



Critical Choices Facilitator Manual

Developing Skills for a Lifetime

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March 22, 2005

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Chapter 1: Getting Started

Welcome to the Critical Choices course! Critical Choices is an online program designed to help persons identify a career and the essential skills or help they will need for workplace success. This manual is a resource for you, the onsite facilitator. It contains an introduction to the Critical Choices website, information about the course content, and job aids with detailed instructions on how to perform important tasks.

Because this course is both content and technology driven, your role as facilitator is extremely important. It will be your job to monitor students as they work through each section and provide guidance and encouragement as needed. Although most of the course content will be presented online, it is recommended you deliver this course as a “blended model.” This means that students work through the course on their own and at their own pace but also have opportunities to review their work and discuss with you other issues pertinent to them. The course also works best when students have access to a computer lab that is: (1) equipped with a support staff and (2) open enough hours to meet a variety of schedules.

What is the course about?

The course title, “Critical Choices,” gives you a hint. There are choices that occur at critical junctures in our lives: selecting a college, choosing a major, selecting a job, choosing a part of the country to live in, picking a romantic partner, and many more. Learning how to make good choices is critical to a person’s success in life. Helping students learn how to make these choices is what the Critical Choices course is all about.

Much of the course focuses on choices surrounding work. Wise decision-making in this area requires that people know themselves and their options. Too often people don’t take the time to consider what they need and want from the work they do. The result is that they drift from one unsatisfactory job situation to another. With the Critical Choices program students look at their values and interests, assess their strengths and skills, and choose a career path for themselves. Once they have done this, they begin the process of finding an entry level position in their newly chosen field. The ultimate goal of Critical Choices is to help each student find a meaningful occupation that pays a living wage.

Why an online course?

By offering Critical Choices as an online program, students obtain several benefits that can not be achieved in a face-to-face course.

First, there is the advantage that students can choose when and where they work on the course. Thus they can design a plan that works with their unique schedules and life circumstances. This can be especially beneficial for those people trying to juggle busy schedules that include children.

Second, the very nature of online learning lets people work at their own pace. Students are not tied to a timeframe dictated by the teacher and the needs of the other members of their class. If they have a special need or interest in a particular topic, they can devote as much time as the desire. Likewise, if there are issues not pertinent to their life circumstances, they can spend less time or skip topics entirely.

Finally, students get the opportunity to practice and master computer skills including using the Internet. In today’s world, experience using technology is important. People who do not have computer skills are severely limited in their career options. Critical Choices gives students who have some trepidation with working on a computer, a safe environment to practice these skills.

How do I access the Critical Choices course?

The URL for the Critical Choices website is <http://www.criticalchoices.org>. When you first access the website, you will be on the public side. Public refers to content that anyone can view. The public side of the Critical Choices website contains information about the Critical Choices project.

The Critical Choices course is located on the private side of the website. Private refers to sections of the website only authorized users are allowed to see. To access the private side you must have a User ID and Password. If you do not have a User ID yet, you can get one by sending an email to the HelpDesk at online@niu.edu. (See Appendix A: Acquire a Facilitator ID / Add a Course Section.)

To log on to the private side of the Critical Choices website, enter your user ID and password in the indicated area on the left-hand side of the screen and click on the Go button.

Each student in the Critical Choices program must also have a unique user ID and password. One of the roles of the facilitator is to create IDs for each student and give this information to them. (See Appendix B: Add a Student to a Course Section.) Students should be informed that without this ID and password, they will not be able to view the course materials.

What is the difference between a facilitator ID and a student ID?

While the Critical Choices course looks similar to both the facilitator and students, there are some important differences. The facilitator has all of the capabilities as the student and a few more. The facilitator can do things such as add students to the course and edit their information, add announcements, monitor the progress of students, and schedule appointments in students' Daily Planner. All of these differences are outlined in this manual.

How do I navigate the Critical Choices course?

Once you have logged into the Critical Choices website, you will find much of the navigation on the left-hand side of the browser page. The navigation is divided into three sections: Main Menu, Connect, and Backpack. For the most part, this navigation will always be available. However, there are some tools such as the Discussion Board, which when selected will change this navigation temporarily. Once you have exited the tool, the navigation will return. On the right-hand side of the browser page, there is a Dictionary and Search tool. These also will always display except when certain tools like the Discussion Board are selected.

Chapter 2: Main Menu

The Main Menu is the navigation located on the left-hand side of the screen at the top. It consists of four links: My Homepage, Learning Center, Community Center, and Help Desk.

My Homepage

The first page a person sees when logging into the private side of the Critical Choices site is My Homepage. It contains information customized to the individual including the use of their name in the title, new announcements from the facilitator (Announcements), a display of appointments they have entered in their Daily Planner for the day (Today's Appointments), a list of personal tasks to do (To Do List), and access to view and modify personal information about themselves (Edit My Information).

- **Course Section**

Each class of students is known as a Course Section. This feature lets facilitators who are teaching several classes move easily between course sections instead of requiring a new ID for every class.

Students do not have this feature on their homepage. It is not necessary since their ID only allows them to have access to one course section.

- **Announcements**

Announcements is a tool available to the facilitator to allow them to communicate to an entire class of students. The facilitator can add, edit and delete announcements. The facilitator also has the capability to define the exact date each announcement will display on the students' homepage. (See Appendix D: Add/Edit/Delete Announcements for instructions on how to use the Announcement tool.)

Students only have the capability to view announcements. When a facilitator sends an announcement, it initially displays on their homepage. Once students have read an announcement, they can remove it from their homepage by using the Mark as Read link. Students can view all announcements they have received during the course by clicking on the View All Announcements link.

- **Today's Appointments**

The facilitator and students in the course each have their own personal Daily Planner. They can add appointments to this planner. All appointments for the day will display in this section on the homepage.

- **To Do List**

The facilitator and students in the course each have their own To Do List. Tasks can be added, edited and deleted from this list. Once a task has been finished, it can be marked completed. People also can view all tasks they have completed and tasks still yet to do. Each person (including the facilitator) only has the capabilities to make changes to their own To Do List.

- **Edit My Information**

Students in the course each have a page that contains biographical information and a picture. Other students can view these pages through the My Classmates link. The Edit My Information link can be used by each student to add, edit, and delete information. Facilitators should encourage students to complete this page prior to beginning the course.

Learning Center

The Critical Choices course is located in the Learning Center. It is divided into four sections: Who Am I?, Where Am I Going?, How Do I Get There?, and How Do I Stay There?. Each section is divided

into chapters. There are fifteen chapters in the course. Chapter 5 (Learning Center) and Chapter 6 (Curriculum) provide more information on the Learning Center.

Help Desk

The Critical Choices course has an extensive help desk system that enables students to seek and find answers to technical problems they encounter while taking the course. One goal of the Critical Choices course is to teach students how to locate their own answers so that they create a sense of confidence using online resources. Therefore, students should be encouraged to initially go the Help Desk when they have a technical problem.

The Help Desk is also available as a resource for facilitators. Facilitators can use the Help Desk when they encounter technical problems, need a facilitator ID, or need a new course section added.

The Help Desk employs a layered approach: (1) A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) database, (2) an online Help Desk form, and (3) a phone number to the Help Desk.

- **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

The Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) tool is a database that a person can search by entering a keyword. The database contains questions that have been asked by previous Critical Choices students and facilitators and will continue to grow as new questions are submitted. With the FAQ, students and facilitators can answer their own questions and do not have to wait for assistance.

The Critical Choices website offers a tool people can use if they have forgotten their password. This tool can be accessed through the FAQ feature in the Help Desk by using the keyword "password". This tool is also located on the homepage of the Critical Choices website.

- **Help Form**

When students or facilitators cannot find the answer to their question in the FAQ, they can complete a Help Form that goes to the NIU Help Desk. The Help Desk strives to have all inquiries answered within 24 hours; however, time may vary. Turn-around time will probably be much shorter if the form is submitted during normal business hours. Turn-around time will be longer for forms submitted late at night or on weekends.

