Your Learning Environment and Computer Set Up

A couple of pointers to make sure that your online experience goes well:

1. **Equipment** - Use a laptop or a computer. A tablet or phone is not a good idea, and they will not work for exam-taking purposes.
2. **Ethernet Cable and Internet Speed**
   - **Ethernet Cable** – It is suggested that you get an ethernet cable to connect your computer directly to your modem. These are inexpensive, and you can get them at any store that sells electronics.
   - **Speed** - It is suggested that your internet connection should be 5 MB as a minimum.

   By doing this, your connection will be faster, and you will experience fewer delays. A slow connection can break up the audio and can be frustrating.

   If you choose not to hardwire your computer, be as close to your modem as possible.
3. **If Delays Occur** - If delays in connectivity do occur, check to see if others are using up bandwidth for nonessential purposes. For example, if a child is gaming online in the next room, this can seriously slow down a connection. Perhaps such playtime can wait until after your class is finished.
4. **Study Area** - Prepare your study area. You will want a location that facilitates learning and allows you to take notes. This area should be free from distractions and background noise sources. When your mic is on, the whole class will hear what is going on in the background.
5. **Software Requirements**
   - **Browser** – You will need an internet browser. Your browsers should be up to date, and it is a good idea to make sure that you have downloaded the latest version
   - **Zoom** – Zoom is a video conference communications package that we use to do virtual "face to face" instruction. Down load the software, and if you already have it, make sure it is up to date
   - **Microsoft Word** – A few (not many) documents may be in Word.
   - **PFD Reader** – Most class documents are in pdf format. Being able to read pdf files is essential.
6. **Software Familiarity** – two software packages that you should be very comfortable with before the class starts are:

- **Blackboard Learn** – This learning management system is the primary portal into course content. Please explore this tool before the class starts
- **Zoom** – If you are not comfortable with this video conference software package, please explore this immediately. Please be comfortable with its workings before the first class.

7. **Before Class** - Before logging onto Zoom, please have all the background computer programs shut down. Programs running in the background can slow your operations, cause Zoom to shut down, and provide unnecessary sounds and interference. Shut down all nonessential programs for class.

8. **Before Taking an Exam** – Blackboard is an application that requires heavy internet usage and may shut down inadvertently at the most inopportune times if its needs are not fully met. And one of these times that is especially to be avoided is when taking an exam. To assure that your exam period goes smoothly, always do the following:
    - **Restart Your Computer** – Restart your computer immediately before starting an exam. By doing so, you will help assure that only essential programs will be using memory and bandwidth.
    - **Shut Down Background Programs** – For the same reasons above, background programs will compete with Blackboard for its essential memory and bandwidth needs. Therefore, shut down all background programs.
    - **Minimize WIFI Use** – If others are using heavy internet programs, such as gaming, videos, and others, these too will compete with the necessary bandwidth needs of Blackboard. Please consider asking others to forgo internet use while you take an exam, if possible.

This list is certainly not exhaustive but offers suggestions borne out of experience and other input.