Pitfalls to Avoid in an Online Class

Assuming online classes are easier
While there are definitely some advantages in taking online classes, like the ability to "go to class" on your own schedule, online classes are not ultimately easier than traditional classes. In fact, in some ways they are more demanding. You have to be more responsible for your own learning by reading, watching, and participating in course content.

Not keeping a schedule
Even though you can work on your class whenever you want, that doesn't mean never! In order to keep up with the work and not find yourself way behind, you need to schedule time every week for class work. For some people, this means you need to actually pencil-in time on your schedule to make sure you get to it. However you handle it, just keep up with your work on a weekly basis so you do not get behind.

Waiting until the last minute
We know you've heard this one before, but it can be a special problem in an online class. Your instructor does not see you face-to-face to ask how projects or papers are coming along. You are responsible for keeping up with the work and knowing what is due when. Study the course schedule at the beginning, and make sure you make time for all your assignments ahead of time.

Not taking discussions seriously
In many classes, thoughtful participation in discussions is a major part of your grade. Through discussions, instructors want you to apply what you have learned and challenge your thinking. Before you hit "post," make sure you understand the topic, read other students' responses, and think through your response thoroughly.

Not following directions. OK, so you have been hearing this one since the 3rd grade. But it is still true, and even more so in an online class. Since your instructor is not watching your response to directions—nor watching you while you are working so they can correct errors—it is really important that you read instructions for assignments and quizzes carefully. This is part of why we say that online learners have to take more responsibility for their learning.

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