- **Phone Number**

The Help Desk does provide a phone number (815-753-2401) that can be used if other options have been exhausted. At this time, a person is available to answer the phone Monday-Friday from 9:00 CST to 5:00 CST. Students and facilitators should only use this as a last resort or if there is a situation that requires immediate attention.

Chapter 3: Connect

The Critical Choices course contains tools to help students learn about and communicate with their classmates and facilitator. There are several reasons for this. (1) Feeling connected to other students and the facilitator can greatly increase motivation and the odds that a student will complete the course. (2) Communication tools and activities give students the opportunity to learn from each other and their facilitator. (3) Being able to effectively use online communication tools like email and discussion boards is an important skill students can use in the workplace.

Connect is the navigation located on the left-hand side of the screen in the middle. It consists of four links: Facilitator, My Classmates, Discussion Board, and Chat.

Facilitator

Facilitator is a webpage that contains contact and personal information about the person designated as facilitator for the course section. Each course section must have at least one facilitator and may have several.

Facilitators have the capability to make changes to this page and add their picture. Students do not have this capability; they can only view the page. Facilitators also can change the information on this page through the Edit My Information tool.

Facilitators who are responsible for several course sections only have to complete the Facilitator page one time. Once they have completed it for one course section, it will automatically display for every course section that they are designated facilitator.

It is important that facilitators take time to complete this page and upload their picture. This attaches a human face and thus a real person to the course which can alleviate feelings of isolation that some students may feel. This is especially important in situations where students may only be meeting with the facilitator once or twice during the course.

My Classmates

My Classmates provides information about all the students enrolled in a class section. It is one of the tools that looks and works very differently for the students and the facilitator.

• Student Capabilities

When students click on the My Classmates link, they get a listing of all students in their course section. The only other thing that displays is the email address for each student.

Students can click on the name of a classmate to see a page containing biographical information and a picture (if one was added by the facilitator). This is the information that was added by that student in the Edit My Information tool or added by the facilitator when the student's ID was created. It should be noted that the only contact information that displays on a student's page is their email address. Their phone number and zip code do not display.

Students should be encouraged to use this tool to learn about their classmates. One reason is that they will be viewing comments by their classmates in the Discussion Board. This tool also can help encourage informal communication between students as they take the course. If students feel comfortable communicating with classmates, they have a resource besides the facilitator they can use when they have a question or just want to discuss a topic. It should be noted that it will probably take some additional encouragement by the facilitator before informal communication takes place. Some strategies the facilitator can use are (1) incorporate icebreaker activities in the orientation prior to the start of the course and (2) partner each student with a classmate.

• Adding Students

For the facilitator, the My Classmates tool is much more than a listing of students and email addresses. Facilitators must use this tool to add students to a new course section. Each new student is added by the using the Add Student link at the top of the page. (See Appendix B: Add a Student to a Course Section for step-by-step instructions.)

Once students have been added, the facilitator can use My Classmates to view students' biographical pages. The facilitator can also edit these pages. While it is not anticipated that the facilitator will need to make many changes to these pages, it may be necessary to change personal information that is inappropriate. In addition to editing biographical information, the facilitator has the capability to upload a picture of the student and reset each student's password.

Only the facilitator can upload a picture for each student's page. Facilitators are strongly encouraged to take the time to do this. Each picture not only displays in the My Classmates page but also displays in the Discussion Board after each posting a student makes. (See Appendix C: Upload a Student Picture for instructions on how to upload a photo.)

• Monitoring Students

Once the class has begun, the facilitator can use My Classmates to monitor the progress of each student. The My Classmates page lists how many times each student has logged into the course, how much time they have spent in the course, and the last time they accessed the course. The facilitator can also review entries each student has made in their Journal and Workbook.

Facilitators should closely monitor the progress of students in their class and communicate with them often. They should review students' Journals and Workbooks weekly to make sure they are on-track and provide immediate assistance as opportunities arise. They also should email students who are doing well and offer praise and encouragement.

With an online course it is especially important that the facilitator communicate frequently at the beginning of the course. One reason people do not complete online courses is that for one reason or another they have trouble getting started, fall behind, and get discouraged. Frequent, early communication can prevent this. It is also motivating to students to know that someone is reviewing their hard work. Facilitators may want to provide feedback via email to students as often as once every few days to let them know that their work is being checked. As the course progresses, if students are doing well, the amount of communication can be reduced.

Discussion Board

Picture a bulletin board at a local community college. What kinds of items might you see? Brochures, fliers, and various other messages usually litter these boards. The Critical Choices Discussion Board works in much the same way, although without all the clutter.

• Discussion Board Basics

The Discussion Board is divided into four sections: Who Am I?, Where Am I Going?, How Do I Get There?, and How Do I Stay There?. It is further divided by chapter. There are two ways to access a specific discussion in the Discussion Board. One way is to click on the link of the discussion board activity in the course chapter. A second way is to click on the Discussion Board link in the Connect navigation and then click on the link of the section and chapter in the left-hand navigation.

When a person accesses the Discussion Board, the navigation normally seen on the left-hand side of the screen is replaced with new navigation. This navigation returns once students leave the Discussion Board. The Return to Course link takes students back to the last page they were on prior to entering the Discussion Board.

In each course chapter, students are given one discussion board topic and asked to post on the (electronic) board their thoughts and/or opinions. These postings are on the private side of the website so only the other students in that course section and the facilitator can see them. When students are adding their own messages, they should take time to view the postings of their classmates. They may want to respond to these as well with an additional posting. There is no limit to the number of postings a student may add.

Students have the capability to view all postings, add postings, and edit or delete their own postings. They do not have the capability to edit or delete postings from other students. Facilitators have the capability to not only view and add postings but also to edit and delete postings of any student.

• **Facilitator Responsibilities**

Ideally, facilitators should read students postings on the day they are assigned. If students do not post on the day the chapter is assigned, facilitators may want to follow-up by email. Facilitators should also encourage students to read each other's postings and respond to one another.

It is the facilitator's responsibility to review the Discussion Board often and ensure that inappropriate postings are not present. For example, it would not be appropriate for a classmate to comment on another student's posting by saying, "That idea is stupid." In the initial face-to-face course, facilitators may want to develop with the class a set of ground rules for appropriate discussion board communication. (See Chapter 7: Facilitator Responsibilities and Appendix K: Netiquette for more about appropriate online communication.)

It is beneficial for facilitators to occasionally add their own postings to the Discussion Board. They may want to provide positive reinforcement for extremely well thought out responses. They may also want to pose follow-up questions for students to think about and make comments. When possible, facilitators should post some type of response to each student at least once during the course.

Chat

Chat tools are another common communication tool on the Internet. Unlike discussion boards and email, chat tools are a "real-time" form of communication. This means that both parties must be present at the same time for it to work. A chat message is immediately conveyed from one person to another and can be answered immediately.

• **Chat Basics**

Critical Choices has a chat room that can be used by students for informal communication. Students who click on the Chat link will open up a window that has two parts. The top part lists the messages that have been posted to the chat room. In addition to the message, the ID of the person who posted the message and the time it was posted is listed. In the bottom half of the window is a place for students to type messages they want added to the chat room.

Currently there is only one chat room. Every student and facilitator signed up for a Critical Choices class section will see the same chat room when they click on the Chat tool.

• **Chat Applications**

The Critical Choices course has no activities that require students use the chat room. However, the tool is a resource students can use to stay in contact and support each other as they take the course. Facilitators may want to encourage students to open the Chat window and leave it open as they are working in the course. Students can then easily check periodically to see if others working on the course at the same time as them have posted a message. They also can initiate an online conversation themselves by posting a message when they have a question or concern.

The chat room has other applications facilitators may want to use. For facilitators who have limited opportunities to see students in person, they can schedule "office hours" where they will be available

in the chat room. Students who have questions or concerns can enter the chat room during those times to talk online to their facilitator. It should be reemphasized that the chat room is available to everyone so it is not appropriate for conversations that are confidential.

