

## Staying Organized and Managing Time as a Remote Learner

**Online tools are great for online learners, but remember: just because you are in a remote learning environment, does not mean you only need to use online tools to keep you organized and manage your time. Click on the topics below to learn more.**

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***Your Calendar:***

Here are some systems to keep a calendar:

- Good, old fashion paper planner
- Google Calendar
- Outlook Calendar (has a “to do” list option and can give you a visual look of your calendar when you are online “zooming” and doing your online classwork)
- MyHomework app

What all these have in common is a way for you to enter recurring responsibilities like live online classes, meetings, office hours/Question & Answer sessions, work hours, etc. Enter into your calendar the information you will need to access your classes (zoom access codes, for example).

Be sure to put into your calendar your professors’ new office hours or expectations for email communication.

You can also use them to keep track of due dates, assessment dates, and deadlines.

Last, you can keep a daily “to-do” list (on your calendar) to keep your days organized, productive and less stressful. Remember, you get satisfaction when you cross things off!

Putting tasks on your calendar and estimating time to do them will help you set realistic expectations for your work time. This, too, will reduce stress. Remember to add time for accessing or learning new technologies—like zoom.

Use your calendar to create a good weekly plan, not just a daily plan.

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***Time Management:***

**Set aside time on a weekend day to look at your week ahead.**

Enter all live classes, meetings, and office hours/Question & Answer Sessions.

Enter all assignments due that week, as well as assessments. This includes reading assignments, watching class videos, watching recorded lectures, quizzes, exams, and presentations.

Keep a regular daily schedule. Wake up at the same time each day; put in a full study day, even if you do not have any scheduled classes. Know that you will need to review class materials more in this on-line environment to prepare for new assessments.

Online assessments (open book tests, quizzes) that are untimed require a deeper understanding of the material and better organized materials. So be sure to organize, review, summarize, review...until you know where material is when you need to use it.

**Now that you have everything listed for the upcoming week, plan when you are going to complete each task.**

*IMPORTANT:* We always underestimate the time it takes to do something. Follow these guidelines:

- Write down when you will read an assignment. Give yourself one additional day than you think it will take. It's okay to finish early.
- If the reading assignment is long, write down exactly what you want to accomplish each day (i.e. Monday: read chapters 7-8, Tuesday: read chapters 9-10) Again, give yourself one extra day to complete the reading.
- When planning to study for an exam or quiz, give yourself one additional day than you normally would. Break down studying into tasks (i.e. Monday: redo quiz questions, Tuesday: write possible quiz/exam questions from lecture notes, Wednesday: write possible quiz/tests questions from book notes, Thursday: answer my own quiz questions)
- Every night, look at what you have to do the next day and prioritize the list.
- Cross off each completed task – it feels good to see a week of crossed off tasks.

### ***Time Management—Doing:***

Once your week is planned, the next step is getting it all done or “Doing.”

Time-Block: Create blocks of time each day that you will devote to your course work.

- Make those blocks of time strictly devoted to school. Keep distractions away (phones, family members, television, etc.)

Keep as consistent a schedule as possible. *Get into a college routine* and tell your household your schedule so they know when not to interrupt you and understand why they can't.

Reward yourself with regular breaks: Try to have a short break after every online meeting, and after 30-45 minutes of reading, writing, or studying. Yes, go on social media! Time your breaks to keep them short. It's easy to lose track of time while on a break: Set a timer. Tell your support circle what you are accomplishing. Help your friends, classmates, and siblings stay focused too.

BE ACTIVE in your studying. The online environment invites more passive learning. Do not just let your eyes scroll through texts.

When reading or writing online, experiment with online functions to break up the visual monotony and engage with ideas so that you will remember them more easily:

- Highlight key sentences or phrases in different colors.
- Use italics, boldface, or underlining to digitally annotate key sections.
- Put key ideas in [brackets] or (parentheses).
- Use the “A-arrow-little a” button to change a word or phrase into ALL CAPS (or reverse).
- Use “Track Changes” under “Review” to add reading notes as comments.
- Use the “Find function” (little magnifying glass) to search for key words, synonyms, or repeated names—you can “list matches in sidebar” to quickly find information.
- Open an online text, e-book, or pdf from your professor AND a blank document side-by-side—type your reading notes in the document and use the above color and font ideas to re-work your own reading notes when you are finished.
- “Insert” a “Text box” in your margins or over paragraphs to write summaries as you read or over your own reading notes to connect ideas.

