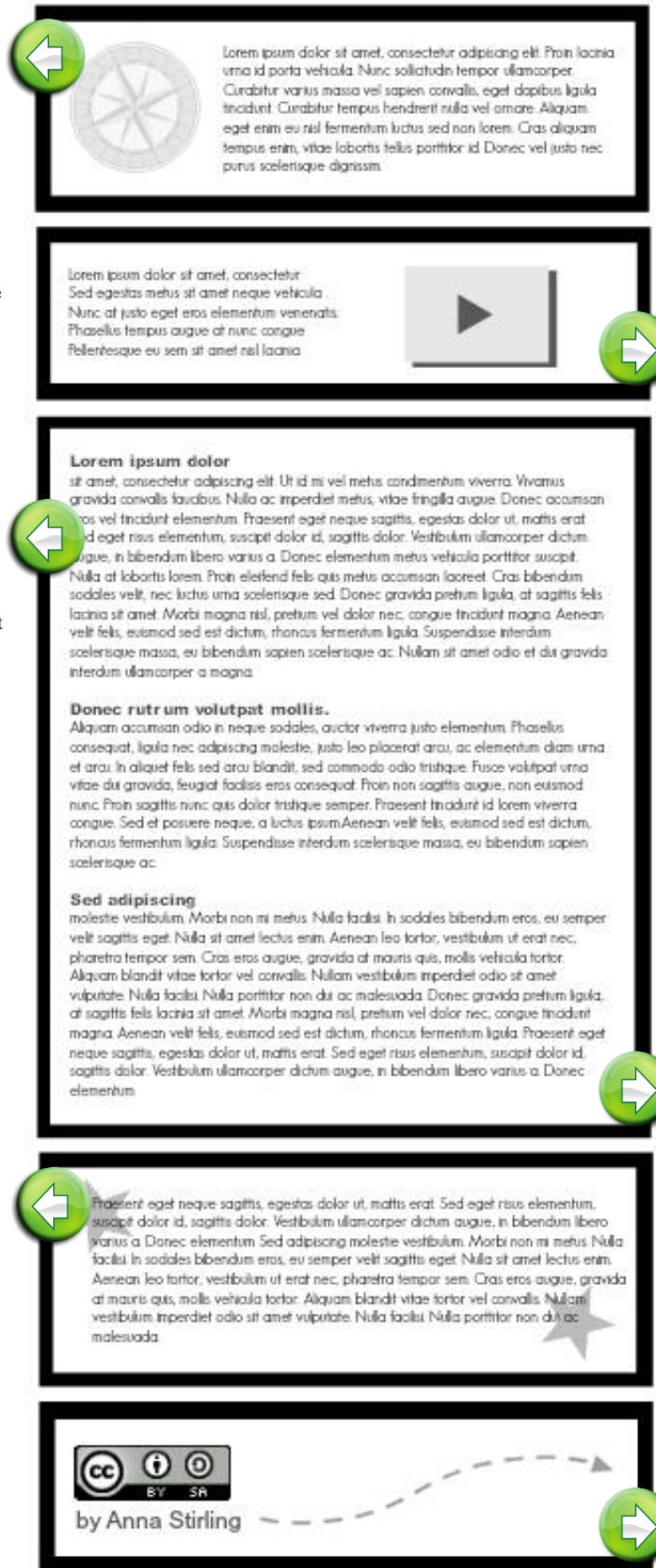# Course Orientation Overview

Begin by introducing the Orientation, explain why it is important to success in your course. In the introduction include any other online learning resources that are important for the students to view or participate in prior to completing your course orientation. For example at MSJC we provide an Online Learner Orientation that is an overview of skills needed to be successful online generally such as time management and basic Blackboard information.  It is also important to include the orientation objects, just as you would for any other unit, along with the due dates.

Now, we jump into the actual course activities.  Each one of the orientation activities correlates with a later course activity.  In my course students are required to create a weekly blog, submit textbook assignment files, and take exams.  Each week there are variations on the instructions for these activities, but the tools used always remain the same.  Look at the activities of you course, which tools do you use?  Do you use discussion boards, or have students submit assignments via SafeAssign? Perhaps you use a course Wiki. Whatever tools you will expect your students to use throughout the course should have a corresponding activity in the orientation.

After the activities, you can add any other important information you students will need.  I include two sections in this area; the first is my Warning section.  In this section I respond to two unrealistic expectations a lot of my students come to my course with.  In the second area, titled What Now?, I provide a brief summary of all the information they should be familiar with after completing the orientation and before beginning the course assignments. The information you include in this section may be completely different based on your course, your teaching style, your students, or any other combination of factors.

In the next section, direct students to important course related information before jumping into the orientation activities.  In my course, I provide links directly to the syllabus & schedule, my faculty information page, and the schools course information page.  Also consider creating an introduction, or syllabus video.  My introduction video explains how to navigate the Course Orientation along with other important information for the beginning of the course.  Videos explaining the syllabus are especially helpful to students too.

The best part about the course orientation is that it is not directly linked to the course objectives, so it provides you with some latitude with regard to what the activities focus on.  I personally believe that this is the opportune time to highlight any resources that are important for students to know about.  Will students need to know how to access the Library online for your course?  Why not create a course Wiki where students develop the steps for accessing the library together?  Will students need to be aware of copyright and plagiarism issues? How about creating a scavenger hunt activity based on the Library's website?  Maybe the library already has a directed learning activity you could use.  Are there a variety of student services that your students would benefit from? Have them create a blog post about what they think is the most important student service on campus, including why along with a summary of services.  Have them comment on one service they didn't know existed or had limited knowledge about before that and one that they use on a regular basis.  The ideas are really endless...

Lastly, and this is optional, but I think it helps out - add a course link directly to the next area where students need to go.  In my course this is to the assignment section.