



What is eQuest?

A recommended schedule

Assessment and goals

Learning about life online

Locating and evaluating information

Participating in online groups

One-on-one relationships

Online tests and interactive programs

Using different online modalities

Creating a web page

Free-form browsing

Putting it all together: Integration

Progress reports

The journal

How to write your paper

Checklist

Your privacy in cyberspace

Ethics in cyberspace





What is eQuest?

Online learning and personal growth!

On the internet people can find a wide variety of opportunities to better understand and resolve personal issues in their lives. There are dozens of web sites offering information related to mental and physical health, family life, social relationships, religion, careers, and education. Some sites describe specific self-help techniques or offer online psychological tests to assess oneself. Numerous online support and self-help groups have formed that address almost any psychological or social issue you can name. Realizing the unique aspects of online communication, many researchers in the social sciences, including psychologists, are beginning to explore the various positive effects of life in cyberspace. In my journal publications and in my online book *The Psychology of Cyberspace*, I have examined the cognitive and emotional benefits of communicating via text, the effects of partial anonymity in encouraging self-disclosure, the advantages of online identity experimentation, how people can psychologically prosper from participating in online relationships and communities, and the advantages of doing professional counseling and psychotherapy in cyberspace.



Avoiding the pitfalls of cyberspace

At the same time, there are pitfalls in cyberspace living. Some web sites offer useless or even harmful misinformation. Due to the lack of face-to-face cues in text communication (e-mail, chat), people easily can misunderstand each other, resulting in confusion or conflict. The anonymity that is possible in online interactions also encourages some people to act out inappropriately and destructively towards others. People or groups with less than benign intentions are not uncommon. Finally, there is tendency for some people to become "addicted" to the internet, resulting in an unhealthy neglect of their family, friends, and responsibilities.

A new kind of program... a philosophy

Despite the large number of informational web sites, support groups, and psychotherapeutic services that are now being offered online, there is as yet no comprehensive program that educates people about these positive and negative aspects of online activities, or that systematically guides them into an effective exploration of online resources.... until now.

In your Independent Study project you will participate in and help me develop a new program called eQuest. This program is not simply a collection of links to and descriptions of web sites - which is the common approach nowadays - but rather a comprehensive framework of online resources and step-by-step protocols that help a person access, compare, combine, apply, and evaluate those resources. The program involves a flexible design that enables each person to tailor it to his or her own personal needs. It pays close attention to helping people understand and take advantage of the potential benefits of online communication and relationships while also recognizing and avoiding the potential pitfalls. The most important feature is the emphasis on combining and integrating several different types of online activities, as well as the integrating of those activities into one's in-person living. Exactly what collection of activities works best for what person and what problem may vary, but the assumption of the program is that this combination of activities provides the synergistic catalyst for learning and change.

As you try out the program, you will be offering feedback on how to improve it. We also will be developing a theory to explain how the program works. That theory will be the foundation for the eQuest "philosophy" or "ideology" that helps the person using the program to better understand and benefit from it. That philosophy includes these goals:

- Feel empowered to become a knowledgeable user of online resources
- Experiment with new behaviors and expressions of self while online
- Experiment with different modalities of online communication

- Integrate online resources and activities with each other
- Integrate online activities with your in-person lifestyle
- Develop a healthy online lifestyle
- Explore a personal issue... Know thyself

That last item is important because even though you will use eQuest to explore a specific issue that is personally meaningful to you, a more general goal is understand yourself better, in many different ways, by experimenting with a lifestyle in cyberspace.

Participant-observation research

If you have written your proposal for the Independent Study, then you already know what the issue is that you will explore via eQuest. It is an important issue to study academically, but it also is an issue that is personally meaningful to you and that applies to your life in some important way. In addition to thinking of eQuest as a personal growth experience, also think of it as a research methodology that will guide you in that academic study of your issue. Similar to conducting a traditional experiment (as you learned about in other research methods courses), eQuest is a specific structure or format for you to conduct research on that issue. But unlike an experiment, YOU will be a subject in that research! You will be observing and interacting with people and groups online, and you also will be exploring your own personal reactions as you participate in the eQuest program. We call this participant-observation research. It is a type of "qualitative" research - as opposed to "quantitative" research which involves statistical analyses.

Throughout the project, we will be considering how your academic understanding of your topic, your personal understanding of how the topic relates to you and your life, and the kind of lifestyle you develop in cyberspace, are ALL related to each other. Keep this in mind throughout your project. It is the essence of your participant-observation research.

The Components of eQuest

There are a variety of components to eQuest. At the top of this page you will see a jump menu linking to pages that describe each of them. The schedule page will guide you through these eQuest components. Throughout the project, reread these pages to refresh your memory.

Progress reports

Stay in touch with me during your project! Whenever you like, feel free to stop by office to talk. Once a week I'd like you to e-mail me a progress report in which you briefly describe what is happening in each of the ten components of eQuest. Also talk about the various exercises that eQuest recommends that you try. And if you ever run into problems in cyberspace - especially with people or groups that you encounter - be sure to contact me!

Remember that email is not 100% reliable. Due to spam filtering and other technical problems, email may be delayed or get lost. If you don't receive my email in reply to your email within 24 hours, something probably went wrong. Please resend your message.

Your Feedback is Welcome!

If anything about eQuest doesn't make sense to you, or if something in this website doesn't seem to be working right, let me know! Your feedback will help me improve it.

Topics chosen by previous eQuest Students

Al-Anon support groups
Parallels between eastern and western psychology
The effects of modeling on children
Factors affecting interpersonal attraction
The effects of alcoholism on the family
Sexual harassment on the Internet
Children's reactions to divorce
The psychology of extreme sports and sensation-seekers
Evaluating the validity of online resources
Threats of suicide and borderline personality disorder
Parasocial relationships on the Internet
Brain Injuries: An athlete's journey
Blind Date: The risks of dating on the Internet
Coping with grief
Test anxiety
The effects of divorce on children
Ritalin abuse
Panic Disorder
Self-injurious behaviors
Alzheimer's Disease
Self-injurious behaviors
Comparison of college Greek life to cults
Test anxiety
Anorexia
Autism
The mind's effect on sports performance
Separation and individual in college students
Happiness and acculturation in America



A Recommended Schedule

Below is a schedule to help you pace yourself through this eQuest project. You shouldn't be doing any of these activities later than what is suggested here, but if you want to do some of these things sooner than indicated, that's fine! Notice that I'm asking you to try some of the exercises more than once. The links below will take you to the various eQuest pages that describe these activities. Be sure to carefully read those pages before attempting these activities. You should be spending about an hour each day working on your project.



Remember to send your progress reports each week! Use the format indicated in the section about progress reports. I'd also like to see you in-person! Contact me so we can set up times to meet.

THE CHECKLIST - To help you keep track of what you are completing in your project, print out this checklist and keep it where you can see and use it easily. Check off items as you complete them. Bring this checklist to our in-person meetings.

Week 1

Browse through the whole eQuest site and become familiar with the different sections and how to get to them. Be sure to reread these sections when you attempt the various activities. In this first week pay special attention to the sections What is eQuest?, Assessment and Setting Goals, Ethics in Cyberspace, and Your Privacy in Cyberspace.

Locate and join at least three online groups. Set up folders to store communications from the groups. Begin observing those groups.

Begin locating, reading, and evaluating online information related to your topic

Begin researching hardcopy information related to your topic.

Begin reading articles in the Life Online section

Make journal entries during the week and submit your weekly progress report in an email

Contact me so we can set up an appointment for an in-person meeting

Week 2

Try the exercise in Freeform Browsing called "Wander on Your Own." Describe the results in your progress report.

Try the exercise in Freeform Browsing called "Random Link Generators." Describe the results in your progress report.

- Continue observing your groups. Continue locating, reading, and evaluating online information related to your topic.
- Continue researching hardcopy information related to your topic.
- Continue reading articles in the Life Online section
- Make journal entries during the week and submit your weekly progress report in an email

Week 3

Send a message introducing yourself to your online groups

Begin establishing one-on-one relationships with people. Set up a folder or mailbox to store those communications.

If you haven't already done so, start communicating with offline companions online (see the Integration section)

- Continue locating, reading, and evaluating online information related to your topic
- Continue researching hardcopy information related to your topic .
- Continue reading articles in the Life Online section
- Make journal entries during the week and submit your weekly progress report in an email

Week 4

Start participating in the discussions of your online groups. Do the "Creative Keyboarding Exercise" in the section Using Different Online Modalities. Include that exercise in your weekly progress report.