When studying math or problem-sets or reviewing science homework, try these:

- Re-write the problems on a piece of paper and write out your work, step-by-step.
- Any problem you do not understand, cannot complete, or feel you did not get correct, highlight it on the online worksheet so you can easily find the problems you need help on.
- If you are using a program that allows you to “see an example,” *write down* the problem and each step of the example and why each step was performed. Try the next problem on your own, without looking at the example. If you need to look at the example to complete the problem, try another problem until you can do it without notes, help, or examples.
- For memorizing formulas or definitions, use flashcards or the app Quizlet.
- For online texts, use Insert text box to add comments and notes or highlight important concepts.
- If you are unable to insert text or highlight, open a second Word doc, side-by-side to make notes along with the text. Be sure to note the page number of the book that correlates to your notes for easy reference.

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### **Your Study Environment:**

Answer these questions about your best study environment:

- Do you like silence, music, background noise?
- Do you like bright room lights, natural light, dim lights?
- Do you need to be alone, or do you like when others are around but not talking to you?
- What clothes do you usually wear? (Did you really wear your pajamas at school?)
- Do you keep a water bottle or snack next to you?
- What worked for you on campus? (Avoid focusing on what you did—instead think about what you did that *actually worked*.)

Now that you have thought about this, how can you best replicate that environment in your new online environment? Here are some ideas:

- If you like background noise, create a study playlist. Be sure the play list is conducive for studying and not distracting.
- If you like total silence, wear headphones with nothing playing to reduce outside sound.
- If you need to see other people studying in order to focus, consider video conferencing with friends to study together or sharing a work-space with members of your current household for delegated hours (e.g. share dining room table with sibling/roommate/etc. from 1-4pm to work quietly in the same space).
- If you need motivation from friends, share your study goals and check in each hour, twice a day, or daily.
- For fewer distractions, keep your screen very organized (file all documents in clearly labeled folders) and minimize anything you do not need to look at for your immediate task; use a plain color without images for your computer desktop, and silence the computer speakers.
- If you need something visual to keep you energetic and in the zone, use an interesting desktop image that changes or have a livecam, maybe at a zoo, that provides opportunities for you to focus on something else but doesn't need to be watched obsessively.

*Tips:*

- It's best not to study in places you normally relax. If you are choosing to study in your room, do not study in bed. If you are studying in a family room, do not study on the couch, but rather sit at a table.
- Have all of your materials ready and organized before you begin. You want your environment to flow. Having to get up for a pen, paper, notebook, textbook, or other materials will distract from the flow of your work.
- Every time you read a text, a tweet, watch someone's story, go on Instagram "for a second" it takes your brain a minimum of 5-10 minutes to get back on track with what you were doing. Those "quick" distractions will make getting through your work MUCH harder.
- Keep your study area organized and as clutter-free as possible.

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**Organization:**

- Keep a virtual folder for each class. As you are working on papers or homework assignments, save them to the appropriate folder. When assessments/assignments are graded and returned, put them in the folder. Be sure to name the files in ways that match your professors' language (i.e. "Paper 3," "Quiz 3," "Comparing Sartre to Dostoevsky").
- Save as you go or enable 'auto-save.'

- In outlook, create email course folders and place all of your professors' correspondences into the appropriate folder.
- When emailing professors, use subject lines that relate to the email (i.e. "Question on hw #4," "Draft of paper 3").
- Pin and flag Zoom meeting to easily find the invite. You can also create a "Zoom Meetings" folder in your email; rsvp to each invitation so that link is saved in your Outlook calendar or BE SURE to put your meetings in your calendar.
- Keep to-do lists of things that need to be done any time that day (i.e. emailing your professor a question, contacting a partner/group about a project, looking at a syllabus change, looking at Moodle for all classes). This should be done, at minimum, in the morning, and ideally at least once again later in the day.

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### ***Academic Support:***

Managing time and staying organized as an online learner in a new study environment are challenging tasks. Asking for help is important whenever you feel confused. There are many resources for support:

- Your professor
- The QRC for math and science tutoring – contact Julia Berkowitz
- The Writing Center for all writing assignments – contact Kate Oakley
- Classmates

How do you know when to ask for help?

- Are you guessing what the professor is asking for on an assignment?
- Are you guessing what will be on an exam?
- Are you questioning whether you truly understand something?
- Are you worried about your knowledge for a test/quiz?
- Are you unsure about your work on a paper or stuck with your writing?
- Is your friend doing an assignment one way but you think it should be done differently?

These are just a few examples, but in general, always err on the side of asking. Everyone is ready to help you!

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