

VCHS Online Program: An Overview

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PROGRAM BACKGROUND

Through [Virtual Valley](#), Valley Christian High School has been offering students an online learning experience since 2006. Virtual Valley is not just another online course program. In a world full of web-based "glorified correspondence courses," Valley Christian offers a truly unique opportunity. All of our online courses have the same UC approval and recognition as our traditional face-to-face classes.

In addition, the Virtual Valley courses combine Biblical Christian values with practical, relevant, and challenging learning methodology.

2008-2009 COURSE OFFERINGS

[Click here for the 2008-2009 Online Course Catalog](#)

Nine online classes will be available to students during the upcoming school year:

- Algebra I (Year Long)
- Geometry (Year Long)
- Algebra II (Year Long)
- Trig/Pre Calculus (Year Long)
- Photographic Design I (Year Long)
- Photographic Design II (Year Long)
- Typing/MS Applications (Semester)
- Shakespeare (Semester)
- Spiritual Disciplines (Semester)

GENERAL BENEFITS TO VCHS ONLINE LEARNING

- Online courses provide students with a superior way to develop **independent study habits**.
- Online courses are becoming increasingly **common in college environments**, and to prepare for success in these types of courses, it is a good idea to take one while still in high school.
- Course material is **accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week**. Students have the ability to review lectures, discussions, explanations and comments.
- Using the internet to attend class, research information and communicate with other students **teaches skills in using technologies** that will be critical to workers in the 21st century business community that works with colleagues globally and across time zones.
- Participating online can be **less intimidating** than "in the classroom." Students have the opportunity to think longer about what they want to say and add their comments when ready.
- Flexibility on when work must be done allows students to **focus on class material** when they are prepared to concentrate.
- All online instructors are VCHS teachers that **ingrate their Christian faith** into the curriculum.
- Online courses **increase flexibility** in course selection for students.

CLASS FORMAT

Each Virtual Valley course combines independent learning with pre-recorded lectures by VCHS instructors that students will watch at their own pace. Students then will use textbooks coupled with additional assignments to prepare for projects, quizzes, and tests. Students will also be enrolled in a “Touchpoint” class during the school day with other online learners where proctored tests can occur and students can request follow up assistance with their online course.

Grades will be posted on PowerGrade with the traditional classes. Online instructors will contact parents if a student falls significantly behind or is performing very poorly. Most communication with the teacher will be conducted through email with some phone calls – see the course catalog for each individual teacher’s communication plan.

MORE ABOUT THE “TOUCHPOINT” CLASSES

Each student that enrolls in an online course will simultaneously be enrolled in a “TouchPoint” class that will occur during the school day. This class will allow students to either work on their online course or use this time as a study hall. The important element of the “TouchPoint” class is the proctored tests that will occur for every online course. The purpose of these proctored tests is to protect the integrity of the learning that occurs in our online classes. The other benefit to students is the opportunity to speak with a teacher or other students enrolled in online courses, providing the much needed social support for each high school learner. The “TouchPoint” class is not optional when enrolling in online classes, but students can appeal through their school counselor if a unique situation exists.

ONLINE COURSE COSTS

There is no additional cost to enroll in an online course if it is one of the student’s seven courses.

An additional charge of \$850 will be added if the online course is in addition to the normal seven-period course load. This is half the charge (\$1700) for taking a traditional face-to-face 8th class in the schedule.

ABOUT OUR ONLINE INSTRUCTORS

Almost all of our VCHS online instructors hold Master degrees in Education Technology and are highly qualified in both their subject matter and in the technical elements related to creating and teaching an online course. Students also benefit from working with the supportive, encouraging faculty at VCHS. Finally, each teacher will bring their dedicated Christian faith to the online classroom and during interaction with students.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