In your progress report, talk about the five different modalities you will be trying.

Experiment with Online Tests and Interactive Programs, including the various testing sites and the computer-aided self-help programs. Describe your experience in your weekly progress report.

- Continue to develop one-on-one relationships with people online.
- Continue locating, reading, and evaluating online information related to your topic
- Continue to communicate with offline companions online (see the Integration section)
- Continue researching hardcopy information related to your topic
- Continue reading articles in the Life Online section
- Make journal entries during the week and submit your weekly progress report in an email

Week 5

Discuss an article, web site, test, program, etc. with people you know online (see the Integration section)

Contact me so we can schedule an in-person meeting.

- Continue to develop one-on-one relationships with people online.
- Continue to explore your five different modalities.
- Continue participating in the discussions of your online groups
- Continue to communicate with offline companions online (see the Integration section)
- Try again the exercise in Freeform Browsing "Wander on Your Own." Describe the results in your progress report.
- Try again the exercise in Freeform Browsing "Random Link Generators." Describe the results in your report.

Week 6

If you haven't already done so, tell online companions about your offline life (see the Integration section)

If you haven't already done so, tell offline companions about your online life (see the Integration section)

If you haven't already done so, bring your online behavior offline (see the Integration section)

If you haven't already done so, bring your offline behavior online (see the Integration section)

- Continue to develop one-on-one relationships with people online.
- Continue participating in the discussions of your online groups
- Continue to explore your five different modalities.
- Discuss an article, web site, test, program, etc. with people you know online (see the Integration section)
- Continue to communicate with offline companions online (see the Integration section)
- Experiment again with Online Tests and Interactive Programs, including the testing sites and the computer-aided self-help programs. Describe your experience in your weekly progress report. By the end of eQuest, you should have tried about 5 or 6 different tests and programs.
- Continue locating, reading, and evaluating online information related to your topic
- Continue researching hardcopy information related to your topic.
- Continue reading articles in the Life Online section
- Make journal entries during the week and submit your weekly progress report in an email

Week 7

Do exercises 1 & 2 "Searching for Sights and Sounds" in the section Locating and Evaluating Information. Describe the results in your weekly progress report.

Reread the section Using Different Online Modalities. What five modalities are you exploring? Write about that in your progress report.

If you have a one-on-one relationship with someone who belongs to one of your online groups, discuss your ideas about the group with that person (see the Integration section)

Arrange to meet online companions in-person or to talk on the phone (see the Integration section)

- Continue to develop one-on-one relationships with people online.
- Continue participating in the discussions of your online groups
- Continue to tell online companions about your offline life (see the Integration section)
- Continue to tell offline companions about your online life (see the Integration section)
- Continue to bring your online behavior offline (see the Integration section)
- Continue to bring your offline behavior online (see the Integration section)

- Discuss an article, web site, test, program, etc. with people you know online (see the Integration section).
- Continue to communicate with offline companions online (see the Integration section)
- Continue locating, reading, and evaluating online information related to your topic
- Continue researching hardcopy information related to your topic.
- Continue reading articles in the Life Online section
- Make journal entries during the week and submit your weekly progress report in an email

Week 8

Do the exercise "Imagining the Person" in the section One-on-One Relationships and describe the results in your weekly progress report.

Do the exercise "Hearing Your Voice" in the section One-on-One Relationships and describe the results in your weekly progress report.

Do the exercise "Expressive Email" in the Integration section.

Do the exercise: Artificial Intelligence with ALICE in the Online Tests and Interactive Programs section, and describe the results in your weekly progress report.

- Continue to develop one-on-one relationships with people online.
- Continue participating in the discussions of your online groups
- Continue to explore your five different modalities.
- Discuss an article, web site, test, program, etc. with people you know online (see the Integration section).
- Continue to tell online companions about your offline life (see the Integration section)
- Continue to tell offline companions about your online life (see the Integration section)
- Continue to communicate with offline companions online (see the Integration section)
- Continue to bring your online behavior offline (see the Integration section)
- Continue to bring your offline behavior online (see the Integration section)
- Continue locating, reading, and evaluating online information related to your topic
- Continue researching hardcopy information related to your topic.
- Continue reading articles in the Life Online section
- Make journal entries during the week and submit your weekly progress report in an email

Week 9

Do the "Vision Quest" exercise in the section Freeform Browsing. Describe the results in your progress report.

Do the "Felt Sense" exercise in the section Integration

- Continue to develop one-on-one relationships with people online.
- Continue participating in the discussions of your online groups
- Continue to explore your five different modalities.
- Continue to tell online companions about your offline life (see the Integration section)
- Continue to tell offline companions about your online life (see the Integration section)
- Continue to communicate with offline companions online (see the Integration section)
- Continue to bring your online behavior offline (see the Integration section)
- Continue to bring your offline behavior online (see the Integration section)
- Discuss an article, web site, test, program, etc. with people you know online (see the Integration section.
- Continue locating, reading, and evaluating online information related to your topic
- Continue researching hardcopy information related to your topic.
- Continue reading articles in the Life Online section
- Make journal entries during the week and submit your weekly progress report in an email

Week 10

Do the exercise "Reviewing the Archive" in the section online groups section. Describe the results in your weekly progress report.

Do the exercise "Reviewing the relationship" in the section One-on-One Relationships. Describe the results in your weekly progress report.

Begin writing first draft your paper.

Begin creating your webpage.

- Continue to develop one-on-one relationships with people online.
- Continue participating in the discussions of your online groups
- Continue to explore your five different modalities.
- Continue to tell online companions about your offline life (see the Integration section)
- Continue to tell offline companions about your online life (see the Integration section)
- Continue to communicate with offline companions online (see the Integration section)

- Continue to bring your online behavior offline (see the Integration section)
- Continue to bring your offline behavior online (see the Integration section)
- Experiment again with Online Tests and Interactive Programs, including the testing sites and the computer-aided self-help programs. Describe your experience in your weekly progress report. By the end of eQuest, you should have tried about 5 or 6 different tests and programs.
- Make journal entries during the week and submit your weekly progress report in an email

Week 11

If you have had any dreams about computers or your project, do the exercise "Integrating the Subconscious" exercise in the Integration section.

Contact me so we can schedule an in-person meeting.

Do the exercise "Contributing to Wikipedia" in the online information section. Contact me so we can discuss what you can contribute.

- Continue to develop one-on-one relationships with people online.
- Continue participating in the discussions of your online groups
- Continue to explore your five different modalities.
- Continue to tell online companions about your offline life (see the Integration section)
- Continue to tell offline companions about your online life (see the Integration section)
- Continue to communicate with offline companions online (see the Integration section)
- Continue to bring your online behavior offline (see the Integration section)
- Continue to bring your offline behavior online (see the Integration section)
- Try again the exercise "Imagining the Person" in the section One-on-One Relationships and describe the results in your weekly progress report.
- Try again the exercise "Hearing Your Voice" in the section One-on-One Relationships and describe the results in your weekly progress report.
- Try again the exercise "Expressive Email" in the Integration section.
- Continue writing first draft of your paper.
- Continue creating your web page.
- Make journal entries during the week and submit your weekly progress report in an email

Week 12

Do the "Your Relationship with Me" exercise in the section One-on-One Relationships. Write about that in your weekly progress report.

Do the exercise "Getting Feedback on Your Web Page" in the section Creating a Web Page.

- Continue writing first draft your paper.
- Make journal entries during the week and submit your weekly progress report in an email

Week 13

Send me the first draft your paper before the end of the last week of classes (I'll make suggestions for changes and will send it back)

Final Exam Week

Send me the final draft of your paper.

YOU'RE DONE! CONGRATS!



Assessment and Setting Goals

Goals

The first step in eQuest is to identify the personal topic you wish to explore via the program. If you've written your proposal for your Independent Study, then you've already selected an issue and have outlined the academic questions to research. Any range of topics are possible in eQuest, including issues related to mental and physical health, marital and family relationships, spirituality, school and job performance. Students using eQuest have explored such topics as alcoholism in the family, online crime and cyberstalking, online friendships, and the effects of stress on physical health. In the [Creating a Web Page](#) section of eQuest, you will find links to their web pages that contain summaries of their projects.



The topic you've chosen is personally meaningful to you, so consider these questions as you begin your project and write about them in your journal, progress notes, and final paper:

- What motivated you to pick this particular topic? How does it relate to your life?
- What questions does the topic stir up for you?
- What thoughts, feelings, and memories does the topic bring to your mind?
- What do you hope to learn and discover for yourself?
- What specific outcomes do you hope for?

