

Romans Road Student Handbook

Online Learning – Is it right for me?

Online learning is not for everyone. Although learning is flexible, meaning it allows you to learn in your own environment during a time each week that is convenient for you, it still requires the same type of time commitment as a regular course would.

Learners need to be self-motivated, independent students who can understand and follow directions. They should also possess organizational, technical and time management skills, and have adequate time each week to spend on coursework.

The more of these qualities a learner possesses, the more successful they tend to be in the online environment. You may find it helpful to read an article entitled "**Is Distance Learning Right for You?**" (http://www.degreeinfo.com/article5_1.html) to help you determine how you might perform in an online learning environment.

Technical Requirements

Hardware Requirements

You need regular access to a personal computer that meets the following specifications:

- 512 RAM (minimum)
- CD-ROM drive (reading ability only)
- Video card (128MB acceptable, 256MB recommended)
- Sound card
- Speakers (internal or external)
- DVD drive (on computer) or DVD player (external) (Select courses only)
- Regular access to high-speed internet (cable modem or DSL) is also needed. Due to the streaming audio and video presentations that will be used to deliver content, a dial-up connection is not recommended.
- Access to a printer to print supplementary notes and handouts is required for seminars and the demo course. It is also highly recommended for enrollment in full courses.

Software Requirements

You need regular access to a personal computer that has the following software installed:

- Operating System:
 - Windows 2000, NT, ME, XP, Vista or Mac OS X
- Internet Browser:
 - Internet Explorer (7.0 or higher) can be used, but it must be the newest version
 - Mozilla Firefox is the suggested browser
- Plug-ins:
 - Adobe Acrobat Reader
 - Adobe Flash Player
- E-mail Account
- Microsoft Word 97 or higher (or equivalent)

- Microsoft PowerPoint 97 or higher or PowerPoint Viewer

NOTE: To test your system, access one of our [Free Seminars](#). If you can access the instructions and open and view the student notes and the presentation file, then you have a supported Operating System and browser and all needed plug-ins.

Suggested Computer Settings

For optimum viewing, your screen resolution should be set at 1024 by 768 pixels. To adjust this setting, go to the Start Menu and select Control Panel. Open the dialog box for Display. You may need to select Appearances first. Select the Settings tab and then drag the screen resolution slider until it displays the desired pixels. Click on Apply then OK to save your settings.

Necessary Online Student Technical Skills

If you are enrolling in courses, you should be comfortable:

- Connecting to and browsing on the internet
- Downloading and printing files
- Controlling the playback of audio and video files in a player
- Opening, editing, creating and saving files in a Word Processor
- Receiving and sending e-mails
- Downloading, editing, saving and uploading attachments
- Discussing ideas through written communication
- Learning new technical skills

CMI Policies – Administrative and Academic

When a student enrolls in the Romans Road course, the student agrees to abide by all *CMI* administrative and academic policies. Any failure to abide by the policies listed can result in student dismissal when necessary as determined by the *CMI Online* academic committee. The decision of the *CMI Online* academic committee is final.

General Course Guidelines

You should plan on spending 5-7 hours a week working on coursework. This includes time watching presentations, interacting in the forum, completing homework and participating in all other activities.

Since online discussion is a significant part of the teaching and learning models that help solidify learning, students are encouraged to actively participate and contribute to course discussions with posts that are frequent and substantial.

Attendance during the First Week

At the end of the first week, each course will be reviewed to determine if the student is attending the course. If the student has not attended, the student will be dropped from the course roster. If you have problems accessing the website or the forum during the first week, promptly contact your instructor and/or IT (Information Technology) Help Desk for help.

Intellectual Honesty and Academic Misconduct

The *Children's Ministries Institute* expects students to exhibit honesty in all areas of study and life. Academic dishonesty is a serious violation of the standards of the *Children's Ministries Institute* and can result in dismissal from the course. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism*, cheating, fabrication of research (inventing data or citations), the facilitation of academic dishonesty, or violation of copyright. All *Children's Ministries Institute* content is subject to U.S. Copyright laws and is restricted to use by enrolled students.

Books and notes (in print or downloadable form) as well as CDs and DVDs may not be reproduced in any form, shared in print or by electronic means, or sold without the written permission of the publisher.