The chat room can also be used for facilitators who want to schedule guest speakers. (For example, in one class, the facilitator scheduled a human resource person to meet with the class to provide information on what she looks for when she is interviewing applicants.)

Facilitators can let students know when speakers will be available in the chat room so students can be present at the same time. Guest speakers can share information and answer questions online.

Facilitators who schedule guest speakers should prepare students for the experience. They may want to schedule a session prior to the guest speaker where students have the opportunity to practice using the tool. Facilitators should also set up ground rules ahead of time so that students are not all posting messages at the same time and overwhelming the guest speaker.

Chapter 4: Backpack

What kinds of things do students put in a backpack: textbooks, appointment books, class assignments? The Critical Choices Backpack is no different. This “online backpack” contains tools that store and organize information collected as students complete learning activities in the Critical Choices course. The Backpack also has several other tools to help students. These are all items that can be printed and serve as “takeaways” after students complete the course.

Backpack is the navigation located on the left-hand side of the screen at the bottom. For students it consists of four links: Workbook, Journal, Daily Planner, and Manual. For facilitators it consists of five links: Workbook, Journal, Daily Planner, Facilitator Manual, and Manual.

Workbook

Within the Critical Choices course students will be completing many online forms and surveys. These include self-assessments and plans for their future. After students complete each of these activities the results are placed in their Workbook. At any time students can click on this Workbook link to look at the results of all the Workbook activities they have completed.

• Workbook Basics

When a person accesses their Workbook, the navigation normally seen on the left-hand side of the screen is replaced with new navigation. This navigation returns once students leave their Workbook. The Return to Course link takes students back to the last page they were on prior to entering their Workbook.

The Workbook is divided into four sections: Who Am I?, Where Am I Going?, How Do I Get There?, and How Do I Stay There? Students can view all of the Workbook activities for the chapters in a specific section by clicking on the link in the left-hand navigation.

Each chapter may have one or many Workbook activities. In the Workbook each activity has an Edit link. If students want to view the details of a specific Workbook activity or make changes to their original responses, they can do so by clicking on this link.

Students can print each section of their Workbook by opening that section and using the Print feature in their browser. The Student Manual has a place for students to put their Workbook pages. Students should be reminded to do this once they have completed the course.

• Facilitator Responsibilities

The student's Workbook is private and cannot be seen by the other class students. However, it can be viewed by the course facilitator through the My Classmates tool. Facilitators should review each student's Workbook periodically and respond when necessary with intervention and/or encouragement.

Facilitators should take the initiative to contact students who are having difficulty with Workbook activities. They should not wait for students to contact them. Students may be reluctant: they may be embarrassed or not realize that they are not completing the Workbook activities properly. Early intervention is especially important. If students become frustrated, it is less likely they will complete the course.

Contacting students who are doing a good job with the Workbook activities is also important. Since students are working alone on these activities, they may be unsure about whether or not they are doing them correctly. Providing positive feedback can alleviate these fears. Some students will also take more care with the activities if they know someone is reviewing their work.

Journal

Throughout the course students will be asked to complete Journal entries covering a variety of topics. After students complete each of these activities the results are placed in their Journal. At any time students can click on this Journal link to look at all the entries they made.

• Journal Basics

When a person accesses their Journal, the navigation normally seen on the left-hand side of the screen is replaced with new navigation. This navigation returns once students leave their Journal. The Return to Course link takes students back to the last page they were on prior to entering their Journal.

The Journal is divided into four sections: Who Am I?, Where Am I Going?, How Do I Get There?, and How Do I Stay There? Students can view all of the Journal activities for the chapters in a specific section by clicking on the link in the left-hand navigation.

Except for a couple exceptions, each chapter has one Journal activity and one optional Journal activity. In the Journal each activity has an Edit link. If students want to view the details of a specific Journal activity or make changes to it, they can do so by clicking on this link.

Students can print each section of their Journal by opening that section and using the Print feature in their browser. The Student Manual has a place for students to put their Journal pages. Students should be reminded to do this once they have completed the course.

• Facilitator Responsibilities

The student's Journal is private and cannot be seen by the other class students. However, it can be viewed by the course facilitator through the My Classmates tool. Facilitators should review each student's Journal periodically and respond when necessary with intervention and/or encouragement.

Facilitators may think journal entries are too personal and be reluctant to view them. However, experience with previous classes has shown that overall students like having their facilitator review their journal. Some students spend a significant amount of time on journal activities, are proud of their work, and want to share it. Another reason for taking time to review journals is that sometimes a student's journal provides insight into their situation that cannot be ascertained through other activities.

Daily Planner

The Daily Planner is an online calendar that can be used to schedule appointments or post reminders. Each student and facilitator has their own Daily Planner. It is a private tool that can only be viewed by the individual. Facilitators cannot view students' Daily Planners.

• Daily Planner Basics

When a person accesses their Daily Planner, the navigation normally seen on the left-hand side of the screen disappears. To exit the Daily Planner and return to the homepage they must click on the Return to Course button at the bottom of the page.

Appointments can be added to the Daily Planner in several ways. On the main page, called the "Month View", users can click on one or more of the checkboxes in the calendar, add information in the orange section below the calendar and click on the Add Appointments button. A second way to add an appointment is to click on the date itself. This will open up a new window called the "Daily View". In this window, users can add, edit, and delete appointments for the day.

Some additional items to note:

- Appointments cannot be added, edited, or deleted for days that have already passed.
- Appointments added by a student are called "private". These appointments display in black.

- Appointments that are on a students' Daily Planner for the current day will display on their homepage.
- There are several activities in Chapter 14: Self-Management Skills that require students to access their Daily Planner.

• **Facilitator Capabilities**

The facilitator's Daily Planner is slightly different than the one for students. The facilitator has the capability to add not only private appointments but also public appointments. Public appointments are those that can be viewed by every student enrolled in the class section. These appointments display in red. Facilitators may want to add public appointments to remind students of upcoming due dates, events, or scheduled guest speakers.

Because every course section may need different public appointments, facilitators have a separate Daily Planner for each one of their course sections.

Facilitator Manual

This link provides a PDF file of the most current Facilitator Manual and is only available to those accessing the Critical Choices website with a facilitator ID. As the Critical Choices team receives feedback from current facilitators about how to make the Facilitator Manual more helpful, this PDF file will be updated. Notification of these updates will be emailed to current facilitators via the Critical Choices listserv.

Manual

The last tool in the Backpack is the Manual. This is a PDF file of the Student Manual. Students will need a paper copy of the Student Manual in order to complete the Critical Choices course. Facilitators should either print out copies for students or inform students that they need to print a copy prior to beginning the course.

The first page of the Student Manual provides a place for students to add their ID and password. Facilitators should encourage students to write this information in their Student Manuals as soon as possible.

The Student Manual consists of four sections: Chapter Summaries, Handouts, Workbook, and Journal:

- **Chapter Summaries:** For each chapter there is a page that lists the objectives and main ideas, reminds students what they have accomplished, and provides an area for students to write comments and questions.
- **Handouts:** This section provides worksheets and job aids that students need to complete some of the activities in the Critical Choices course. Many of these documents will also be a resource students can utilize after they complete the course.
- **Workbook:** After students have completed the course, they can print out their completed Workbook and place the pages here.
- **Journal:** After students have completed the course, they can print out their completed Journal and place the pages here.

In addition to being a helpful tool for students as they work through the Critical Choices course, the Student Manual is a resource that students can take with them and refer to after they complete the course.

Chapter 5: Learning Center

The Learning Center is the primary content area of the Critical Choices website. This is where the Critical Choices course is located. The Learning Center is organized into four sections and 15 chapters. Within each chapter there are a variety of learning activities including multimedia presentations, surveys and forms, and opportunities for personal reflection.

Table of Contents

The first page of the Learning Center is a course table of contents. Each chapter name is a link to the first page of that chapter.