Assessment

For any person who participates in eQuest, it's important to assess one's level of experience, knowledge, and skills in using the internet. Look over these questions and think about how they might be related to your experience in using eQuest. Write about these questions in your journal, progress notes, and final paper:

- How comfortable do you feel using computers and the internet?
- What kind of access do you have to a computer and the internet?
- What types of things have you done with computers and the internet?
- What are your attitudes and feelings about the internet?
- How would you describe your "life" online?
- Have your experiences been good, bad?
- What do you like and don't like to do online?
- Do you have friends online or belong to online groups?
- How well can you type?
- How do you feel about reading and writing?
- What good or bad experiences have you had with reading and writing?
- Do you feel motivated to learn about new online software and communication tools?
- What do you think about discovering new places online and meeting new people?



Learning about Life Online

In order to successfully navigate the social dimensions of cyberspace, some people will need a basic education about the communication techniques and customs of online relationships, groups, and communities. Even experienced onliners may need some training regarding the social and psychological nuances of online relationships. Much of this will be learned experientially in the eQuest program, but it's also important to provide you with some background "academic" instruction. My online book *The Psychology of Cyberspace* contains lots of information that will be useful to you. Browse through it. In particular, you should read the articles listed below. There are similar chapters in my book *Psychology of the Digital Age* (Cambridge University Press), Right now, read at least the first two. In the other sections of this eQuest site, I'll point you again to those other articles:

- Cyberspace as a psychological space
- The basic psychological features of cyberspace
- The online disinhibition effect
- The black hole of cyberspace
- Identity management in cyberspace
- E-mail communication and relationships
- Transference among people online
- Subtlety in multimedia chat
- Ethics in cyberspace research
- TextTalk: Communicating with typed text chat
- Steps in studying an online group: The Geezer Brigade
- Bringing Online and Offline Living Together: The Integration Principle
- The Final Showdown Between In-Person and Cyberspace Relationships



Ideas to Think and Write About

In your journal, progress notes, and final paper, discuss the following:

- If some information in these articles sticks in your mind, why might that be the case? What does that say about your personality and your life?
- What information in these articles was especially helpful in understanding your experience with eQuest?
- Based on your own experiences in cyberspace, do you disagree with anything in these articles?



Locating and Evaluating Information

In addition to information you get from hardcopy journals and books, you will need to search the web for information related to your topic. In your final paper, you must cite at least 20 references. Don't cite any more than five of my articles. Have at least five references that are books or articles from hardcopy professional journals, and at least five good online articles or resources other than mine.

You probably also know how to use search engines to find information online. T Google also includes Google Scholar (scholar.google.com) which will search for academic articles.



It's good to select one search engine and learn all its features, especially the "advanced" features. Read the information at the search engine site to learn about those advanced features. Mastering those skills will make your searching more powerful and precise. Become an expert at using one particular search engine, but remember that any particular engine only covers about 40% of the internet, so it's important to spend some time using two or more engines. Remember that thinking about and experimenting with different keywords will improve your search as well as enhance your insights into what your topic is about.

In particular, I would recommend trying the advanced search features at google - especially searching for EXACT PHRASES and searching for pages WITHOUT a particular word. If you enter "Suler in cyberspace" (without the quotation marks) it will search for pages with that exact phrase. If you place "carrots" (without the quotation marks) into the WITHOUT box, it will search for pages with whatever words you entered into the other boxes but it will ignore pages that contain the word "carrot."

Some search engines have a NEAR command in the advanced search section that is very useful. If you entered the expression "Suler NEAR Cyberspace" (without the quotation marks) it will search for pages where the words Suler and Cyberspace are close to each other on the page. If you enter "Suler in Cyberspace" NEAR "Rider University" it will search for pages where those phrases are close to each other.

Use the advanced search features! They are very helpful.

Remember that you also can search for hard copy articles online! There are a dozen or more search engines available to you at the Library Databases located on the Rider web site. They will scan all sorts of journals and newspapers. PsycINFO and PsycARTICLES will scan the psychology literature and related fields. Don't assume that all information you find online is good information. Remember that anyone - recognized experts as well as crackpots - publish on the internet.

Contradictory Information: It is very possible that you will find contradictory information about your topic when you are searching online. Sometimes we are tempted to see information as valid when it confirms what we already believe about a topic. Try not to fall into this trap! Keep an open mind about all information, and use the criteria below to decide just how valid information is.

Criteria for Evaluating Online Resources

Learn how to evaluate whether a web site or web article seems accurate and valid. Consider these questions:

1. **Authority**: What is the status, reputation, or credentials of the person or organization presenting the information?
2. **Content**: How professional, well-organized, well-written is that page of information or that web site? Is the information presented in a fair and unbiased way? Does the information seem accurate?
3. **Impact**: How many and what kinds of other web sites or people are citing that page or site? Try two methods. Enter the title, in quotes, of that web page into google and see what hits come up. Then, at google, type the word "link:" (without the quotes) followed by the address of that web page to find out what other pages link to that page, for example, "link:www.rider.edu" (without the quotes)
4. **Reviews**: Do these other sites review and evaluate that page or that site? What do they say?
5. **Validation**: Is the information on that page confirmed by other sources? Do other sources agree or disagree with that information?
6. **Timeliness**: Given that particular topic, is the information on that site current and up-to-date?
7. **Personal Evaluation**: What is your gut level reaction to the information? Does the information match or contradict what you know from your experience?

Citing and rating online references: In the reference section of your paper, for each reference that you got online, cite the author or organization, the title of the page, the address of the page, and the date you accessed the page. Following the citation, include a rating of that reference on a scale from 1 to 7 using the seven criteria above. A reference gets one point each time you determined that it is a "good" article based on that criteria. Describe the reasons for your giving the article that overall rating. For example, a citation might look like this (if there is no person as an author, an organization or group might be listed as the author):

Smith, J. The online disinhibition effect. www.washingtonu.edu, retrieved March 2002.

(Rating = 5. This article was cited by numerous web sites, it is extremely well written and organized, the author is a university professor, the article meets most of the criteria for a scholarly article, and my gut level reaction was that the information was very important)

Ideas to Think and Write About

In your journal, progress notes, and final paper, discuss the following:

- How exactly did you search for information on the web?
- What keywords worked well or didn't work well?
- How did experimenting with different keywords give you some insight into your topic?
- What do you like and dislike about searching for information online?
- Did you find contradictory information about your topic? What information do you believe? Why?

Exercise: Searching for Sights and Sounds

1. At google or photosharing communities like Flickr or Webshots, use the image search engine to find three pictures that you like - pictures that have something to do with the issue you are exploring, or ones that say something about you, your personality, your life. Save these pictures and try to use them in your web page.
2. Find three music files or even sound effects that you like - anything that might have something to do with your issue, or that say something about you. Save them and see if you can use them in your web page. These files may be in mp3, midi, wav, avi, mpg, mov, or other formats. There are entire web sites devoted to these kinds of files. See if you can find them. You might also use free "peer-to-peer" programs like LimeWire to find some of these files.
3. Go to Youtube or Vimeo to see if you can find videos related to your topic.
4. In your journal, progress report, and final paper, write about what these pictures, music, and videos reveal about you, your personality, your life. How might these things about you be related to your eQuest topic?

Exercise: Contributing to Wikipedia

A wiki is an online document that a group of people create together. [Wikipedia](#) is an online encyclopedia where anyone online can create and modify its articles. Search to see if it has any articles related to your topic. Near the end of your independent study, you will think about how you might add to or modify what you read there. You might even try to modify it.



Participating in Online Groups

One of the unique aspects of cyberspace is the opportunity to access thousands of discussion and support groups that address almost any personal issue you can imagine. A critical component of eQuest is for you to find groups that address the issue that you are exploring. These groups either be chat groups, message/discussion board groups, or email groups.

Look around for different possible groups before deciding on which to join. Remember that every group is different, so try to join at least two. Small groups (less than 10) may not be very active or may not be friendly towards newcomers. Large groups (more than 30) may be very active and somewhat confusing for the newcomer. Also keep these things in mind when you join a group, and write about these things in your paper:



Join different types of groups - Online groups occur in different formats. The most common are chat, discussion boards, and email groups or "lists." Try out these different formats to understand how each works, and to see what you like and dislike about each. A new group format that many people enjoy are "social networks" in which you connect with people who are "friends of friends." However, you're probably most familiar with [facebook](#). If you haven't already done so, create an account in facebook and include a short description of your eQuest project. This may help you connect with people who know something about your topic. See if you can find and contact people in facebook who know something about your topic.