The only copying allowed is that which the student is required to make in order to complete his or her course. Streamed video lectures should not be viewed on a regular basis by those not enrolled in a course. In addition, students should not attempt to gain unauthorized access to computerized academic or administrative records or systems. Any act of software piracy, hacking, constructing viruses, or knowingly introducing viruses into a system will be breaches of integrity.

*All written material submitted by any means should be the original work of the student. Group projects should be the combined original work of the group. Students should not at any time represent another's work as their own.

Communication

Although interaction will be different than in a typical classroom setting, it is a key component of online education. Whether you communicate through email, chat sessions, or the forum, you should do so politely following the guidelines given. Weekly written discussions amongst your classmates and instructor will take place in a forum.

A forum is a place to carry on a discussion with others. Instead of merely e-mailing thoughts to an individual, a forum provides a public place for you to post your thoughts so that everyone can read them and have the opportunity to respond. One of the advantages of this type of communication is that participants do not have to all be online at the same time. Replies to a post can be added right after it is made or even days later.

These discussions will build throughout the week and provide opportunity for you to ask questions, clarify understanding of a topic and offer suggestions to others. Students will also have the ability to communicate through e-mail and chat sessions.

All types of communication should work together to help build a community where learners support and assist each other. *CEF* and *CMI* are inter-denominational, and *CMI* students represent a variety of denominations and cultures. In keeping with the interdenominational character of the organization, careful consideration must be given to our ministry and our fellowship with one another to demonstrate the unity of the Body of

Christ. All denominations, national origins, genders, ages and races should feel welcome, and all students should feel safe to share their thoughts.

Students should keep a multicultural, inclusive perspective when writing online. Any posts that are considered offensive to individuals or groups are subject to deletion by your instructor. Any student who consistently posts things that are offensive or hurtful to others as determined by the *CMI Online* Academic Committee is subject to dismissal from the program.

Keeping these things in mind, the following are guidelines that will help us build a supportive learning environment where all feel welcome.

General Guidelines and Format

- Be concise. Each assignment will give a minimum and/or maximum number of words. Stay within those guidelines.
- Use correct grammar, capitalization, and punctuation. Use spell check and edit all postings before submitting. Treat forum posts and e-mails with the same respect and guidelines that you would use when writing correspondence or hand-written letters. It is not a text message and text message shorthand is not allowed. Refrain from using abbreviations.
- Using ALL CAPS is not appropriate. It is the equivalent of shouting. Break long messages down into short paragraphs so they will be easy to read online. For longer messages, be sure to compose your message first in a word processor.
- When you write messages in the text box of a discussion forum, it is not recognized by the software your internet service provider (ISP) uses to connect you to the internet. As such, after a set amount of time, your ISP will “time out”, your connection may be broken, and your work may be lost.

Content

- Clearly state your topic in the subject line.
- Your contribution should demonstrate original thought and grapple with pertinent issues with respect to the topic.
- Be sure to carefully read the discussion questions. If the question has several parts, be sure to answer all parts of the question.
- Only messages that are relevant, help others, further the conversation, or resolve an issue should be posted.
- Ask questions or define issues or terms in the post. Also, ask expansive questions to stimulate your classmates thinking and lead to deeper understanding.

- Build on previous posts by agreeing or disagreeing, but avoid posting “Me, too” or “Great job” type posts. Feel free to give encouragement to your classmates, but provide specific reasons or examples about why you agree or disagree with the post.
- Include personal accounts and provide reasons or examples to support assertions you make.
- Suggest metaphors that could help with understanding.
- Share web links and other reference materials.
- Cite the source for anything you quote as part of an assignment by providing the pertinent information.

Online Etiquette

- Be polite. Do not belittle others or their ideas.
- If you disagree with someone, start by restating what he/she has said to see if you understood correctly. You may question and challenge other people’s ideas. When done constructively, it benefits learning. Keep in mind that individual attacks and verbal abuse are not allowed.
- Use good judgment in your postings. What you may think is humorous, another person may think is offensive. Avoid sarcasm and be careful with humor. It can easily be misunderstood online due to the lack of verbal and nonverbal clues.
- If you use a word that may have several meanings, define the word and clarify the intention of its use.
- Profanity, pornography, hate and offensive language are not allowed in any online communication.
- This forum will be actively monitored and messages deleted as necessary. Any student that uses offensive, derogatory, or inappropriate communication as determined by the *CMI Online* Academic Committee will be removed from the course.