Prior to the table of contents there is a link entitled Start Here. This link connects students to an introductory video. The video gives a brief course overview, explains critical thinking skills, and provides tips on how students can get the most out of the course. An alternate text version is provided for students having difficulty using the video.

A green arrow icon is displayed in front of each chapter. This icon is part of a bookmark feature in the course. On the last page of each chapter, students have the option to click on a link that indicates they have completed the chapter. After they utilize this link, the green icon changes to a red checkmark. A key to this feature is located on the right-hand side of the page in a navy blue box.

Course Structure

Each chapter in the Critical Choices course is similar in scope and layout. There are 12 to 16 pages per chapter. Each chapter page contains a short paragraph or two of text and a link that takes students to a learning activity. Navigation for the chapter runs along the top and bottom of the page.

The number and types of activities within a chapter vary depending on the course content. However, there are some things that are always the same. The first page in each chapter contains a link to an introductory video. This introduction includes a listing of chapter objectives. The last page of each chapter contains a link to a concluding video. This video provides a brief summary of the content just covered. Each chapter also always has one discussion board activity and at least one journal activity.

Located on the right-hand side of each page is a red box entitled “How Do I...?” The link in this box opens an online job aid that provides instructions on the mechanics of the learning activity for that page. Students who are having difficulty can refer to these job aids at any time. Like the slideshows in the Critical Choices course, the “How Do I...” presentations are designed in Flash. Students must have a Flash player on their computer to view them. Unlike the slideshows, the “How Do I...” presentations do not include audio.

Occasionally, the right-side of the page will also contain other extras: “About Your Presenter”, “Motivational Quote”, and “Try This!”. “About Your Presenter” provides information about Goldie Fleming, the Critical Choices narrator. “Motivational Quote” gives quotes spoken by famous people. The content of these quotes is directly related to the information being presented in the chapter. The “Try This!” are optional activities available for students who are particularly interested in a topic. With a couple exceptions, each chapter contains two “Try This!” activities: one Journal activity and one link to an external website.

Learning Activities

The learning activities are really the “heart” of the Critical Choices course. Each chapter uses a variety of learning activities. Some present information; others require students to actively work with or reflect on information. Once a student masters how to do a specific type of activity, it works the same throughout the course.

The Critical Choices course employs seven different types of activities: video, slideshow, drag-drop, activity, discussion board, journal, and workbook.

- **Video**

Short video clips are utilized at the beginning and end of each chapter of the Critical Choices course. These videos run on Windows Media Player; a plug-in found on all PCs. They are also “streaming” which means that they do not have to download entirely to a computer before they begin playing.

Video requires good bandwidth or network speed. Some computer labs may not be equipped to handle multiple users accessing video. Some computer labs may be able to handle video but not during times of high internet usage. If there is not enough bandwidth available, students will have difficulty watching the videos. They will take a long time to begin, will appear choppy, or may not run at all. For this reason, an alternative presentation is always available. These presentations, designed in Flash, do not require as much bandwidth and provide the same information.

Facilitators who are demonstrating the course in a face-to-face class should avoid asking the entire class to click on a video link at the same time. Requesting multiple video streams at the same time puts a huge burden on a network.

- **Slideshow**

The majority of information presented in the Critical Choices course is done through the use of slideshows. The slideshows are developed in Flash and require the Flash plug-in to play.

Once a student clicks on a slideshow link, it takes a few seconds for the slideshow to load. Loading time depends on the speed of the network. While a slideshow is loading, a motivational quote displays. When the slideshow is ready, a prompt at the bottom of the window “Click to Begin” displays.

There are two types of slideshows. Some are linear. These run automatically from slide to slide and require no intervention from students. Other slideshows give students choices. Students can view every part of the slideshow or just choose the selections that are pertinent to them.

To assist students who have limited reading skills, all slideshows include audio narration. Some students may find it distracting to have the text they are viewing also being read. These students can use the Mute feature to disable the audio.

- **Drag-Drop**

Drag-drops give students an opportunity to actively practice concepts presented. These are developed in Flash and require the Flash plug-in to play.

Similar to a slideshow, once a student clicks on a drag-drop link, it takes a few seconds for it to load. Loading time depends on the speed of the network. While a drag-drop is loading, a motivational quote displays. When the drag-drop is ready, a prompt at the bottom of the window “Click to Begin” displays.

- **Activity**

Activities are interactive presentations designed to simulate some of the sharing that takes place in the classroom. Questions are asked, students enter a response, and finally they compare their entries to other possible answers. The information entered is not saved once the student exits the activity.

Activities are developed in Flash and require the Flash plug-in to play.

- **Discussion Board**

Discussion board activities provide students with opportunities to interact with their classmates. Each discussion board activity consists of a question. Generally, these questions require students to share an experience or express an opinion.

There is one discussion board activity per chapter. The link in the course for a discussion board activity takes students directly to that question on the Discussion Board. When students are finished entering their response, the Return to Course link returns them to the chapter page they were on prior to going to the Discussion Board.

- **Journal**

Journal activities consist of questions that invite reflection on a specific topic. Topics vary from sharing feelings to recounting past experiences to planning for the future.

Students type their entries in a form. Once they save their work, it is added to their Journal which can be accessed using the Journal link in the left-hand navigation. Students can access saved journal entries as many times as they want and make changes to them as needed. Journal entries can only be viewed by students and their facilitator.

Optional journal activities are provided in each chapter for students who find journaling an especially beneficial activity.

- **Workbook**

Workbook activities vary in purpose and scope. Some of them require students to assess themselves. Some of them are designed to help students plan for the future.

Many of the Workbook activities consist of an online form that students must complete. Once they save their work, the information is added to their Workbook which can be accessed using the Workbook link in the left-hand navigation. Students can access saved Workbook activities as many times as they want and make changes to them as needed. Workbook entries can only be viewed by students and their facilitator.

Some Workbook activities require students to refer to their Student Manual. Occasionally students are required to enter information into their Student Manual instead of online. However, there are only a few of these activities. Most Workbook activities require students to enter information online. This was intentionally done so that facilitators can easily access students' Workbook information and thus monitor their progress.

Chapter 6: Curriculum

The Critical Choices course provides information and tools for assisting students in assessing themselves and making a career plan. While the chapters are designed to build off lessons learned in previous chapter, each one is also designed to work as a self-contained learning object. Facilitators may choose to have students work through all the chapters or only some. However, it is important to understand that some of the chapters, particularly the ones in the “Where Am I Going ?” section build off of work done in the “Who Am I?” section.

This chapter provides a brief overview of each chapter in the Critical Choices course and lists the learning objectives.



Following the description of each course chapter, watch for this icon. These notes provide facilitators with things to watch for and actions they may need to take as students work through the course.

Section 1: “Who Am I?”

The first six chapters are part of the “Who Am I?” section. These lay the groundwork to help students understand themselves.

• Chapter One: Making Choices

One of the bases of life enhancement is making good personal choices. In this chapter students are encouraged to examine how their choices are currently being made and what they can do in the future to make better ones.

The learning goals for this chapter:

- Discover how facts, opinions and feelings affect the choices you make
- See the difference between a want and a need and list what you want and need in a job
- List the natural talents and abilities that make up your potential and recognize that you can achieve more by choosing to use undeveloped potential
- Identify things in your life that you can change



As the facilitator you may need to intervene when the mental health concerns of students may be affecting their ability to make effective choices or process the Critical Choices materials. If you recognize anger, anxiety, and depression in students, you should make appropriate referrals to counseling services in your area.

• Chapter Two: Self-Awareness

This chapter touches on the topics of awareness and perception and their impact on the choices we make. Students assess themselves specifically in the area of values and interests.

The learning goals for this chapter:

- Discover how awareness of personal history, experiences and sense of self lead to more accurate self-assessment
- Identify personal values
- Find how values relate to career paths and work
- Identify personal interests and see how they relate to work



In this chapter students complete a short version of John Holland's Self-Directed Search (SDS). As the facilitator you may need to help students understand their SDS results and apply these results to the career clusters information, world-of-work map, and people/data/things/ideas concepts.