Use an archive - When you join an email group, use your email program to set up a separate folder or mailbox for that mail. Your email program might have a feature - sometimes called a "filter"- that will automatically sort that mail into that folder. It's a good idea to create this kind of archive or "room" for a group's mail. Some groups (like yahoogroups) have an archive of all the group's messages on the group's web site. Look through that archive. If you're participating in a chat group, see if your program allows you to save the conversations. If so, create an archive for those meetings too.

Create a profile - Some groups have a page where you can provide background information about yourself for other members to see - your "profile." Before you create one, take a look at what other members did for their profile. At least at first, you may want to be conservative in what you reveal about yourself. For example, you may want to leave out your home address and phone number.

Sit back and observe - After you join, just sit back and observe the group for a while to get a feeling for how it works and how people talk to each other. See if it's a group that you want to continue with or not.

Introduce yourself - When it feels right to do so, send an introductory message in which you say a little bit about yourself to the group. Only say what feels comfortable to you.

Feeling welcomed - A good group welcomes and shows interest in a newcomer. Beware of a group that is not friendly to newcomers.

Be comfortable - Trust your gut level feelings about the group. If something doesn't feel right about it, if things are happening that make you feel uncomfortable or bad, leave the group. In good groups, the members and especially the leaders listen to each other, are open to different opinions, respect each other, try to be fair, and attempt to resolve conflict in a positive way.

Stay in touch - Stay in touch with me to let me know what's happening, especially if you're feeling uncomfortable in the group.

Being Honest about Your Purpose: Be honest about who you are and why you're joining the group. You are in the group to learn about your Independent Study topic, and yourself. Mention this when you introduce yourself to the group. You also are trying to understand what online groups are like, although you are not necessarily "studying" the group.

Some online groups really dislike the idea of someone observing or studying them for a research project. A group's reaction to you will depend a lot on how you introduce yourself to them. If the first thing you mention is that you joined the group because their purpose is personally important to you, and that you also chose to do an independent study on that topic because it's personally important to you, then the group may accept your being there. If the first thing you say is that you joined the group to study or observe them for a project, then they may not be happy about that. Respect a group's wishes if they ask you to leave the group.

If you sense that a group might not be happy about your being there, privately contact the group's host or moderator. You don't have to contact the hosts right away if you're just observing to see what the group is like. If you then decide it's a group you'd like to stay in, then you could either contact the host before introducing yourself to the group, or just introduce yourself to the group, depending on which method you think might be best. Talk to me if you have any questions about that.

Confidentiality: If you mention a group or person when you write your progress notes and final paper, never mention real names or any information that could identify them. Let group members know that you respect and will protect their confidentiality. If we decide that you want to do a formal interview with a person, we must remember the ethical principles of informed consent and the protection of confidentiality. Talk to me about creating a form for informed consent. Make sure you read the article below about ethics. Let me know you if have any questions about this aspect of your project.

For email groups and discussion boards that are public (i.e., you don't need permission from the host or moderator to join the group), you can always observe without participating. People don't necessarily see that you are "there" reading the messages, as is the case with chat meetings. For large, public chat meetings (20 or more people), you also might simply observe. In these situations, it is still important to not mention in your progress reports or final paper any information that reveals the identity of people in the group.

If you have explained your reasons for being in a group, and how you respect their confidentiality, and the group is still not happy about your being there, you should respect their wishes and leave.

Readings

- One of Us: Ethics in Cyberspace Research
- Steps in studying an online group: The Geezer Brigade
(think of this article as steps in "understanding" an online group)

Ideas to Think and Write About

In your journal, progress notes, and final paper, discuss the following:

- In what ways are these groups similar and different?
- What groups are most helpful to you? How come?
- What are you learning about your topic in these groups?
- What's it like for you to be in these groups?

Exercise: Reviewing the Archive

Go back and look through all the messages or conversations you have saved in your archive for that group or that is stored on the group's web site. If it's email, look over the titles of the messages for the past few months, or even years. Reread some of those old messages. In your journal, progress notes, and final paper, discuss the following:

- Do the message titles capture something interesting about what has been happening in the group - something that's important to you personally?
- What interesting patterns or trends do you see in those titles?
- When you reread old messages, can you gain some new insights or a different perspective on what has been happening in the group that's important to you.



One-on-One Relationships

While online groups can be very valuable, the greater intimacy and honesty that occurs in one-on-one relationships may be especially helpful in your exploring your topic. As you meet people online, think about whom you may want to contact privately via email or instant messaging - perhaps people in the groups you join. You might be able to connect with several people. Ideally they will be people who are familiar in some way with your topic. Some relationships may "click" and others may not. That's OK. You can learn from both. Some people may not reply to your attempt to connect to them. That's OK too. It often happens online. Read that article below about "black hole experiences."



Let these relationships happen naturally. Don't feel forced to have to create one. Connect with someone because it feels right, because it's something you'd like to do, not because it's an assignment. Getting information from the person about your project isn't really the goal. The goal is for you to see what it's like to form an online relationship with someone you don't know - someone who knows something about your topic. So if it doesn't happen naturally, don't worry about it. It won't affect your grade. In some cases you may simply hang out with these companions and casually communicate with them about the topic, or other things not necessarily related to the topic.

As with online groups, be honest in your online relationships. In these one-on-one relationships let people know about your independent study project. But let them know that the reason why you connected with them was because you personally wanted to. Your goal isn't to gather data from them, or interview them. Let them know that in anything you write for your independent study you will always protect their anonymity. Otherwise, your goal is NOT to "study" the other person, but rather to learn something about yourself and your topic from that person.

When you mention a person in your journal, progress notes and final paper, never mention real names or any information that could identify them. Create a pseudonym for each person, perhaps one that is meaningful to you in some way, that captures something that you think is important about that person. In your progress notes and final paper, if you use quotes longer than one or two sentences from a person's message, you should ask their permission first.

Formal Interviews: In some cases, you may decide to do a more formal interviews, but be sure to consult with me first before doing that. If you do a formal interview with the person, we must first create a form for informed consent that they will read and sign. Be sure to contact me first about this. Because it is difficult when online to verify people's identity and obtain their signature, any interviews you do should be with people that you can meet in-person. You can do the interview in-person, but sometimes it's interesting to do it online via chat or e-mail. We can discuss those options. Another option is to do an e-mail interview with someone who is a professional or recognized expert on your topic. Another possibility is to video-conference with the person.

Store the conversation: If you're emailing a person, use your email program to set up a separate folder or mailbox for each person's mail and create a filter that will automatically direct his/her incoming mail to that folder (if your program has that feature). Also store your own messages to that person in that folder or mailbox. You may have to move your messages from the out box to this folder or mailbox. This creates a kind of "room" for your conversation with that person, so you can go back and reread those messages. It's an archive of your relationship.... If you are using chat or instant messaging, see if you can find a way to save those conversations and store them in a folder. Some programs have this feature.

Readings

Compared to face-to-face relationships, online relationships are unique in many respects. There are pros and cons. Be sure to read these articles from *The Psychology of Cyberspace* that describe how online and offline relationships compare. Understanding different types of online relationships will be an important aspect of your project.

- The online disinhibition effect
- The black hole of cyberspace
- Identity management in cyberspace
- E-mail communication and relationships
- Transference among people online
- The Final Showdown Between In-Person and Cyberspace Relationships

Ideas to Think and Write About

In your journal, progress notes, and final paper, discuss the following:

- Why do you think you chose the people you did for creating one-on-one relationships?
- What strikes you as important about their personalities?
- What did you like and dislike about those relationships?
- If you've never seen or heard this person, what do you imagine they look like? Or their voice?
- What do you imagine their life is like, their home, work, family, things they didn't tell you about?
- Who do these people remind you of in your own life?
- Might you be misperceiving them, imagining what they are like based on your own expectations, feelings, or wishes?

Your Relationship with Me

One of the people you'll be connecting with online and offline is me. In your journal, progress notes, and final paper, write about these questions: What was it like for you to do that? Do I seem different online as compared to in-person? Was there any particular event or communication between us that stands out in your mind? How come?

Exercises for Understanding Online Relationships

Try this out and describe the results in your journal, progress reports, and final paper.