Chat Sessions

- Chat sessions allow participants to discuss topics in real time on the web. This is a useful way to get a different understanding of the topic being discussed.
- Be on time. Give yourself enough time before the chat session starts to troubleshoot technical difficulties so that you are not late for class.

- Dial-up connections are not recommended since it may make the chat room very slow.
- Research the topic of discussion before the chat starts. Make sure you have paper, textbooks, and any other research material available to refer to for support of your ideas.
- Make sure the chat has your full attention.
- Enter dialogue after the instructor asks if there are any questions.
- If you have a question for your group or for the instructor, please type a question mark (?).
- Include the name of the person to whom you are responding before you type your message.
- Be patient. Some people type slow or have dial-up issues. Give the receiver time to process the information and formulate a response.
- Stay focused on the goals and objectives of the chat.
- When you have a lot to say, please type three dots (...), so that the rest of the class knows to hold all other postings until you have completed your thoughts.
- Emoticons (e.g. smiley face) are useful when the words you are typing may be taken two ways.
- Expect the unexpected. If you have technical problems, don't panic. Email your instructor as soon as possible and ask how you can make up for your absence.

Privacy

- If you draw examples from people in your area, protect their confidentiality by using fictitious names. This is professional courtesy.
- Assume that all messages you post are available to the general public. Do not post things that you want to keep private.
- Do not post any proprietary, classified, or restricted information.

Advertising

Advertisements are strictly prohibited. Do not post to the forum or e-mail students promoting yourself, your organization, your company or your products. Sales, chain letters, advertisements and commercial activities are forbidden.

Ownership

CEF and *CMI* reserve the right to use students' online posts without consent for marketing and/or communication purposes. In all other cases, online communication cannot be copied and shared without permission of the author and/or the instructor. Make sure that you have their permission before using any other student's work.

Personal Security

Neither *CEF* nor *CMI* will ask you to send personal information via unsecured email, through the *CMI Online* forum or other unsecured communication. As well, do not reveal personal information to other students. Notify the instructor immediately if anyone requests information such as home address, phone number, Social Security number, driver's license number, credit card numbers, account numbers, or password. Do not request this information from others.

Student Complaints/Grievances

If a student believes that they have a justifiable concern about discrimination or unfair treatment on the basis of race, color, sex, age, or national origin or any academic procedure (class procedures, grades, evaluations, etc.), it is our desire that any grievance be resolved in an informal manner. This would include discussing the problem or grievance with an instructor first. If the issue cannot be resolved with the instructor, an appeal may be made by following the procedure listed below.

Unlawful discrimination or unfair treatment

Any complaint regarding sexual harassment, unlawful discrimination or unfair treatment on the basis of race, color, sex, age, or national origin should be raised as soon as the event occurs or the student gains knowledge of it. In no event should a grievance be raised more than 30 days after the event occurred.

The student should first seek to resolve the issue informally with the instructor. In the event that this is not possible, the student may file a written grievance with the *CMI Online* academic committee. The written grievance should contain the name of the complainant, the date of the filing, and a brief, specific description of the grievance and the resolution sought.

The *CMI Online* academic committee will provide a written response to the student typically within thirty days of receipt, unless the situation requires additional research or investigation. The decision of the *CMI Online* academic committee will be final.

Quality of Instruction

CMI consistently evaluates all policies, procedures, content, instructors, and the delivery system. Students are strongly encouraged to provide feedback about issues or concerns through surveys or personal communication with their instructor.

If any issue or concern cannot be resolved with the instructor, the student may file a written complaint within 30 days of the end of the course in which the complaint arose. The student should clearly state the areas of concern, give examples, and provide specific documentation.

The *CMI Online* academic committee will investigate appropriately including talking with the instructor and reviewing class communications. The *CMI Online* academic committee will convey to the student in writing a detailed evaluation of the complaint and, if appropriate, a solution to the problem. The decision of the *CMI Online* academic committee is final.

Technical Support Services

If you are having technical problems,

1. Follow the Technology Help Desk Self-Service Steps (outlined below)
2. Read the frequently asked questions on the *CMI* website to see if your question is answered there.
3. Contact the IT (Information Technology) Help Desk with a detailed description of your problem if you have not resolved your issue.