• Chapter Three: Aptitudes and Skills

In this chapter students identify aptitudes that they already possess and those they want to develop. Students also identify their transferable and technical skills.

The learning goals for this chapter:

- Identify your aptitudes, your potential to learn skills that you do not yet have
- Identify your interest in four major areas of skills—data, people, ideas and things
- List your technical skills
- Determine skills you have that can transfer to new jobs



As the facilitator you may need to help students identify their aptitudes and skills. Students may also have difficulty recognizing their technical and/or transferable skills.

• Chapter Four: Barriers to Change

This chapter helps students deal with the subject of change. Students identify the internal and external barriers they face and begin to identify strategies for overcoming them.

The learning goals for this chapter:

- Recognize your feelings about change
- Identify your internal barriers
- List personal strengths that you can use to overcome your internal barriers
- Identify some of your external barriers
- Share resources that can overcome external barriers



As the facilitator you may need to help students identify the need for additional support services in cases such as domestic violence and substance abuse. You may also recognize self-esteem issues that require counseling interventions.

• Chapter Five: Support Systems

Good support systems are essential for attaining and maintaining workplace success. This chapter guides students through the process of identifying the support systems they currently possess and identifying the support systems they are lacking.

The learning goals for this chapter:

- Learn types of support systems
- Identify your own support systems
- Assess your support systems
- Consider ways to improve your support systems



As the facilitator you may need to provide additional information about local community resources, including community, state, and federal programs, to aid students in obtaining housing, income, food, childcare, and transportation. Students will need to have direct knowledge of community services available through libraries, community colleges, YMCAs, OneStops, community mental health centers, and other career and community services.

You may need to intervene when a student indicates he/she has no support systems and are socially isolated. You will need to be prepared to recommend community services available to help students develop support systems. This might include knowledge of local churches and other religious organizations.

• **Chapter Six: Learning Styles and Multiple Intelligences**

This chapter assists students in identifying their preferred learning style. The concept of multiple intelligences first introduced by Dr Howard Gardner is also explored.

The learning goals for this chapter:

- Explore the different ways that people learn
- Recognize your own learning style
- Look at the many kinds of intelligences
- Identify the ways that you are smart



As the facilitator you may need to help students understand the concepts of learning styles and multiple intelligences and apply them to career decisions and job search strategies. These interventions might also include helping students to problem-solve ways to use this knowledge to increase their success in traditional academic environments. For example, help students develop alternative study skills methods.

Section 2: “Where Am I Going?”

Chapters 7-10 are part of the “Where Am I Going?” section. These chapters help students learn about where they best fit into the world-of-work.

• **Chapter Seven: Exploring Occupational Information**

In this chapter students are introduced to the world-of-work. Using their career clusters and preference for working with data, people, ideas and things students explore ACT’s online world-of-work map.

The learning goals for this chapter:

- Identify sources of occupational information
- Examine how the world-of-work is structured
- Identify career areas that match your interests
- Explore the role of bias in career choices



As the facilitator you may need to help students sort through occupational information and choose the information relevant to each student. You will need to know how to use ONET, the ACT website, and the Occupational Outlook Handbook.

Students also will need help finding relevant occupational information for their community and state. This will include finding occupational “best bets” (those occupations that have the highest salary, highest growth, and high number of employment opportunities for different educational/training levels) for local areas.

• Chapter Eight: Career Decisions

Before making career decisions, students should first identify and understand their decision making style. This chapter provides information on decision making styles and offers one decision making model.

- The learning goals for this chapter:
- Consider different decision making styles
- Learn a model for career decision making
- Practice making a career decision



Facilitators may need to intervene when students' gender bias is negatively affecting career decision-making. You may also need to assist especially indecisive students.

• Chapter Nine: Financial Planning

Before students can decide on a career, they need to know how much money they will need. In this chapter students identify their minimum salary requirements by compiling information about their expenses and additional sources of income. This chapter also provides some money management tips.

The learning goals for this chapter:

- Develop a budget
- Calculate your minimum salary requirement
- Explore how to manage your money better
- Consider ways to save and invest your money



As the facilitator you may need to refer students with serious money management or debt concerns. You may also need to help students learn the basic concepts of budgeting and money management.

• Chapter Ten: Develop a Career Goal

A SMART goal is (1) Specific, (2) Measurable, (3) Action-Oriented, (4) Realistic, and has (5) Time and resources determined. In this chapter students use the SMART goal model to write a career goal for themselves.

The learning goals for this chapter:

- Learn the characteristics of a well-written goal
- Write a career goal
- Develop a plan to reach your career goal
- Identify strategies that will help you stay committed to your career goal



As the facilitator you may need to help students make an appropriate career decision. This will include using all the self-knowledge and occupational information developed from previous chapters. You may also need to provide additional information on specific education and training opportunities available in their communities. Students may need help narrowing down opportunities to specific choices and aid in goal-setting. Your guidance can be especially helpful in aiding students in making decisions regarding short-term versus long-term goals. For example, students may need to meet short-term financial needs through immediate employment, while making plans for long-term training/education.

Section 3: “How Do I Get There?”

Chapters 11 through 13 are part of the “How Do I Get There?” section. These chapters help students plan how to achieve their career goals.

• Chapter Eleven: Job Search Methods

In this chapter different job search methods are introduced. Students are given several job aids to assist them with their job search and have an opportunity to practice using them.

The learning goals for this chapter:

- Identify job search methods that produce the best results
- Practice using the most effective job search methods
- Develop a job search plan



As the facilitator you may need to help students identify local employers who are hiring in their community. Students may require help in developing and implementing realistic job search plans. You may need to keep students accountable to career goals by encouraging follow-through on applications for support services, training/education programs, and/or job search plans.

• Chapter Twelve: Developing Job Search Tools

Well constructed resumes and job applications are an important part of the job search process. This chapter covers a variety of issues related to resume writing and gives students an opportunity to begin collecting information for their job applications.

The learning goals for this chapter:

- Review one simple resume format
- Practice modifying your resume for different jobs
- Develop a plan for finding information for your resume
- Practice emailing your resume
- Fill out a job application



As the facilitator you may need to help students effectively use a Search Engine, write a resume, complete an application and/or write a cover letter. You will need to have specific knowledge and community referrals available to aid students with negative employment histories or those who have been incarcerated. Students who are not proficient with email may need help with the concept of attachments.

• Chapter Thirteen: Presenting Yourself to Potential Employers

This chapter gives students strategies for making the best impression during job interviews. It also explains how students can evaluate potential employers during job interviews so they can determine if jobs are right for them.

The learning goals for this chapter:

- List things you should do to prepare for an interview
- Identify ways to present your best appearance at an interview
- Develop different interview skills
- Practice evaluating job offers



As the facilitator you may need to help students develop and practice interview skills. You may need to help students find local community resources for available phones, fax, and clothing

needed for effective job searching. You may also need to help students evaluate job offers, including understanding compensation concerns such as wages versus overtime, flextime, and insurance availability.

Section 4: “How Do I Stay There?”

Chapters 14 and 15 are part of the “How Do I Stay There?” section. These chapters give tips for how to succeed in the job setting.

• Chapter Fourteen: Self-Management Skills

For some students securing a new job is not as difficult as keeping it. This chapter covers some of the skills that can assist students in maintaining a job. Topics include attitude, time management, and strategies for handling stress.

The learning goals for this chapter:

- Discover how attitude affects your success in the workplace
- Explore ways to develop a positive self-image
- Look at tools that can help you manage your time well
- Identify sources of stress and strategies for handling them



As the facilitator you may need to help students identify when overwhelming amounts of stress are resulting in physical or psychological damage and a referral to medical or counseling services is required.

• Chapter Fifteen: Relationship Skills

Developing good communication skills is another key to retaining a job. This chapter covers a variety of topics including communication styles, listening skills, criticism, and empathy.