Reviewing the relationship: If you've been communicating via email with someone for awhile, go back and look through all the messages you have saved in your archive for that person. Look at the titles for the messages. Do those titles capture something about your relationship with that person? Have there been any interesting patterns or trends? Reread some of those old messages. By doing that, can you gain some new insights or a different perspective on your relationship with that person?

Imagining the person: If there are people you get to know pretty well online, but have never met them in person, try this exercise. Think about that person. Reread some of your conversations with him/her. Then close your eyes and try to get a picture of what you think that person looks like, sounds like, his/her body language, home surroundings? What do you see, hear, feel? Even if you only get brief glimpses into these things, it may tell you something about how you are subconsciously imagining what this person is like. When you try to imagine the person, do other people that you know pop into mind? Perhaps this person online reminds you of that person.

Hearing his/her voice: Pick out a message you received from someone that was important to you, perhaps one that stirred up some emotion in you. Think about how you reacted to that message. Now read the message out loud. Try to read it in different ways, with different tones of voice and emotion, emphasizing different words, and pausing in different spots. How can you change the meaning of the message simply by reading it out loud in different ways? Which meaning do you think the person intended? Was your first reaction to the message based on an accurate understanding of its meaning?

Hearing your voice: After you compose an interesting, important, or emotional email to someone, read it out loud to yourself. As in the previous exercise, each time you read it out loud use a different tone of voice and different emphases. Then read the message silently. Is it capturing the emphasis and feeling that you originally intended? How might the person misinterpret what you wrote?



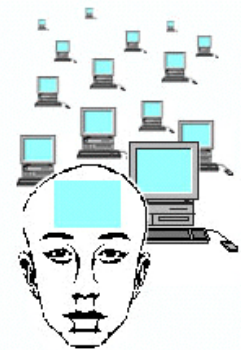
Online Tests and Interactive Programs

Online you can find a wide range of tests, questionnaires, and other interactive programs that can help you better understand your personality, interests, and lifestyle. Explore a few sites and try out anything that looks interesting to you. Perhaps you'll find something that is related to your issue, but even if you don't, experiment with anything that catches your attention. You may discover that the experience gives you some insight into yourself and the issue you chose for the project. Keep in mind that many of these tests and questionnaires have not been validated by research. Take the results with a grain of salt. Think of these tests and questionnaires more as tools to get you thinking about yourself and your issue, and NOT as valid psychological tests that accurately assess you.

Ideas to Think and Write About

In your journal, progress notes, and final paper, discuss the following:

- Why do you think you picked certain tests and programs, and not others?
- What do your choices say about your interests, your personality, your life?
- What tests and programs seemed helpful? How come?
- Which ones seemed unhelpful, and why?
- What did you learn about yourself by experimenting with these tests and programs?
- How might these tests be related to your thoughts and feelings about your topic?



Exercise: Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence ("AI") simulates human thinking and communication. Even when they fall short, interacting with them can be an insightful experience. Use three approaches when talking with such a programs (like ChatGP).

1. Talk about your eQuest project. Be honest about yourself and what you are trying to learn. Reply to it seriously, even if it makes mistakes Be patient and try to get good advice or feedback from it despite its errors.
2. Feel free to broaden your conversation into other topics about you, your personality, your life. Again, be patient and try to help it give you some insights into yourself.
3. Deliberately try to trick it into saying silly things. See if you can outwit it. Say whatever you want. Be outrageous. Do this in order to figure out how the program seems to work.

In your journal, progress notes and final paper, discuss these issues:

- How was it helpful in the discussion about your eQuest project?
- How was it helpful in helping you understand yourself and your life?
- What specific comments or questions from it stand out in your mind?
- What kind of "personality" does it seem to have?
- How did you find yourself reacting to its personality?
- What are its strengths and weaknesses as an artificial human?
- What were its mistakes, shortcomings or silly reactions?
- How do you think the program works?



Using Different Online Modalities

There are many different ways or "modalities" for communicating online. People express themselves and their identities differently when using different communication tools. Relationships and groups are different too depending on the modality. Experiment with as many as you can. Even if a particular communication system feels strange or uncomfortable at first, stick with it for a while. It may take some time to learn and appreciate it. Think of it as pioneering a new territory. Some modalities may be better for you depending on the particular issue you are exploring in eQuest. You may even find that what you learn about yourself and your topic changes as you try different communication modalities.



Modalities to Explore

Use at least five of the following modalities. Some of them you already may be quite familiar with, but there may still be a few things to learn. Be adventurous and try out some modalities that are new to you. Remember that there's always a learning curve when experimenting with new programs, but the outcome often is worth the effort.

Email: An old standard of online communication, one of the very first to be invented. Read the article below about email communication for information and techniques that might be new to you.

Discussion Boards: Also called "message boards" or "forums." Blackboard, which you are familiar with, includes discussion boards. Like email it's another form of "asynchronous" communication. Many online groups and communities - including some very old and famous ones, like The Well - use the discussion board modality.

Chat rooms and Messaging: Unlike email and discussion boards, these are "synchronous" modalities - in other words, people have to be online at the same time in order to communicate. You interact in real time, either with one person or a group of people. You may already be texting, but read the article "TextTalk" for information and techniques that might be new to you. There are many different programs for chat and instant messaging.

Blogs: Blogs are online journals in which people write about themselves and their ideas, and then get feedback from visitors who read their weblogs. Some journalists and professors use blogs to discuss social and academic issues. If you search the blogs, you might find people discussing ideas related to your topic. In blogs you also can locate people according to their interests, careers, and hobbies. Consider using a weblog as the [journal](#) for your project. I will be impressed if you do :-)

Social Networks: In this modality you can find and communicate with people who are "friends of friends." There are several popular ones, and others less well-know. If you haven't already done so, create an account in a social network and include a short description of your eQuest project. This may help you connect with people who know something about your topic. See if you can find and contact people who know something about your topic.

Short Message Networks: Services like Twitter (X) combine social networking and blogging so you can stay connected to friends and family by via short messages sent to their computers or cell phones. Using your computer and cell phone to send messages, you can let people know throughout the day what you are doing.

Avatar and imaginary environments: In avatar communities, people use imaginary pictures to represent themselves, and they interact with others in an imaginary environment. For a listing of other avatar communities that might interest you, see the Avatar Teleport. "Second Life" is a another popular platform, but the learning curve is rather steep. There might be other imaginary environments online - like online games - that are related somehow to your eQuest topic.

Video Conferencing: Video conferencing enable you to view scenes or interact with people in real time using both sight and sound. Of all the online modalities, this is the one closest to in-person encounters.

Podcasting: Podcasting is a method of publishing audio broadcasts via the Internet, allowing people to subscribe to a "feed" of new files (usually MP3s but sometimes video files). Podcasts are devoted to all kinds of topics. For any particular podcast, there might be an online group devoted to discussing it and the topics addressed by that podcast. You might find podcasts and groups that are discussing topics related to your eQuest topic.

Online Video and Mixed Media: People are communicating with text, photos, audio recordings, video, and various combinations of these things. Popular sites for video are Youtube and Vimeo. See if you can find videos related to your topic.

Other Modalities: It's possible that you may know of other online modalities that may be useful in your project, but not mentioned above. If so, let me know!

Readings

- Email communication and relationships
- TextTalk: Communicating with typed text chat
- Subtlety in Multimedia Chat
- The Psychology of Avatars and Graphical Space (this one you can just browse)

Ideas to Think and Write About

In your journal, progress notes, and final paper, discuss the following:

- Other than what you're doing in eQuest, what other programs are you using online?
- How might you use those programs in this eQuest project?
- What modalities seem to be the most and least useful for exploring your topic?
- What motivates you to try new modalities? What stops you?
- What is it like using different communication tools?
- Which ones did you like and dislike? How come?
- How did you express yourself differently with these different tools?
- What did you learn about yourself by using these different modalities?
- How might those insights relate to the issue you are exploring in eQuest?

Creative Keyboarding Exercise

Since you'll be using e-mail and perhaps texting, here's an exercise I'd like you to try. First, read that article above about email and text communication relationships, especially the section on creative keyboarding and an email makeover. Using as many of those creative keyboarding techniques as you can, compose an email or text message to one of your online companions. It could even be an imaginary companion. If its an email, the message doesn't have to be long, maybe three or four paragraphs. You can say whatever you like in the email - be creative - but devote some of the message to talking about the issue that you are exploring in eQuest. When you're done, send this message to me. You don't have to actually send it to your companion.

In your journal, progress notes, and final paper, discuss your reaction to this exercise. Reread your message to see what it says about your personality and how you express yourself. What techniques did you like or dislike? Did writing this message give you any new insights into your topic?



