

ONLINE STUDENT STUDY GUIDE

Adapted by  UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
FARMINGTON
Learning Commons
From the Center for Academic Innovation
at The University of Michigan



Things may feel out of control right now. You may be facing a lot of unknowns and disruptions. Try to be patient with yourself, your classmates, and your instructors during this time. Take care of your wellbeing first. Making a plan and adjusting your studying may help you feel an improved sense of control.

In this guide, we'll talk about:

- Staying organized
- Avoiding multitasking
- Making the most of video lectures
- Setting a schedule
- Trading your strategies for new ones
- Working with a group or team
- Staying connected to other people

While more of your coursework and teamwork have to be online and remote, here are some strategies to keep in mind:

1. Stay Organized

With so many things changing in your courses, you might be reliving that *first-week-of-class* confusion at *finals-week* pace.

Here are some things you might want to keep track of for each class:

- Are in-person parts of the class changing?
- What in-person parts of this course are being scheduled live?
- What if you cannot make a meeting time?
- Where can you find links to access meetings/replays?
- Are assignments changing?
- Are there new due dates?
- Is how you're submitting your assignments changing?
- Are any quizzes or exams being offered virtually? What should you do if you need help?
- Is your course offering virtual office hours? When, and how can you access?
- Is there an online forum for asking questions?

2. Avoid Multitasking

If you're doing more work on your own and your time is less structured, you might be more tempted to multitask.

Many people think they can do multiple things at once. But research shows us that only about two percent of the population can multitask. Even if you feel like you're multi-tasking, you're probably not... really, you're switching between tasks very quickly (some call this "micro-tasking").

The downsides of multitasking and microtasking:

Assignments take longer. Each time you come back to an assignment (from Instagram, for example,) you have to get familiar with it, find your spot, remember what you were going to do next, etc. You're more likely to make mistakes. Distractions and switching between tasks tires out the brain. You'll remember less. When your brain is divided, you're less able to commit what you're learning to long-term memory.

When you need to study something important:

- Focus on one thing at a time.
- Take breaks between tasks.
- Consider the "pomodoro method:" focus for 25- or 50-minute periods and then reward yourself with 5- or 10-minute breaks.

3. Making the Most of Video Lectures

Stick to your instructor's schedule as much as you can.

Staying on a schedule will help you have a feeling of normalcy and prevent you from falling way behind. Find out how to ask questions. Is there a chat feature? Is there an online discussion forum in? Close distracting tabs and apps.

4. Setting a Schedule

As the situation unfolds, you may have fewer social commitments, group meetings, or work hours.

Use Google Calendar or a notebook planner to set a schedule for yourself, provide structure and keep you motivated.

5. Trading Live-Class Strategies For New Remote Learning Ones

Your routines may have to adjust during this time. Look for ways to adapt your usual habits or form new ones.

For example:

- If you usually study in the coffee shop or library, ask yourself what kind of environment helps you study. See if you can recreate that at home. Maybe it's studying in a chair, rather than on your bed or couch, or moving to a new spot when you change tasks. If you feel you need background noise, consider a white noise app.
- If you always study in groups, try a virtual or even phone-based study session with a group of peers.
- If you thrive on tight timelines, but now have a more open schedule, think about how working with others or setting up a schedule (like the one above) can recreate that for you. When that gets hard, see if you can even do fifteen or twenty minutes at a time. There are a lot of apps (like Google Tasks) out there that help you create to do lists; try to use one of those to help you stay on track and prioritize!

6. Work With a Group or Team

Remote collaboration will look a little different, but it is definitely possible.

- Do not procrastinate. That group project may be out-of-sight, out-of-mind if you aren't seeing each other regularly. Resist the urge to put it off, as the work you do (or don't do) affects your group-mates schedules and work-flow. Determine whether your professor has a specific group space (like a blackboard/online Discussion Board), but if not, you can still connect! Make small progress and make a plan for how and when you will stay in touch.
- Meet regularly, especially if you usually touch base during a class or lab. Consider a quick text on a group chat about progress every couple of days. Ideally, have real conversations over video for any week you're working together. The tools available to you as students include Zoom and Hangouts to make video calls, and Google Chat for group chat messaging and sharing links, and work.
- Set a purpose for meetings and use a shared document. Meetings might feel different when using video, even if your team was really good at working informally in the past. Try to set the purpose of your meeting in advance. Take notes in a shared doc so you can all contribute and follow along.
- Keep videos open when you can. As long as you can see whatever you need to collaborate, aim to keep the video visible on your computer screen. It'll help you see the expressions of your teammates and stay connected to each other.
- Check on each other and ask for backup: If someone has been absent from your group meetings or chat, ask them directly if they're still able to participate in the project. If you aren't getting responses within a day or two, let your instructor know. Know it isn't being petty, it's your team's responsibility.

7. Stay Connected to Other People

Connecting with family and friends might be more important than ever.

And staying in touch with instructors, classmates, and group mates is still important for continued classwork.

Here are a few ideas:

- Schedule video calls with friends and family. Talking with loved ones is often really helpful when you're stressed or nervous about something. Taking a break to have a laugh is also important.
- Follow Social Media accounts to connect with other students and the University.
- Attend virtual office hours or study groups so that you can stay up on your coursework.

Please remember, this will pass.

If COVID-19 has disrupted your travel plans, ended a lab experiment you were excited about, or for any reason feels like it came at the worst possible time, remember: this is temporary. You'll find your way when it settles down. You'll get back on track, and things will get back to normal. We don't know when, but it will happen!

Until then, take a deep breath, do your best, get some rest, and

wash your hands!