The learning goals for this chapter:

- Compare different communication styles
- Identify ways to be an active listener
- Practice handling criticism
- Review skills you can use to resolve conflicts



As the facilitator you may need to help students practice and provide feedback on listening and communication skills. This may require a scheduled face-to-face meeting or a phone conference.

You may need to intervene and refer students when they have anger issues and are in need of specific anger management treatment. Students may require problem-solving counseling in regards to specific conflicts in the home or workplace that are acting as a barrier to career goal achievement and need resolution. A student may require help processing negative experiences of criticism and conflict.

Chapter 7: Facilitator Responsibilities

Facilitators add a great deal of value to the Critical Choices online course. The role of a facilitator is different than that of a teacher. However, it is no less important. It is also just as much work. The success of students taking the Critical Choices course may be determined by the effectiveness of the course facilitator.

This chapter covers the different responsibilities that the course facilitator must assume when facilitating the Critical Choices course.

Basic Responsibilities

Each facilitator will have a unique situation in his/her location. How the course is used within a site will determine exactly what each facilitator will have to do. However, most likely there will be tasks that need to be done before class begins, during class, and at its conclusion. Appendix E: Facilitator Checklist contains a checklist of suggested tasks that should be done by facilitators for each class section.

- **Before Class**

Many of the tasks that should be completed before students begin the course involve some technical ability or the assistance of someone with technical ability. In general the facilitator will need to request a new course section from the Help Desk, set up student IDs, make sure equipment is ready in the computer lab, set up a schedule, and arrange for Student Manuals.

- **During Class**

Because the content is already established, the facilitator's role changes from a presenter of information to someone who focuses on students' needs. Therefore, during class the facilitator will predominantly spend time posting announcements, monitoring students' progress with the My Classmates tool, monitoring the Discussion Board, responding to email, and meeting with individual students.

- **After Class**

Once the course is over, it is the responsibility of the facilitator to ensure that students have completed their work. The facilitator may want to schedule a meeting with each student to review information collected during the course, follow-up on unresolved issues, and confirm each student's plan for the future. The facilitator should also remind students to print out their Journal and Workbook for their Student Manual.

Face-to-Face Orientation

It is recommended that facilitators offer a face-to-face orientation prior to the beginning of the Critical Choices course. The orientation will vary depending on the site and how the course is being offered.

During the orientation facilitators can distribute Student Manuals and IDs. Students should be given the opportunity to practice logging into the Critical Choices site. This is also a good time for students to access the Edit My Information feature. Here they can change their password if they desire and add information about themselves. Once students have decided on a password, facilitators should encourage them to write their ID and password on the first page of their Student Manual.

The orientation is also a good time for facilitators to take photos of each student and upload them into the students' profile. These photos display in the My Classmates page and next to postings in the Discussion Board.

Since the orientation may be one of the only times students are physically together, facilitators may want to provide icebreaking activities. These give students an opportunity to begin building relationships. Students are more likely to communicate meaningfully on the Discussion Board and communicate via chat and email if they have established face-to-face relationships prior to starting the course.

Facilitators may also want to review the site with students: its navigation and types of tools. If time permits and especially in situations where students are new to computers and technology, facilitators may have students work through several activities in the first chapter. By doing this, students can begin building confidence and get quick answers to early questions.

Other topics that can be covered during the orientation include reviewing course goals, establishing a schedule, defining expectations, identifying resources, and setting ground rules particularly in the area of group communication that takes place on the Discussion Board. Appendix F: Student Orientation Lesson Plan provides a sample lesson plan that facilitators can use or benchmark off of as they design their own orientation session.

Identify Resources

Facilitators should clearly describe the resources available in their facility and in the community that can assist students as they complete the course and afterwards when they begin working on their career goals. Facilitators may want to provide this information during the face-to-face orientation session.

- **Environment**

Students need to know what the facility has to offer them: career counseling, computer labs, job postings, satellite campuses, etc. What are the hours of operation? Are there any specific rules they should know about?

- **Staff**

Facilitators should identify available staff in the facility. Students should be introduced to lab assistants who can help them if they experience technical problems as they take the course. Are there career counselors available? Does the facility have a librarian?

- **Off-site**

What off-site facilities will help students? Is there a library nearby with resources for career planning? Are there community centers with good computer labs? Facilitators should explain resources within the facility's vicinity, and also within the community in which the students reside. Facilitators also should provide information on childcare resources and transportation schedules.

Support Students

Online courses can be very stressful for students. In addition to being concerned about learning course content, they have to contend with mastering the technology of the course, overcoming feelings of isolation, and staying on schedule while working independently. It is the responsibility of the facilitator to assist students with these challenges.

- **Mastering Technology**

Students taking the Critical Choices course will come from a variety of backgrounds. Some will be very comfortable with computers and the Internet; for others the Critical Choices course will be a whole new experience. Students who have spent limited time on computers will probably need more assistance and encouragement. For this reason, it is important to identify these students. Appendix G: PC Skills Assessment provides a survey that facilitators can give students prior to the course.

Whether students have experience or not, facilitators should not assume they are doing well with the technology because they do not ask questions. Some students may be embarrassed to ask for help. They may skip parts of the course if they do not know what to do. It is important to reassure students that questions are normal and that one of the goals of the course is for them to become more comfortable with using computers and the Internet.

It can be useful to pair up students and encourage them to help each other as they take the course. Using a “buddy” system can have multiple benefits. Students do not have to wait when the facilitator or technical resource person is otherwise engaged. Students are also more likely to problem solve together as opposed to asking the facilitator for “the solution”.

- **Feelings of Isolation**

When working on an online course, students may feel isolated especially when there is not a real person in the same room with them. The Critical Choices course offers tools (Announcement, Facilitator, My Classmates, and Discussion Board) to alleviate this. In addition to using these tools, facilitators should take time to periodically check-in with students via email to see how they are doing. This communication reinforces the idea that despite the fact there is no physical person near them, there is a facilitator looking at their work and available if they need help.

- **Staying on Schedule**

When taking an online course students are setting their own schedule. This is very different from a face-to-face course. It requires self discipline and therefore it is easy to fall behind. The reason many students do not complete an online course is that they fall behind early and cannot recover.

At the beginning of the course, facilitators need to be clear about the expectations. This includes a schedule of when different sections of the course should be completed. It also may include how many times a week students need to log-in. Short-term deadlines should be provided. This not only keeps students focused but helps them to assess if their progress is acceptable. Students who are not meeting deadlines may need to spend more time. If the majority of the class is having difficulty meeting deadlines, facilitators may want to reassess their expectations. Appendix H: Sample Critical Choices Schedule provides an example of a class schedule.

Even with a schedule, facilitators should monitor students’ progress. Facilitators also need to monitor the quality of their students’ work. The Critical Choices course content is challenging. Students will be asked to make big decisions. Left on their own, some may become overwhelmed with the enormity of the task. Others may make unrealistic decisions.

My Classmates is a tool that the facilitator can use to check students’ progress. The sections on My Classmates (Chapter 3), the Workbook (Chapter 4), and the Journal (Chapter 4) provide details on how these tools work and how facilitators can effectively use them to support their students.

Monitor Participation

Communication in an online environment is different than face-to-face. Because the Critical Choices course requires interaction between classmates, facilitators need to make sure students understand acceptable online behavior, model appropriate online behavior, and deal expeditiously with inappropriate behavior.

- **Netiquette**

Netiquette refers to a set of rules for considerate behavior on the Internet. Prior to a class, it is not uncommon for teachers and students to establish a set of ground rules for acceptable behavior. It is just as important to establish netiquette for online courses like Critical Choices. During the face-to-face orientation, facilitators may want to work with students to develop a set of ground rules for online communication. At the very least, facilitators should review appropriate and inappropriate behavior for emailing and posting to the discussion board. (See Appendix K: Netiquette for more.)

• **Model Appropriate Online Behavior**

Positive climate building can reduce anxiety about communicating online and contribute to a positive collegial environment. Facilitators can promote a positive online environment by modeling positive behaviors.