Creating a Web Page

How people choose to present and in a sense create their online identity is an intriguing aspect of life in cyberspace. Designing a personal web page is a concrete exercise in understanding what you think is important about yourself. For this component of eQuest, create a personal web page. Say something about your life, your personality, background, and interests. Devote a paragraph to describing the issue you are exploring in eQuest, what you are learning from your project, what you are learning about yourself. Also create a section entitled "My advice to future eQuest students."



We'll include this page on the eQuest website, so think about how you'd like to present yourself to future eQuest students.

There are several ways you can create a web page. Some web browsers include a feature for creating web pages. In PowerPoint you can create a slide and then save the slide as a web page. You might even find a simple free program for creating a page.

Be as creative as you like. Feel free to use colors, graphics, and pictures. Include links to sites that you personally like or that are important for your research topic.

Ideas to Think and Write About

In your journal, progress notes, and final paper, discuss the following:

- Why did you choose the things you did to put into your page?
- What does the page reveal about you, your personality, and your life in how you designed it?
- Did you deliberately leave some things out? How come?
- How might you construct the page differently if people who knew about your issue were going to see it?
- How would you construct the page differently if almost anybody on the net might see it?
- How might you construct the page differently if only your friends and family members were going to see it?
- Apply what you learned about yourself in creating this page to understanding the issue you are exploring in eQuest.

Exercise: Getting Feedback on Your Web Page

Ask three people you know (online or offline) for feedback about your web page. Ask them what the page reveals about your personality? Is there anything new they learned about you from that page? Write about this in your journal, progress reports, and final paper.



Free-Form Browsing

As we search the internet, our preconceptions about what is interesting, valuable, relevant, and "good" steer us from page to page, sometimes narrowing our attention and limiting what we see. In the Free-Form Browsing component of eQuest, you will explore cyberspace in a more random, wandering sort of way. Hopefully this free-form browsing will help you discover new areas of cyberspace that you would not have seen otherwise.



What you find may not seem directly related to the issue for your project, but when you spend some time thinking about it, you may realize that you've learned something about yourself that leads to insights into your project. Try these three exercises at least once, spending at least 20 minutes with each:

1. Wander on Your Own - Start anywhere on the Internet you like and then jump from link to link in a "free association" style, allowing your movement to be more spontaneous, less influenced by conscious intention and evaluation. Just wander and leap around the Internet looking for anything that seems interesting. Sometimes even "speed click" without thinking at all.

2. Random Link Generators - Wander around cyberspace as you did in #1, but use a random link generator to help you. They will throw you randomly onto different pages on the Internet. Once they toss you onto a page somewhere, you can continue wandering around on your own from that page, or return to the generator whenever you want. Some random link generators will allow you to connect randomly to pages that relate to any topic of your choice. If so, use it to explore pages related to your equest topic.

3. Vision Quest - Start off with an open-ended question about yourself and your life, one that is important to you. Try to pick a question that is related to the topic you are exploring in eQuest. With that question in mind, use either method 1 or method 2 to start wandering around cyberspace. Keep your question in the back of your mind. Continue wandering until you get a "sign" or perhaps a series of signs that in some way gives you an answer or an insight into your question. You'll know the sign when you see it. If this vision quest method sounds silly, then just think of it as a way to allow your subconscious mind to help you discover an insight into your question.

Ideas to Think and Write About

In your journal, progress notes, and final paper, discuss the following:

- What was it like doing using these free-form browsing techniques?
- Which of these three methods worked best for you? How come?
- What places that you visited stand out in your mind? Why do you think that is?
- Did you learn anything about yourself, your interests, your personality?
- What sign did you receive? What did you learn from it about yourself?
- How might what you learned about yourself from free-form browsing relate to your eQuest topic?



Putting It All Together: Integration

Exercises in Integrating Online Activities

As you've probably noticed, the eQuest program encourages you to link together the various things that you are doing online. It encourages you to compare and contrast what you are learning across these different activities. This is called "integration." So, for example:



1. Whenever you find online an interesting article, web site, test, program, etc., discuss it with the people you know online. Also ask them if they know of anything online that relates to the issue you are exploring.
2. If you have a one-on-one relationship with someone who belongs to one of your online groups, discuss your ideas about the group with that person. How are their views similar or different than yours?
3. In your personal web page, say something about your online lifestyle and what you are learning about yourself from it. Say something about the personal issue you are exploring in eQuest.
4. Ask people you know online for feedback about your web page. Ask them what the page reveals about your personality? Is there anything new they learned about you from that page?
5. What's it like to use different communication tools (chat, email, message boards, etc.)? Which ones do you like and dislike? What might that say about you and your personality?

Exercises in Integrating Online and Offline Living

An online lifestyle has much to offer but it cannot substitute for in-person living. An important feature of the eQuest program will be its emphasis on the balance and integration of online and offline activities. Be sure to read my article about the integration principle and apply to your project these five guidelines described at the end of the article. Write about these guidelines in your journal, progress reports, and final paper:

1. Tell online companions about your offline life.

You may not want to disclose some things about yourself (phone number, address, etc), but generally it's good to let people know something about yourself and your life, especially if what you tell them will help you discuss and understand the topic you are exploring. Also tell them about the information you are locating online. They might have some helpful advice and feedback.

2. Tell offline companions about your online life

Tell friends, family, or other people who know you know well and whom you trust about what's happening in your eQuest project. Tell them about the information you are locating online and the people you are meeting. They might have some helpful advice and feedback.

3. Try to meet online companions in-person (or talk to them on the phone or with video-conferencing)

You won't be able to do this with everyone you meet, but try to do it with some people. It will give you a new perspective on those people, and will shed light on how the way you imagined them to be might be quite different than how they actually are.

4. Communicate with offline companions online

Contacting online people you already know in-person can give you a new perspective on that person. People online aren't always exactly the same as they are in-person. Talk to them online about your eQuest project and the issue you are exploring.

5. Bring your online behavior offline

If you're experimenting with new and helpful ways of relating to people online, or new activities online, see if you can bring that into your in-person lifestyle, especially if those experimentations are related to your topic in some important way.

6. Bring your offline behavior online

Think of some ways you behave in your "real" life and try to bring those behaviors into cyberspace. What's that like? especially if it will be helpful in exploring and understanding the topic you are exploring.

Integrating the Body - The "Felt Sense" Exercise

We tend to forget about our bodies when we're in cyberspace, but our bodily experiences are important aspects of who we are! To integrate online living into the Big Picture of our lives, pay attention to "felt sense." If you've been online for more than an half hour or so, or if you find yourself very immersed in what's happening to you online, take a few minutes out to close your eyes and pay attention to what's happening in your body. What sensations do you feel... in your arms, legs, face, skin, stomach, chest, shoulders? Even if it's a very subtle sensation, notice it. What pictures or sounds are going through your mind and what effect do they have on your body sensations? Might these internal sensations be telling you something about you and your activity in cyberspace? Write about these things in your progress reports and in your final paper.

Integrating Hidden Thoughts and Feelings: The "Expressive Email" Exercise

In our relationships we sometimes hold back on what we are really thinking and feeling. For this exercise, think of someone you are communicating with online, perhaps in a one-on-one relationships or someone you know in one of your online groups. In an email which you don't have to send, express what you ideally would need or want to say to that person. Feel free to express whatever you are thinking or feeling. Try to use some of the "creative keyboarding" techniques described in the article about email relationships. If you want me to give you feedback about this email, send it to me, but you don't have to if you would rather not. But do write about this exercise in your journal, progress report, and final paper.

Integrating the Subconscious: Dreams

Sometimes we have reactions to our lifestyle in cyberspace that are not fully conscious. Felt-sense will tell you something about that. Dreams will too. If you have any dreams about the internet or people you know online, write those dreams down and talk about them in your progress reports and your paper. What might those dreams be saying about your feelings and activities in cyberspace? Might those dreams be trying to teach you something? Think about how the dream might also be commenting on the issue you are exploring in eQuest. Here's an article about "cyberspace as a dream world" that you might find interesting. Sometimes dreams are tricky to understand. Here's an article about working with dreams that might help you. Try out some of the techniques described there. They work!



Progress Reports

Stay in touch with me during your project! Once a week I'd like you to email me a progress report. The entries in your daily journal will make it easy to write these reports. The reports don't have to be long - about the equivalent of one or two typed pages.

