Online CAOT Students

NOTE: The Spring, 2015 semester begins on February 9, 2015, but your doing as much preparatory work as possible before the start date will help make everything easier for you.

Dr. Steven Mark Sachs
Professor Emeritus of Computer Applications Office Technology, Counseling, and Psychology

Welcome to our Computer Applications Office Technology Online Class for the Spring, 2015 Semester!

Hi. I am Dr. Steve Sachs (“Professor Steve”), and I will be your online instructor. I am happy you have chosen to enroll in this course, and I am looking forward to working with you this semester!

Excel is a great program for figuring things out and for displaying information. One of Excel’s main strengths is called “what-if analysis.” For example, Excel could be tweaked to answer this kind of inquiry: What if our mark-up for the pictures we sell were to change from 10% to 12.5%? What effect would that have on our monthly sales of both pictures and wine bottles?

In CAOT 85, we will learn Microsoft Excel 2013. By the end of the semester, I intend to have empowered you to use Excel at a significantly higher level than 99% of people who use it on the job, and to list Excel 2013 confidently on your resume and other skills lists.
Excel is also wonderful and powerful in displaying information in graphs (which Microsoft calls “charts”). For example, we could create a chart showing the changes in monthly college enrollment extremely easily within Excel. It would take a knowledgeable user (like you will become in our class) maybe 15 seconds to make this kind of chart, after the data were already figured out. Then you could go on to customize the chart as much as you wanted with very easy, visual tools.

Although you will be learning Excel 2013, you may be aware that lots of businesses (and other people) still use Excel 2010. Relax about this. These two versions are almost identical to Excel 2010. You won’t need to worry about learning the 2013 version and then getting a job with the 2010 version.

Still, you’ll need to use the 2013 version for our class. Fortunately, it’s available free (as a component to Microsoft Office 365) to legitimate college students (that’s you!), and there’s clear information on our class main website, SachsAcademics.com, tell you how to get it.

I want you to be aware that students taking online courses are expected to already have considerable general computer literacy (not necessarily with Excel, of course). This is true despite there being no formal prerequisite computer class to take this one.

Following is a table of some computer skills you should already have. If a lot of these mystify you, then you are probably not ready to take any online computer class yet. In this case, have a friend or a basic computer class teach you all of these things before the semester begins. There is also considerable help available in the textbook’s first chapters. They’re not about Excel, but rather on Microsoft Windows software and such. Still, you really need to be proficient before, not after, the semester begins. Here’s what you should already be able to do before the semester begins:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Start and exit Windows</th>
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<tr>
<td>EXTRA IMPORTANT: Copy, move, rename, organize, and delete files, and create and organize folders, using either the “Windows Explorer” (this is different from Internet Explorer) or the “My Computer” functions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Download and upload files</td>
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Send and receive e-mails

Use the Firefox browser (similar to Internet Explorer, Chrome, and Safari).

Search the internet

Use a mouse’s buttons, including the roller button (if your mouse has one)

Use passwords

Start and close software

Maximize, minimize, restore, and resize windows

Move windows to different locations on your screen

Use the Ctrl and Alt keys effectively

Control sound (voice, music, etc.) coming out of your computer

Print

PC vs. Mac or Apple

This course teaches the Microsoft Office 2013 “PC” (“Personal Computer”) version of software. IT IS NOT APPROPRIATE TO TAKE THIS COURSE USING A “MAC” OR “APPLE” OR MINI-LAPTOP COMPUTER. LAVC does not teach the Mac version of MS (Microsoft) Office. While the online exams and online assessments in the SAM system (see below) could be taken on a Mac, the textbook work cannot be done on a Mac properly unless you have super-expensive, battle-tested, bulletproof Mac PC emulation software. I cannot recommend any such emulation software; I recommend that you stay away from Mac PC emulation software. Also, you’ll need a full PC or laptop rather than a tablet or other minimized computer equipment.

Screen Resolution

The Syllabus, which is available at http://www.SachsAcademics.com (or by clicking at the link at the top of this screen if you’re on the internet now) will direct you to ensure that your screen resolution is at absolute minimum 1024×768 for optimal display. You should use this resolution or higher any time you use any Microsoft
Office application/software unless you have a super-resolution screen that can do higher numbers. I will provide you with a Resource that teaches you how to change the resolution for PC-type computers, in case you don’t already know how to do it. This Resource is part of the Etudes system, which is the online system we use for communications. Etudes is described below and elsewhere in our online course materials.

You will need your own individual computer and your own SAM account (SAM is described below). Sometimes students try to “share” textbooks, computers, and other resources. Bad, bad idea. For one thing, exams have time limits, and there is just enough time for one person to complete each exam. So having your own computer for exclusive use is vital. For another thing, if you don’t have your own, individual SAM code (with which you will be creating a unique SAM online account), you will not be able to take any of the exams and you won’t have access to the online training. You get your SAM code in the textbook bundle, or it can be purchased at higher cost directly from the publisher. See Your Sam Account for details.)