Step One: Technology Help Desk Self-Service Steps

You should do the following before calling the IT Help Desk:

1. Is your computer on? Check to see if your modem, computer, keyboard, mouse, phone, cable, or network cords are plugged in. Sometimes a computer restart may clear up your problems.
2. Dial-up service is not recommended due to the streaming audio and video presentations that are used to deliver content. However, if you have dial-up service you should check to see if your telephone is working. Pick up a phone that shares the same line and listen for a dial tone. If there is no dial tone, you'll probably need to contact your telephone company.
3. If you have cable Internet: Are you able to receive your normally subscribed television channels? If not, you should contact your cable company.
4. Is your modem functioning? Look at the lights. Are they functioning as they normally do?
5. Can you open up an Internet browser window (Internet Explorer or Netscape) and view web pages? If not, you may need to restart your computer. If you are having trouble accessing the Internet in general, you should contact your Internet Service Provider.

6. Check the *Technical Requirements* page located under the *Main Menu*. Make sure that all the hardware requirements are met. Then, check the software requirements to make sure that you are using one of the suggested operating systems and that you have downloaded a current browser and all the necessary plug-ins.

Step Two: Visit CMI Online and read the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) to see if your question is answered there.

Step Three: Contact the IT Help Desk

The IT Help Desk can help you with the following types of issues:

You are not able to login.

The website is not working.

When you contact IT, you should send them the following information:

- Your name and contact information.
- The course number, section number and the instructor's name.
- Detailed description of what the problem is, including what you were doing and where (i.e., I receive an internal server error message when trying to upload a Word file to the Dropbox.).
- If possible, copy and paste any error message that may appear.
- Indicate the browser (Firefox, Internet Explorer, or Safari) and the version you are using.

What can I expect from the IT Help Desk?

The IT Help Desk will try to resolve the issue if possible within four hours during the business day. Office hours are Monday-Friday 7:30-3:30 CST. They will notify you of receipt of your request and the resolution.

The *Children's Ministries Institute* wants to help you succeed. If for any reason you are unsure who to contact or you are not receiving timely answers via other routes, feel free to contact the *CMI Online* Administrator at 636-456-4321 ext. 232 and we will do everything possible to resolve the difficulty you are having.

Instructor Expectations: Instructor Introductions

Instructors will post an introduction to the class in the forum. This will include a brief biographical sketch. There will also be information regarding the preferred means of communication during the course, contact information, office hours and other relevant course information. Be sure to read this post and respond by introducing yourself to your instructor and classmates.

Instructor Expectations: Instructor Interaction in the Discussion Board

You can expect your instructor to interact with students on the discussion board providing constructive feedback where appropriate. The instructor will not respond to each individual post but will selectively reply to students noting significant areas of learning that are mentioned that are in line with weekly and course objectives. Instructors

will also provide explanations or further comments regarding the topic of discussion to extend your learning. As well, instructors may ask questions about your posts to challenge you. Students are encouraged to take responsibility in the forum providing appropriate constructive feedback and resources to their fellow students as the course progresses. Students are also encouraged to ask questions of their fellow students when questions arise about their posts.

Prompt Response to Questions

Your instructor is also available to help you with whatever difficulties that you might have with the coursework. Weekly office hours will allow you to call if needed. Other direct, one-on-one help can be obtained by following the procedure your instructor posted at the beginning of the course. Your instructor should respond within two business days.

Links

Our web sites may contain links to other sites. Such a link should not be seen as an endorsement, approval or agreement with any information or resources offered at sites you can access through our sites. Please be aware that *Children's Ministries Institute* is not responsible for the privacy practices of such other sites. We encourage our users to be aware of when they leave our site and to read the privacy statements of each and every Web site that collects personally identifiable information.

Limitation of Liability

The *Children's Ministries Institute* will not be liable for any damages or injury that accompany or result from your use of any of its sites. These include, but are not limited to, damages or injury caused by any:

- Use of or any inability to use the sites
- Use of or inability to use any site to which you hyperlink from our sites
- Failure of our sites to perform in the manner you expected or desired
- Error or omission on our sites
- Interruption of availability of our sites
- Defect of our sites
- Delay in operation or transmission of our sites
- Computer virus or line failure

We are not liable even if we've been negligent or if our authorized representative has been advised of the possibility of such damages or both.

Notification of Changes

We reserve the right to change our policies at any time. If we decide to change our policies, we will post those changes on our privacy related Web pages so our users are always aware of what information we collect, how we use it, and under what circumstances, if any, we disclose it.