Use the progress reports as a way for me to give you helpful feedback. Rather than just list the things you did that week, let me know what you are learning and thinking about those things. For example, if you write in your report "I did the free-form browsing exercise this week and it was interesting" and that's all that you mention, then I will be limited in the feedback I can give you. Instead, let me know what you discovered from that exercise, and specifically what you liked and disliked about it. The progress reports are an important way for us to have an ongoing conversation about your project! Divide the report into the following sections:

Activities this week:

A brief description of where you are in the schedule and what you did that week

What I learned about my topic

Anything new you learned, and where you learned it.

What I learned about myself

What you learned about your topic and yourself, including your reactions to the exercises and any insights into how you behave in cyberspace.

Problems and Questions

Were there any difficulties with getting things to work online, bugs in the eQuest program, or problems with people online? Is there anything I can help you with? Any questions that I can answer about your topic or what you are learning about yourself?

Recommendations for eQuest

If you know of any web sites or online resources that might be included in eQuest, or if you have any recommendations about new exercises or other ways to improve it, let me know!

Use these email communications with me to build your email skills. Experiment with the creative keyboarding techniques that are described in my article about email communication.

Remember that email is not 100% reliable. Due to spam filtering and other technical problems, email may be delayed or get lost. If you don't receive my email in reply to your email within 24 hours, something probably went wrong. Please resend your message.

In-Person Meetings

In addition to our email contacts, we should meet in-person at least three times: near the beginning, middle, and end of the semester. But feel free to schedule other meetings or just stop by to talk whenever you want. Communicating online as well as in-person will give us an opportunity to better understand how people express themselves and react to each other in text communication compared to face-to-face communication.

Bring your journal and the checklist to our in-person meetings.



The Journal

What did Darwin, Freud, Piaget and other great scientists have in common? They all kept journals in which they recorded what was happening in their research and the ideas that came to them. It's very easy to forget what you did, why you did it, what worked, what didn't. Believe or not, it's even easy to forget great insights that pop up during research. A journal prevents that from happening.

EVERY DAY during your project you should write in your journal. For some entries you simply may be summarizing what you did for the project that day. But the journal involves much more than that! You should also use it as a place to:

- Ask yourself questions about the project
- Work out ideas and record your insights
- Think about what you are reading
- Plan for the next day and week
- Express your feelings about the project
- Discuss how events in your life influence your project
- Record ideas for writing the final paper



The journal is a professional and personal record of your project. It is a place for you to explore how your project is meaningful to you personally. This is an important part of eQuest. When you write your progress notes and final paper, you will be using what you wrote in this journal. A good journal will make it much easier to write the progress notes and final paper.

Guidelines:

1. I recommend your using either a bound notebook or a word-processor to keep your journal. If you're using your computer to record your journal, make sure you protect your privacy (see the eQuest section about privacy in cyberspace).
2. For each entry, you should record the day, date, and time. Also put an interesting TITLE at the top of each entry.
3. Reserve several pages at the beginning of the journal to create a TABLE OF CONTENTS that contains the titles of the entries and a page number that helps you easily locate an entry.
4. Try to write in your journal everyday! Long entries may be several pages. Short entries may be as brief as a few lines. Write even if you did not work on the project that particular day. You may still have ideas, plans, or feelings about the project!

Even if you have no idea what to write, still write! Write about why you had no ideas that particular day, how you felt about that, what you might do to get some ideas, etc. If you feel like it, write about things that seem unrelated to the project - for example, what you did that day, positive or negative things that happened to you, thoughts, reflections.... anything! Because an important aspect of eQuest is how your topic is important to you personally, these things may turn out to be relevant to your project!

Titles:

Listed below are some examples of titles for entries that might appear in your journal. These headings are just examples. The journal is for you benefit, so choose whatever descriptive or creative titles you like.

What I Want to Accomplish Tomorrow
I Did It!
My first chat room conversation
An important email with Dr. Suler
Reactions to Jone's (1976) article
Something I Have to Ask Dr. Suler
I Hate This Project!
A great website
An Idea for the Final Paper
An Insight into email relationships
Dr. Suler is a Pain in the Ass
Why I Forgot to Write in the Journal Yesterday
Started the Final Paper
Feeling Overwhelmed!
Talked to My Mom about This Project

Bring your journal to our in-person meetings

The journal is primarily for YOU, but I'd like to browse through it a bit during our meeting and talk with you about it. I'll mostly just look over the table of contents. If there are any entries that you prefer I don't see, let me know. I want to respect your privacy.

Using a Blog:

If you're up for a challenge, consider using a blog. Blogs are online journals in which you write about yourself and your ideas, and get feedback from visitors who read your weblog. The platform also lets you read other people's weblogs and give them feedback. People might give you interesting and helpful feedback on your project!

But if you prefer to keep your journal private, don't use a blog. Many people who have a blog sometimes thinks of it as a personal diary, as a kind of "thinking out loud." They forget that anyone online could read what they wrote. When you create a blog for your project, you are letting the world know about your project.

When writing in a blog, or when writing anything in cyberspace, it's important to think about "audience." Always ask yourself these questions:

- Who am I writing this for?
- What do I want to say to the reader and how do I want to say it?
- Who would I *like* to say these things to?

Besides helping you write appropriately to the right audience, these questions can also lead to valuable personal insights about why you are writing what you write.



How to Write Your Paper

Keep in mind that there are three goals in your paper: (1) to write academically about the research related to your issue, (2) to write about your personal experiences and insights while undertaking this eQuest project, and, (3) to provide feedback about the eQuest method.



The paper must be double-spaced with 1 inch margins, at least 20 pages in length, not including the reference page and any appendices you might include. Your paper will be divided into three major sections (Introduction, The eQuest Method, Conclusions). Center the title for these major sections and put them in bold print. These major sections will include subheadings as indicated below. Subheadings should be left-justified and underlined.

Introduction

In this section, which should be no less than 10 pages, review the literature related to the issue you are studying (online and hardcopy articles or books). Start off with an introductory paragraph. Then divide this introduction section into subsections based on the bullet-point list of research questions that you had in your proposal. It's OK if you feel you need to add other subsections based on other issues that came up in your project.

Using APA format, cite the references that you found. You can include articles from my online book but no more than five. In the body of the paper, APA citations look like this:

The eQuest Method

In the very first paragraph of this section, you will describe how the purpose of your project is to use the eQuest methodology to study the issue. Briefly summarize what eQuest is. Go back and read the "What is eQuest" page to refresh your memory. In this paragraph, be sure to mention that part of the eQuest method involved studying the issue from a personal perspective, and how therefore you used the "participant-observation" strategy. Describe how the issue relates to you personally.

Divide this eQuest Method section into subsections that correspond to the various sections of the eQuest program. Be specific about exactly what you did for each of these components. Before writing each subsection, reread the page for it in this eQuest site in order to refresh your memory. Answer the questions listed on that page. Whenever possible, talk about how that component gave you insights into the topic you are exploring - both academic insights and insights into yourself. Describe how that component was or wasn't helpful. If you think there is a way to improve that component, talk about that. Divide this section into these subsections using these headings:

- Assessment and Goal Setting
- Learning about Online Behavior
- Locating and Evaluating Information
- Participating in Online Groups
- Establishing One-on-One Relationships
- Online Tests and Interactive Programs
- Using Different Online Modalities
- Creating a Web Page
- Free-Form Browsing
- Integrating Online and Offline Living

In this Method section of the paper you might also use quotes from people that you met online. Short quotes (a sentence or two) can be inserted within paragraphs using quotation marks. Longer quotes should be placed in the paper as separate and indented "block quotes." Always protect people's anonymity when using quotes. Create a pseudonym for the person and do not provide any information that could reveal the person's identity.

Conclusions

In this final section describe your conclusions about the project. Summarize the most important points. Summarize what you learned from the people and groups in cyberspace about your topic compared to what you read in the literature about it. Did what they say confirm, contradict, modify what the literature says? Talk about what you personally learned during eQuest and how that compares to what others said and what the literature said. Summarize the advantages and disadvantages of the eQuest program, and describe how it might be improved as a personal growth experience. This section should be about three pages.

References

Use APA format to cite at least 20 references. Don't cite any more than five of my articles. Have at least five references that are books or articles from hardcopy professional journals (not popular magazine articles), and at least five good online articles or resources other than mine. If you cite references from the web, include a brief paragraph explaining your rating of the validity of that reference (see the criteria in the Locating and Evaluating Information section).