- Using student's first names
- Responding promptly to messages
- Using reinforcement phrases (i.e., "Good idea!" or "Thanks for the suggestions," etc.)
- Using personalizing remarks (i.e., a reference to where you are working -- home, office, terminal, what is happening around you, the weather, etc.)
- Avoiding hostile or curt comments
- Displaying humor
- Promoting cooperation by offering assistance and support to students and by sharing ideas

• **Online Misconduct**

Despite each facilitator's best efforts, there may be situations where students refuse to participate or do not follow established codes of online conduct. Each site will have to determine how to deal with these situations.

Just as in a face-to-face course, there are varying levels of misconduct online. At the mildest level, misconduct may just be a misunderstanding that a facilitator can mediate between participants. Many times, when people are writing, non-verbal cues normally given in conversation are missing, and the lack of these cues can make an innocent statement seem rude, sarcastic or demeaning. When this occurs, facilitators should consult the students involved and attempt reconciliation. Providing guidance for how to post messages that will not be misunderstood may be all a participant needs.

At some point, serious misconduct may occur among participants. Serious misconduct may include but is not limited to: profane and abusive language, slander, transmission of other participant's personal information to outside parties, and threats of violence. Each facility should deal with these situations in the same manner they would be dealt with in a face-to-face course.

Appendices

Appendix A: Acquire a Facilitator ID / Add a New Course Section

Each class should have its own unique course section. It is the role of facilitators to obtain a new course section from the Critical Choices Help Desk for each of their classes.

• New Facilitators Who Do Not Have an ID

1. Send an email to Help Desk at online@niu.edu
2. In Subject Line put: New Facilitator ID
3. In email provide:
 - Name and email address
 - Phone Number
 - Site location
 - Site coordinator and email address
 - Course start date
 - Customized Course Name (Optional)

**Turn around time for request should be no longer than 48 hours.*

• Facilitators Who Only Need a New Course Section

1. Send an email to Help Desk at online@niu.edu
2. In Subject Line put: New Course Section
3. In email provide:
 - Name
 - Site location
 - Course start date
 - Customized Course Name (Optional)

**Turn around time for request should be no longer than 48 hours.*

Appendix B: Add a Student to a Course Section

To add a new student to the Critical Choices course, complete the following steps.

1. Click on the My Classmates link.
2. Click on the Add Student link at the top of the page.
3. Fill in the required fields marked with an *.
 - Each student must have their own email address. If a student does not have one, a free one can be obtained at <http://mail.yahoo.com>.
 - The fields that are not required should be completed by the student using the Edit My Information link on their homepage.
4. When complete, click on the Save button at the bottom of the page.
5. The Classmate's Information page will display.
 - Only the information that students can view will be visible.
 - To see all information again, click on the Edit Student Information button at the bottom of the page.
 - If you have a picture to upload, click on the Edit Student Information button. For instructions on how to do this, see Appendix C: Upload a Student Picture.
 - If you are not adding a picture at this time click on the Go Back button which will take you back to the "My Classmates" page.
6. Test the student ID and password by logging into the course using the student ID and password.
 - If you are unable to log into the course, log back in as a facilitator and edit the student information. Test again.
 - If you are still unable to log into the course using the student ID, contact the Critical Choices help desk.

Appendix C: Upload a Student Picture


Before a student's digital photo can be uploaded to the Critical Choices course, it must have the following characteristics:

- JPEG file with a .jpg extension
- No larger than 175 kb
- Name should only contain numbers and/or letters (no special characters) and should be no larger than eight characters

Modifications can be made using the photo editing software that comes with your digital camera.

To display optimally, digital photos should also be 75 px (width) by 100 px. This editing can be done with your photo editing software. The Critical Choices course also offers a photo editing feature for this task.

Once a photo is ready to upload, complete the following steps:

1. Click on the My Classmates link.
2. Click on the name of the student you want to edit.
3. Click on the Edit Student Information button at the bottom of the page.
4. Click on the Update photo link on the left side of the page.
5. Click on the Browse button.
6. Locate the picture of the participant on your PC.
 - Must be a JPEG file with a .jpg extension.
 - Must be no larger than 175 kb.
 - Name should only contain numbers and/or letters (no special characters) and should be no larger than eight characters.
7. Click on the Upload button to send the photo to the online photo editor.
 - If you receive the error message "The page cannot be displayed", verify your file meets the requirements specified in Step #6.
8. Resize if photo is not 75 px (width) by 100 px (height). Click on  to save photo to the database.
 - You should receive a pop-up window that says "Photo Saved."
9. Click on the Go Back button to return to "Upload User Photo" page.
 - Saved photo should display on this page.
10. Click on the Go Back button to return to the "My Information" page.

Appendix D: Add/Edit/Delete Announcements

Add an Announcement

1. On your homepage, click the Add/Edit/See all Announcements link.
2. Click on the Add button.
3. Select the date of posting. You can choose the current date or a future date. Your announcement will not be viewed until the date you choose to post.
4. In the "Announcements" text area, type in the announcement you want to add to the list of announcements.
5. Click on the Add button when you are finished.

Edit an Announcement

1. On your homepage, click the Add/Edit/See all Announcements link.
2. Select the announcement you wish to edit by checking the box next to the announcement and clicking on the Edit button.
3. Select the date of posting. You can choose the current date or a future date. Your announcement will not be viewed until the date you choose to post.
4. In the "Announcements" text area, type in any changes you want to make to the announcement.
5. Click on the Edit button when you are finished.

Delete an Announcement

1. On your homepage, click on the Add/Edit/See all Announcements link.
2. Select the announcement(s) you wish to delete by checking the box next to the announcement(s) and clicking on the Delete button.
3. A windows message box verifying that you want to delete the announcement(s) will display. Click "OK" to delete the announcement(s).

Appendix E: Facilitator Checklist

Before Class

- Familiarize self with the course
- Request new course section from Critical Choices Help Desk (See Appendix A)
- Set up Student IDs in Critical Choices (See Appendix B)
- Verify computers lab is ready
 - Check equipment (See Appendix I)
 - Verify Critical Choices site is accessible (<http://www.criticalchoices.org>)
 - Verify computer settings are correct (See Appendix J)
 - Report problems to computer lab administrator
 - Contact Critical Choices Help Desk if lab administrator unable to solve problems.
- Check other equipment (digital camera, projector) needed for Student Orientation (See Appendix I)
- Create a class schedule (See Appendix H for example)
- Print out Student Manuals and put them in binders
- Organize and schedule Student Orientation

Start Class

- Conduct Student Orientation (See Appendix F for sample lesson plan)

During Class

- Post announcements
- Using My Classmates tool, check student's progress
- Intervene with struggling students
- Positively reinforce good work
- Meet with participants as needed to discuss career goals, resumes...
- Monitor discussion boards and comment or intervene as needed
- Respond to emails

After Class

- Using My Classmates tool, verify all students have completed the course
- Using My Classmates tool, verify students have a realistic plan for future employment
- Remind students to print out their Journal and Workbook pages and add to their Student Manual
- Follow-up with each student face-to-face or via email
- Follow-up on unresolved issues

Appendix F: Student Orientation Lesson Plan

- I. Getting Started
 - a. Icebreaking Activities
 - b. Pass out Student Manuals
 - c. Assign a User ID/password to each student
 - d. Take a picture of each student

- II. Course Overview
 - a. Explain goals
 - b. Set a schedule
 - c. Define expectations
 - d. Identify resources
 - e. Develop ground rules

- III. Website Overview
 - a. Access www.criticalchoices.org
 - b. Review password reset feature
 - c. Log-in course
 - d. Review Student Homepage
 - e. Complete Edit My Information

- IV. Navigation
 - a. Main Menu
 - b. Connect Tools
 - c. Backpack Tools

- V. Learning Center
 - a. Review Table of Contents
 - b. Review Bookmark feature
 - c. Review “How Do I” help

- VI. Learning Center Tools
 - a. Slideshow
 - b. Drag-drop
 - c. Interactive Presentations
 - d. Journal
 - e. Workbook / Manual
 - f. Discussion Board
 - o Netiquette

- VII. Questions and Answers
- VIII. Complete Chapter 1 (*Optional*)

Appendix G: PC Skills Assessment

I have used:

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| A computer | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| E-mail | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| A computer mouse | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| A printer | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| The Internet | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| An online discussion or "chatroom" | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

I would like to learn more about computers.

