education to qualify and have or be eligible for a teaching certificate for Elementary Education, Grades P-5. The GRE is not required for this program.

Students can begin coursework this summer, but courses are available throughout the year. For more information, visit www.wku.edu/online/ems.

Independent Learning Announces AIS Degree

WKU Independent Learning is proud to announce the availability of the Associate Degree of Interdisciplinary Studies solely through a self-paced, correspondence format! The Associate Degree of Interdisciplinary Studies is an ideal program choice for students who are interested in building their marketability in a time where minimum educational requirements in the workforce have changed. All the general education, two areas of emphasis, and elective hour requirements (60 hours total) can be met by choosing from a diverse offering of Independent Learning courses.

Students interested in pursuing this option through Independent Learning would be those who are interested in the Business, Education, Health, Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences, or Social Justice and Equity Studies Emphases. Students are required to choose 27 unduplicated hours from two of the areas of emphasis while making sure to select a minimum of 9 credit hours for each area.

The Business track includes courses that are focused on a variety of disciplines. Students can choose to enroll in SOCL 450 – Occupations and Professions to study the trends of occupational activities and careers. Need to hone in on your office systems approaches or skills? Independent Learning also offers a couple of Office Systems Technology (OST) courses that would be useful to students in the constant evolving business world.

Although the Education emphasis does not certify students to teach, this area affords students valuable knowledge relevant to their career of choice. Working with Young Children and Families (FACS 192) and Family and Community Partnerships (FACS 297) are courses students may choose to enroll in if working with preschool aged children or employed at an organization or agency that offers after-school programming. The Health emphasis allows students the opportunity to explore different aspects of health ranging from Drug Abuse (PH 165) to Human Sexuality (PH 365).

Students who enjoy learning about
literature, history, and the arts would opt for courses in the Humanities emphasis. Courses like 20th Century Europe (HIST 335) and Art of Asia, Africa, and Americas (ART 325) are two possibilities for students who are leaning towards the more liberal arts experience. The options provided to students under the Social and Behavioral Science Emphasis range from Social Deviance (SOCL 309) to JOUR 355 – Fundamentals of Public Relations.

The last emphasis area that some Independent Learning courses can be classified under is Social Justice and Equity Studies. This area covers subject area that fosters thinking related to advocacy and organizing. Race, Class, and Gender (SOCL 362) and Criminology (SOCL 330) would be appealing to students looking to explore equity and discrimination issues whilst fulfilling the emphasis area requirement.

For more information regarding the Associate of Interdisciplinary Studies, please contact one of the advisors: Deborah Weisberger at 270-780-2540, Ashley Chance at 270-745-8962, or Heather Strode at 270-780-2584.

**New Independent Learning Courses**

Fall registration for Independent Learning is going on now! Students who are interested in using their financial aid to pay for Independent Learning courses can still request to do so until October 19th. Independent Learning has added quite a number of new courses to the list of offerings.

- ART 325 Art of Asia, Africa, and Americas
- GEOG 100 Intro to Physical Environment
- GEOG 487 Environmental Law
- HIST 341 A Cultural History of Alcohol
- HIST 440 Colonial North America to 1763
- HIST 441 American Revolution & Early Rep.
- HIST 443 Civil War/Reconstruction
- HIST 463 The Atlantic World

Courses that Independent Learning will be offering soon include:

- BIO 131C Human Anatomy and Physiology
- CIT 352 Database Administration II
- FACS 495 Relationship and Violence
- GEOG 444 Environmental Ethics in Geography
- GEOS Practical Environmental Ethics
- HIST 426 Hitler and Nazi Germany
- JOUR 154 New Media Literacy
- JOUR 201 Media and Society
- PE 100 Life Fitness/Wellness
- PSY 321 Child Developmental Psychology
- SOCL 530 Penology
- UC 175 University Experience

**New Online Learning Courses**

More than 1,000 courses are offered online each year! This fall brings with it new courses in Agriculture, Architecture and Manufacturing Sciences, Communication, Folk Studies, History, Instructional Design, Nursing, Real Estate and much more! Visit TopNet at topnet.wku.edu to see a complete list of fall courses.

**Key WKU Departments for Online Students**

- Admissions.................................270-745-2551
- Billings & Receivables...............270-745-6381
- Bookstore......................................270-745-2466
- Career Services Center.............270-745-3095
- Community College...................270-780-2550
- Counseling & Testing Center ......270-745-3159
- Distance Learning......................270-745-5173
- Diversity Programs.....................270-745-5066
- Financial Aid..............................270-745-2755
- Graduate Studies.........................270-745-2446
- Independent Learning ...............270-745-4158
- Library Resources.......................270-745-6125
- Online Tutoring .........................270-745-6254
- Registrar ....................................270-745-3351
- Student Disability Services..........270-745-5004
- DELO Testing Center ...................270-745-5122