Appendix

Here you may include any extra materials that were related to your project. For example, if you did a formal structured interview, you would include the questions for the interview here. I'll let you know what other materials you should include in the appendix.

eQuest Check List

To help you keep track of what you are completing in your project, print out this checklist and keep it where you can see and use it easily. Check off items as you complete them. Bring this checklist to our in-person meetings. Read the sections of eQuest for the detailed guidelines about these activities.

The Journal

- created the journal according to the guidelines
- wrote every day
- brought journal to in-person meetings

Progress Reports

- completed every week
- followed guidelines for sections
- scheduled three in-person meetings
- made recommendations for eQuest

Assessment and goals:

- writings in response to the questions about your goals
- writings in response to the questions about assessment

Learning about Life online

Read the following articles in The Psychology of Cyberspace:

- Cyberspace as a psychological space
- The basic psychological features of cyberspace
- The online disinhibition effect
- The black hole of cyberspace
- Identity management in cyberspace
- E-mail communication and relationships
- Transference among people online
- Subtlety in multimedia chat
- Ethics in cyberspace research
- TextTalk: Communicating with typed text chat
- Steps in studying an online group: The Geezer Brigade
- Bringing Online and Offline Living Together: The Integration Principle
- The Final Showdown Between In-Person and Cyberspace Relationships
- Writings in response to "Ideas to Think and Write About"

Locating and Evaluating Information

- found 20 online and hardcopy articles related to the topic
 - at least 5 online articles or resources other than Suler's
 - at least 5 hardcopy articles or books
 - no more than 5 of Suler's online articles cited
- used rating system for evaluating online articles and resources and included ratings in final paper
- writings in response to "Ideas to Think and Write About"
- Exercise: Searching for Sights and Sounds
- Exercise: Contributing to Wikipedia

Participating in Online Groups

- joined at least 2 online groups
- created an archive for group messages
- Exercise: Reviewing the Archive
- Writings in response to "Ideas to Think and Write About"

One-on-One Relationships

- established one-on-one contact with people
- created an archive for storing messages from an ongoing relationship
- writings in response to "Ideas to Think and Write About"

- ___ writings about your online/in-person communications with Suler
- ___ Exercise "Reviewing the relationship"
- ___ Exercise "Imagining the person"
- ___ Exercise "Hearing his/her voice"
- ___ Exercise "Hearing your voice"

Online Tests and Interactive Programs

- ___ experimented with 5 or 6 different tests and interactive programs
- ___ writings in response to "Ideas to Think and Write About"
- ___ Exercise: Artificial Intelligence with ALICE

Using Different Online Modalities

- ___ creative keyboarding exercise
- ___ writings in response to "Ideas to Think and Write About"
- ___ used at least 5 different modalities

Creating a Web Page

- ___ browsed through readings about personal web pages
- ___ browsed through pages of other eQuest students
- ___ created a web page with text and graphics
- ___ Exercise: Getting Feedback on Your Web Page
- ___ writings in response to "Ideas to Think and Write About"

Free-Form Browsing

- ___ Exercise "Wander on Your Own" (tried this twice)
- ___ Exercise "Random Link Generators"
- ___ Exercise "Vision Quest"
- ___ Writings in response to "Ideas to Think and Write About"

Putting It All Together: Integration

Exercises in integrating online activities

- ___ discussed online resources with people you know online
- ___ discussed your topic with someone you know online
- ___ discussed your online lifestyle and your topic in your web page
- ___ got feedback about your web page from people you know online
- ___ writings about using different communication tools (modalities)

Exercises in Integrating Online and Offline Living

- ___ told online companions about your offline life
- ___ told offline companions about your online life
- ___ tried to meet online companions in-person
- ___ communicated with offline companions online
- ___ brought online behavior offline
- ___ brought offline behavior online
- ___ Felt Sense Exercise
- ___ The Expressive Email Exercise
- ___ Dream Exercise

How to Write Your Paper

- ___ double-spaced, 1 inch margins
- ___ at least 20 pages
- ___ included Introduction, eQuest Method, and Conclusion sections
- ___ found 20 online and hardcopy articles related to the topic
 - ___ at least 5 online articles or resources other than Suler's
 - ___ at least 5 hardcopy articles or books
 - ___ no more than 5 of Suler's online articles cited
- ___ used rating system for evaluating online articles and resources and included ratings
- ___ sent first draft to Suler before the end of last week of classes
- ___ sent final draft to Suler during final exam week



Your Privacy in Cyberspace

Some people get overly anxious about confidentiality and security in cyberspace, but it is wise to be a bit cautious. Always think twice about whether you want to provide information about yourself, like your address and phone number. Keep in mind that anything you say or do online might be recorded somewhere and people might have access to it. For example, some search engines can find messages that are posted to discussion boards. Many things that you say and do are happening in a public or semi-public environment, even though it may "feel" private.

Trust Your Intuition: If you're ever having doubts about something that you're going to say or do online, you might ask yourself this question: "What would happen if this became publicly known?" Trust your gut feelings. If you feel uncomfortable about saying or doing something online, think twice about whether you say or do it.

Email Security: Web email services which require you to go to their website to do email do not store your messages on your computer. But some email programs do download all your mail and store them on your computer, which means other people who have access to your computer could read your mail. Also, it is possible for someone to intercept email as it travels to and from you, although it's unlikely that this will happen to you. There are programs, some of them free, that will encrypt email so that only people who have a "key" that you gave them will be able to read your message. If you'd like to use one of these programs, let me know.

Shared Computers: On the computer you're using, you might want to take precautions to make sure that your email and records are not easily accessed by others. Some email programs can be set so that they are password protected. Windows and Mac operation systems have features that let you encrypt files. They also allow you to set up your own password-protected area or "account" on the computer where you can login to do your work and restrict what programs and files other people using the computer can access. Search the Help Center of your computer for information about these features.

Deleting Files: If you're working on a public computer, be very careful about deleting any messages or files that you don't want other users to access. Remember that in many operating systems just dropping something into the trash or recycling bin does not necessarily mean it is deleted. You have to empty or delete files from the trash or recycling bin to get rid of them. With special programs, people might even be able to retrieve files that have deleted from the trash or recycling bin. Some computers have a feature that enables you to completely delete the file so that it can never be recovered.

Browser Security: Use the features of your web browser that can maximize your privacy. Some browsers are better than others.

When working on a computer used by others, one option is to copy important files to an external device, delete them from the computer, and then store the device in a safe place.

If you ever have any questions about privacy and security, feel free to ask me! Browse through the Privacy Rights Clearinghouse to see what other issues are important - such as "spyware" that might be secretly planted on your computer and tracks where you go in cyberspace.



Ethics in Cyberspace

The Participant-observation Method

In addition to thinking of eQuest as a personal growth experience, also think of it as a research methodology that will guide you in the academic study of your topic. Similar to conducting a traditional experiment (as you learned about in other research methods courses), eQuest is a specific structure for you to conduct research on your topic. But unlike an experiment, YOU will be a subject in that research. You will be observing people and groups online, interacting with them, perhaps conducting interviews, but you also will be exploring your own personal reactions as you participate in these online experiences. We call this participant-observation research. Your primary goal in gathering information and speaking with people online is to better understand your topic, life in cyberspace, and yourself.

Online Groups

Be honest about who you are and why you're joining a group. You are in the group to learn about your topic. You might mention this when you introduce yourself to the group. You also are trying to understand what online groups are like, although you are not necessarily "studying" the group. Some online groups really dislike the idea of someone studying them. If you mention a group or person when you write your progress notes and final paper, never mention real names or any information that could identify them. In your progress notes and final paper, if you use quotes longer than a few sentences from a person's message, you should ask their permission first. Many people consider their email and discussion board posts to be their property, and do not like it to be copied or distributed without their permission.

If we decide that you might do a more formal interview with a person, we must remember the ethical principles of informed consent and the protection of confidentiality. Read the APA guidelines about this topic and let me know you have any questions about this aspect of your project.

Online Relationships

As with online groups, be honest in your online relationships. Let people know about your independent study project. If you do a formal interview with the person, you must first get informed consent. Be sure to contact me first about this. Otherwise, your goal is NOT to "study" the other person, but rather to learn something about yourself and your topic from that person. When you mention a person in your journal, progress notes and final paper, never mention real names or any information that could identify them. Create a pseudonym for each person, perhaps one that is meaningful to you in some way, that captures something that you think is important about that person. In your progress notes and final paper, if you use quotes longer than a few sentences from a person's message, you should ask their permission first.

Reading: One of Us: Ethics in Cyberspace Research

True Center Publishing