PC Users Technical Requirements

1. Windows /2000/XP/Vista
2. Pentium IV or faster
3. 512 minimum RAM
4. 1GB hard disk space (to load Elluminate program)
5. Sound card with speakers or a headset
6. DSL
7. Acceptable web browsers:
 - a. Internet Explorer 6.0
 - i. Available free at: www.microsoft.com/windows/ie/default.mspx
 - b. Netscape 7.0 or higher
 - i. Available free at: <http://browser.netscape.com/nsb/download/default.jsp>
 - c. Firefox 2 or higher
 - i. Available free at: <http://www.mozilla.org/products/firefox/>
8. Admin rights to download and install Java Client

MAC Users Technical Requirements:

1. MAC OS 10.4 or later
2. 1 GB or higher
3. 1GB minimum RAM
4. 1GB hard disk space (to load Elluminate program)
5. Sound card with speakers or a headset
6. DSL
7. Acceptable web browsers:
 - a. Safari 3
 - b. Mozilla Firefox 2.0 or higher
8. Admin rights to download and install Java Client

REGISTRATION STEPS

Students register for online classes in the exact same format as the traditional classes by including the online class in your [Class Choice](#) course selection. If you are deciding to enroll in an online class after Class Choice has closed to students, please contact your school counselor.

ONLINE CLASS CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions about the online class format, teachers, or class content, please contact your assigned high school guidance counselor. They will also be able to advise you on whether an online course is a good fit for you or if a traditional classroom would be better. Finally, counselors can provide more information on how an online class will work with the rest of the student's schedule.

ORDERING BOOKS

Books for online classes are ordered the same as for traditional classes. Please visit www.classbooks.com

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **What are the policies on withdrawing from the course?**

The policies for withdrawing from an online course are the same as for withdrawing from a traditional class. Students may drop the course and add another class within the first three weeks of the semester. Since the pacing is very different in the online classes, student may not be able to switch to a traditional class setting after the first three weeks. Students may drop a class without a fail/withdraw on their transcripts until the 11th week of the semester.

Refunds also follow the same policies as any extra traditional class. Please contact the business office for additional details.

- **Are the online classes UC approved?**

All of our online courses have the same UC approval and recognition as our traditional face-to-face classes. Please see our VCHS course catalog for our UC A-G approved list.

- **Why do we require a “Touchpoint” class period for an online course?**

Our goal is to provide students with a support system to help them succeed in online classes. The typical successful completion rate (defined as finishing the class with a grade of C or better) for online courses nationally is less than 60%. Traditional face-to-face courses have successful completion rates of greater than 90%. Many studies, as well as our own experiences with our online summer school program, show that this gap can be overcome with strong accountability measures in place. We can best provide this through a proctored class period.

- **If I have to attend class anyway, why shouldn't I just take a traditional face-to-face class?**

The goal is for students to develop the independent study skills to not need constant face-to-face accountability. After completing one or two courses in this format, students should be equipped to take online courses without attending the “Touchpoint” proctored class period. Once a student and parents agree that the student is ready, we can make arrangements for students to not attend during this period in future courses.

- **Is there a way to not take the “Touchpoint” class period?**

This is not recommended, especially for students who have not taken courses in this format previously. However, if after consultation with a counselor, parents agree to take on the full responsibility for monitoring their student's progress in the class, students can be given the period free. This is far better to try after a student has successfully completed one or two online courses.

- **Can I work ahead in the class and finish early?**

Yes. This is one of the great benefits of taking a class online. Students just need to coordinate closely with the teacher to make sure that all assignments are done in the proper order. However, students should be aware of two issues. The first is that they need to be careful about creating too large a time gap between sequential courses. For example, completing a math class in February potentially creates a 6 month gap before taking another math class. The second is that compressing the timeline for a course can weaken the overall level of mastery, so students need to focus on developing understanding, not just acquiring knowledge for a test.

- **If I finish early, can I take another online class when I am done?**

Yes. Additional charges may apply.

- **Can I take as long as I want to finish the course?**

While online courses offer much greater flexibility for completing work, there are essential deadlines that must be met throughout the courses.

- **How many online courses may I take per semester?**

Students may take one online course per semester. If you would like to enroll in more than one, please contact your counselor.