Also, the book is a resource to which you will need to refer frequently, and trying to share it would really backfire. Get your own textbook bundle or separate materials (described elsewhere in the course requirements), and work on your own, separate PC-type computer, and ensure that you have high-speed internet access, even if you’re living with someone else who’s taking the same class at the same time.

A Little about the SAM Account
We use the SAM system for online training and for all exams. You will need to create a SAM 2013 account. Read the YOUR SAM ACCOUNT document now to move forward creating that account. In case you’re viewing this Welcome Letter outside of our class website, the SAM Account document is available on the SachsAcademics.com website. Even if you already have an active SAM account, it must be with a SAM 2013 code; earlier code versions won’t work. And, after creating your account, you will still need perform the additional step of enrolling in our specific class within SAM. There are instructions on how to do all of this in the YOUR SAM ACCOUNT document.
General Note
This online course will be taught 100 percent online. All quizzes, tests, and training assignments will be completed online. There are no required on-campus meetings and there will not be any on-campus meeeetings. While you will enjoy greater flexibility in scheduling your study time, you will need to be solidly self-motivated and disciplined in setting your study schedule and completing course requirements. All assignments, tests, and quizzes will be completed according to a specific schedule that is always available within the SachsAcademics.com website. There are notations in the Syllabus (another online document) and in the Etudes Announcements that will help you understand those timelines.

Important: Please note right away that Major exams are scheduled to take place on Sunday evenings! If this does not work with your life schedule, then this is not the class for you. [DO NOT TAKE THIS CLASS IF YOU CANNOT BE AVAILABLE ON SUNDAY EVENINGS TO TAKE MAJOR EXAMS.]

Textbook BUNDLE (not an individual textbook)
You will need to have several things to take this class, and they are best purchased as a specific textbook “bundle.” This bundle is carried at the Los Angeles Valley College bookstore. You can order it from the bookstore online at [http://www.lavcbookstore.com](http://www.lavcbookstore.com). You should get the bundle as soon as you can, but check with the bookstore to see if it’s in stock if you are shopping long before the semester starts.

If you wish to get the textbook (and your required SAM code) directly from the textbook publisher, you can get them together by typing the following link into your internet browser, or just by clicking [HERE](http://www.cengagebrain.com/shop/en/US/storefront/US?cmd=CLHeaderSearch&fieldValue=9781133645795):

Here’s the bundle information:
The textbook bundle includes both the textbook and a packet with the unique SAM 2013 Access code (see below) you will need for the course. Although the software and the SAM access codes could be purchased separately from some places, I understand that they are significantly more expensive if not purchased in the bundle. I do not deal with selling the books or the bundles.

Software

Free Microsoft Office 365 (with Excel 2013)
You must have either Microsoft Office 365 or Microsoft Excel 2013 for this course. For information on this, go to SachsAcademics.com (if you’re not already here), go to the First Steps document by clicking on the First Steps link near the top of the page, and see Step #5. It’s all explained there.

Free Adobe Reader and Adobe Flash Player Software
For many of the files you’ll need to read in this class, your computer will need to have free Adobe Reader software installed. You can download this free, safe software here: http://get.adobe.com/reader/. You will also need Adobe Flash Player from the same company. When you go to the website, read the screen carefully. Your browser may already have Flash Player. You should check this from within Firefox. You can get Adobe Flash Player here: http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer.
I recommend taking care of these downloads right now. Then come back and continue reading this Welcome Letter.

SAM (SAM2013)
Although I have already written about this system above, here’s more important stuff: For this class, you will need to create an account in the SAM system. This
system will be used for all exams and for the online training component of class as well.

To create the SAM account, one thing you will need is a special, one-time-use code that is automatically included in your textbook bundle that you can get from the LAVC bookstore or elsewhere. Therefore, you will not be able to create your SAM account until you have purchased and received your own textbook bundle. You could purchase the account separately, but it is reportedly much more expensive to do it that way.

To create your SAM account, you will need a SAM code from the textbook bundle PLUS you must have the Institution Key. **Our SAM Institution Key is: T2054479.** For much more SAM information, see the Your SAM Account page of this website. Read and Digest the First Steps, Readiness Checklist, and Syllabus Documents. These are other Parts of the SachsAcademics.com Website, and you find them by looking at the links near the top of the page. If you’re reading this online, you’re probably already on the website. But if you’re looking at this on paper, you’ll find the stuff at the following URL: [http://www.SachsAcademics.com](http://www.SachsAcademics.com).

**Dropbox**

You will need to create a Dropbox account and a Shared Dropbox Folder. Click on the Dropbox Information link at the top of this page for more information. There’s more Dropbox information in the First Steps document as well.

**Read First Steps right away.** This will help you get ready and will help explain the Syllabus. Every word is critical in the Welcome Letter (you’re reading that now), the First Steps document, and the Syllabus. You should obtain and read these in fine detail as soon as you can, if possible long before the semester begins. You will be referring back to the Syllabus many times over the semester.