- Yes No

I am anxious about using a computer and fear making a mistake I cannot correct.

- Yes No

I feel that computers will be useful to me in my future work.

- Yes No

I like learning on a computer.

- Yes No

I know how to type ...

- Using all ten fingers.
 Using two fingers.
 Using one finger
 Not at all.

When I start something ...

- I always finish it.
 I finish it if it is interesting.
 I rarely finish it
 I never finish.

If I have used a computer, it was . . .

- Personal computer (PC) Apple Don't know

Circle any of the following words you are familiar with regarding the computer.

Mouse	Monitor	Click	Drag	Link	Menu
Internet	URL	E-Mail	Explorer	Instant Message	Window
User ID	Netscape	Browser	Password	com/.gov/.bus/.edu	Toolbar

Appendix H: Sample Critical Choices Schedule – 2 Weeks

<p>Prep Day</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Request course section from online@niu.edu. ▪ Verify participants. ▪ Print out manuals. 	<p>Prep Day</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Check CC website on computers. ▪ Load plug-ins needed for course. ▪ Modify computer settings as needed. 	<p>Prep Day</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Add students to course. ▪ Check all student IDs and passwords. 	<p>Prep Day</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Check equipment needed for orientation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Digital camera - LCD projector - Headphones 	<p>Prep Day</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If computer lab has been in use, re-check CC website on computers. ▪ Post first announcement on CC website.
<p>Day 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student orientation. ▪ Take photos and add to student profiles. ▪ Students complete Chapter 1. 	<p>Day 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Post announcement that students should complete chapters 2 –3 today. ▪ Review students' work from yesterday using My Classmates. ▪ E-mail all students with feedback. ▪ Answer emails. 	<p>Day 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Post announcement that students should complete chapters 4 –5 today. ▪ Check postings on discussion board. ▪ Meet w/ students as needed. ▪ Answer emails. 	<p>Day 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Post announcement that students should complete chapters 6-7 today. ▪ Check student's progress using My Classmates; email feedback as needed. ▪ Answer emails. 	<p>Day 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Post announcement that students should complete chapters 8-9 today. ▪ Check postings on discussion board. ▪ Meet w/ students as needed. ▪ Answer emails.
<p>Day 6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Post announcement that students should complete chapter 10 today. ▪ Check student's progress using My Classmates; email feedback as needed. ▪ Answer emails. 	<p>Day 7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Post announcement that students should complete chapters 11-12 today. ▪ Check postings on discussion board. ▪ Meet w/ students as needed. ▪ Answer emails. 	<p>Day 8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Post announcement that students should complete chapter 13-14 today. ▪ Check student's progress using My Classmates; email feedback as needed. ▪ Answer emails. 	<p>Day 9</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Post announcement that students should complete chapter 15 today. ▪ Check postings on discussion board. ▪ Answer emails. 	<p>Day 10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Post announcement that students should print Workbook and Journal and review their plan for "next-steps". ▪ Meet w/ all students to discuss "next-steps". ▪ Answer emails.

Appendix I: Computer Checklist

The following are the minimum computer requirements to ensure all parts of the Critical Choices course run properly.

PC Platform

- Operating System: Windows 98 (Second Edition), Windows 2000, or Windows XP
- Processor: 500 megahertz (MHz) or faster
- RAM: 128 MB or greater
- Free Hard Disk Space: 100 MB required, 300 MB recommended
- Modem Speed: 56.6 kbps modem (minimum)
- Audio: 16 bit Sound Card and Headphones
- Video: Display card (minimum 65,000-color)
- Monitor: Set to 800 x 600 resolution or better
- Software: Internet Explorer 5.5 SP1
- Windows Media Player (free version available), Acrobat Reader, Flash Plugin (6.79 or better)

Platform: Macintosh

- Operating System: OS X version 10.1.5 or greater
- Processor: 450 megahertz (MHz) PowerPC G3 processor or higher
- RAM: 128 MB or better
- Free Hard Disk Space: 10 MB
- Modem Speed: 56.6 kbps or greater
- Audio: Headphones
- Monitor: Set to 800 x 600 resolution or better
- Software: Internet Explorer 5.1, Netscape 7.1, MSN for Mac OS X version 2.0, or Apple Safari 1.0
Windows Media Player 9 for Mac OS X (free version available), Acrobat Reader, Flash Plug-in (6.79 or better), Microsoft Word

Lab: For student orientation, each student should have own workstation with headphones. Other recommended equipment: (1) digital camera with a hookup to the facilitator's workstation and (2) a LCD projection system.

Appendix J: Computer Settings For Critical Choices Course

Prior to students beginning the Critical Choices course, facilitators should verify that the computer settings are as follows.

Windows Properties/ Settings

- Set screen size to 800 x 600 pixels
- Choose "True Color 32 bit"

Sound Settings

- Verify computer has a sound card
- In Windows Control Settings, check that the sound is on and set at a volume participants can hear.

Media Settings

- Media Player runs best when taken out of the default side-bar player.
- To take Media Player off the side and place in own window:
 1. When Media Player starts, choose the drop down menu entitled, "Media Options."
 2. Under "Media Options," choose "Settings." If the selection "Play web media in the bar" is checked, click on that selection to deselect. When it is deselected, the check mark next to the selection will be gone.

Appendix K: Netiquette

Netiquette refers to appropriate conduct when communicating online. It is the responsibility of the facilitator to (1) educate students on appropriate and inappropriate behavior in an online environment and (2) monitor student communication and intervene when inappropriate communication is occurring.

General Rules for Students

- Do not personally insult anyone.
- If insulted, do not return insult for insult. Instead, contact the facilitator. It does not matter who threw the first punch; everyone who threw a punch is responsible for what they have written.
- Do not give out very personal information or give personal information about other participants to people outside the class
- Unauthorized web sites cannot be mentioned or promoted. Web sites must be sent to the facilitator and he/she can decide if the website is something the whole class should see.
- Nothing from the discussion board can be posted to any other forum without permission from the facilitator and participants involved in the discussion.
- No one is authorized to copy email addresses from the Critical Choices course and use them for unsolicited email.

Participant inappropriate behavior...

- Is discriminatory in nature
- Promotes hate or violence
- Solicits anyone to participate in a pyramid scheme
- Is threatening or abusive in nature
- Attempts to defraud another individual
- Attempts to impersonate another individual
- Promotes adult, X-related material.
- Offers anything for sale. The Critical Choices discussion boards are not the classifieds.

Facilitators should encourage participants to...

- Post questions and remarks related to school and/or applying to jobs.
- Engage in thoughtful discussions or silly chats with other participants.
- Just 'lurk' and read what other people have to say.
- Find information on a wide array of work and helpful topics.
- Think before writing.
- Be polite to other people, even if they disagree with them.
- Refrain from posting personal information about themselves. Warn them not to post their address, phone number, etc.
- Contact the facilitator if they have any questions about, or need help with, the boards.

Facilitators can ...

- Encourage participants to read all instructions and rules regarding the communication tools.
- Warn participants when postings or chat sessions are inappropriate.
- Ask participants to edit any inappropriate information or remarks they have made. Always give participants a chance to remedy the situation themselves before editing or deleting their posts/comments.
- Delete posts if the situation warrants immediate attention or a participant refuses to change inappropriate posts/comments. Facilitators may also warn and/or ban users that don't comply with the rules in the "Participant Inappropriate Behavior" section.
- Help participants with questions about the discussion board, chat or "My Information" features.

Sources for Netiquette:

Netiquette Primer: <http://jade.wabash.edu/wabnet/info/netiquet.htm>

Online Classroom: <http://www.otal.umd.edu/~probinso/Online/netiquette.html>