Welcome to Math 120 Online! There are a lot of things to learn this semester: some relatively easy while others are going to be challenging. If you enjoy learning, this will definitely be fun. Please allow me to share with you what I learned this semester.

Before you move forward with this class, make sure that you already have a firm grasp of Algebra 110. This will save you a lot of headache as the course progresses. There is quite a bit of work involved so expect to devote at least four hours a week on this class. Never wait to the last minute because time will not allow it. Also, set-aside your study time for when you will expect to have minimal interruptions.

First there is the textbook reading. Sometimes the material is presented in a very technical manner that the lesson gets lost (at least for me). Luckily, the instructor also posts her own lecture notes, which translate the 20 pages of material to two or three pages in a way that is easy to understand. Always use this as your reference. It will make your life in this class easier.

Then there is the homework. Ms. Moss only assigns the odd problems in the textbook so you check your own work at the back of the book. If you get stuck, the solutions manual found online shows you how to solve a problem step-by-step. The online homework consists of a few problems and is really handy because this prepares you for the test. If you get stuck, there is the handy “Help Me Solve” button that will walk you through the problem step-by-step. Once you complete the problem this way, the system will give you a new problem that is solved in the same manner. Here is why you don’t procrastinate: you may take the online homework as many times as necessary to receive 100%, as long as you do it within the allotted timeframe (which is midnight on the due date). Plus, if you get it done 24 hours in advance, you get extra credit.

The online quiz is somewhat similar to the online homework, except you don’t have the helpful buttons. The quiz itself is an overview of that particular section. You can also take this as many times as necessary to get 100%, as long as it’s within the allotted time. To prepare you for the in-class test, Ms. Moss will post a sample test for each unit plus the answer key, which also shows you how the problem is solved step-by-step.

Keep organized and stay on top of your schedule. Use index cards to jot down main points and to keep your formulas together for easy reference and for portability. Work out practice problems and homework problems step-by-step as neatly as you can so if you have a wrong answer, you can go back and see where you may have miswritten something. Take advantage of the multi-media library on Course Compass.

If you are still having problems, I strongly suggest you use the discussion board. Please enter specific information on the subject line (i.e. Ch. 4.2, problem 15), not something general to make it easier for your classmates and the instructor. Also, if you discovery something while
working out a problem that may make it easier for your other classmates, post that, too. It’s a big help. There is a lot of help available to you if you use it. When all else fails, again, use the discussion board.

Expect to get frustrated, especially in the beginning with Chapters 4 and 5. It isn’t always going to be easy. Sometimes I would procrastinate because I felt overwhelmed by the information I had to tackle. Obviously, this only works to your disadvantaged. Breathe. Then breathe again. Then focus on the task at hand. I know this works for anything and that’s exactly it. I have even taken to throwing my book! Don’t give up. Work through the first few examples. Pretty soon, you’ll find that it isn’t as intimidating as you first thought and that you can do it. Practice, practice, and more practice, as with anything new to learn, will reinforce what you need to know to understand the chapters and do well on the tests. It was a great feeling when that light bulb finally comes on and my mind was clear.

The one thing I did not get a chance to use was the virtual classroom. If you get a chance, join in! This is another learning aid for you. It is there for you so take advantage of it.

If you take anything from this missive, I hope they are: (1) stay organized, (2) use all help available to you, and (3) keep trying.