**Virtual Valley Resources**

There is a great Virtual Valley website for all online students (if you’re taking a class online from LAVC, you are a part of “Virtual Valley”), and you should check it out thoroughly. Here’s the URL: [http://www.lavc.edu/virtualvalley/index.html](http://www.lavc.edu/virtualvalley/index.html). An especially important part of that site can be reached by clicking on the STUDENT
RESOURCES drop-down near the top of the page; then click on Things You Need to Know. Please take all the stuff there very seriously; it’s there to make your life easier!
I would also like to recommend strongly that you take the Readiness Assessments on the Virtual Valley website (http://www.lavc.edu/virtualvalley/studentGettingStarted.html). Look in the lower right corner for the Technical Skills Quiz, the Student Skills Quiz, and the Online Learning Success: Self-Paced Tutorial. At the end of these, you will either feel fully prepared for taking an online class, or you will know what to do to get yourself fully prepared. Either outcome is so worth it!

SUPREMELY CRITICAL ITEMS FOLLOW!

Etudes Login
The main course communications website will be available shortly through a system called ETUDES. You should log on at your first opportunity using the username and password described below. You will be able to get into this system once the college populates Etudes with student information; sometimes they don’t do that until a week or two before the semester begins.

Etudes will have Announcements from me as well as a way to communicate with me (called Private Messages). You and I will not be using “regular” e-mail during the semester; we’ll use Etudes instead.

Make sure you have a working e-mail address, and ensure that the LAVC Admissions Office knows your e-mail address. A link to the Etudes website and information regarding your LAVC username and password can be found at the following URL: http://www.lavc.edu/virtualvalley/studentLoggingInOnline.html. After you know how to log in to Etudes online, you can get to the Etudes directly site by going here: http://www.myetudes.org.

Note 1: There is an Etudes iPhone/iPad app called Etudes InTouch. Find it in the iTunes store if you have one of these devices. It is VERY USEFUL to be able to check the Etudes Announcements that are posted very frequently. Many of these are critical for your progress in the class. Maybe by this time they have it for Android, too.
Note 2: Although the Logging In Online page says that ETUDES is where “... you will perform all of your class work,” that is not accurate. Much more class work will be done in SAM, as you will learn once you read very carefully through our entire class Syllabus. Once you are “into” your account on the Etudes system, have a look immediately on the left side, and click on and read the Announcements section. Then go to the Etudes Resources section, and download and/or print and/or read and digest everything there. Over the course of the semester, don’t skip anything! BUT: There may be a few things there that won’t make sense until later in the semester. For example, I may post a note in Resources that explains something in a later chapter of the textbook. So if something is obviously not yet appropriate, make yourself a note to re-check at the proper time.

Please don’t be put off by the volume of written material there is to download and digest. My approach is to explain as much as possible so there are as few questions – and the lowest amount of confusion – possible. The volume of support and informational material will decline after the first couple of weeks of the semester. Of course, at that time the volume of instructional material will increase. I want you to know that there is a good computer lab available on campus (library building) you may use. If you want to use the on-campus lab(s), you’ll need to have your student ID card with you. Check with the Admissions office about how to get one. You are never required to come on campus for this class, though, and you don’t need to have you student ID card with you just to set foot on the campus. BTW, students need to pay for parking on campus.

Major Exam Timing: You must be available to take Major Exams on certain Sunday Evenings. Read this CAREFULLY, please. All Major Exams are scheduled to take place somewhere within the time window between 7:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. on certain Sunday evenings. You can find and click on the Class SCHEDULE on the menu at the top of the class web page to see all upcoming significant dates, including the Sundays when there will be Major Exams. If you cannot take exams during these date/time combinations, then you should not take this class since you cannot pass without taking the Major Exams. THE TIMING OF THE MAJOR EXAMS IS SET INVARIABLY. If you have an “emergency” at the time of one of these, you will simply need to skip that exam. No make-ups, no re-scheduling.

Required Communications: Extremely Important!
Early in the semester, you will see an Announcement in the Etudes communications software that will require you to send me a pre-written Affirmation. You can see the text of that required Affirmation in the Syllabus. The Affirmation basically says that you will not use any resources, other than your brain and hands, when you take any of the exams. **IF YOU DO NOT SUBMIT YOUR AFFIRMATION WHEN REQUIRED, YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO TAKE ANY EXAMS AND WILL NOT BE PERMITTED TO CONTINUE WITH THE COURSE.** Please watch and respond to all of the Announcements very carefully and appropriately.

From time to time, you will also see an Announcement in the Etudes communications software requiring you to send me an “I am In” message. This is my way of taking roll, since, in an online course, there is no traditional “roll call.” **IF YOU DO NOT SEND ME THE “I AM IN” MESSAGES WHEN REQUIRED, YOU WILL NOT BE PERMITTED TO CONTINUE WITH THE COURSE.** EXPECT TO BE EXCLUDED FROM OR TO FAIL THE COURSE IN THIS CASE. Please watch and respond to all of the Announcements very carefully and appropriately.

**Are You Ready?**

You’re now ready to read the First Steps document, the Readiness Checklist, and the online Syllabus. These are all at SachsAcademics.com. I am looking forward to an enjoyable semester with you and I wish you good luck in the course!

All the best,

Dr. Steven Mark Sachs

“Professor Steve”

*Professor Emeritus of Psychology, Computer Applications Office Technology, and Counseling*