Online Learning Strategies

Strategies for Online & Remote Learning Success

Prepare for Your Term & Courses

- **Get to know our courses** by thoroughly reading your course syllabi. Learn course expectations and how to contact your professor. Note: there will be variation in how your online classes are structured, no two courses will be the same.

- **Create a term calendar** of your important course and personal dates for the term. By having important dates on one calendar, you’ll be able to see and better prepare for your particularly busy weeks.

- **Become familiar with the course management system**, likely Blackboard or Canvas, and learn about its functionality. Understand how to upload your assignments, where to find course materials, and where the discussion board is located. Learn how to use the system by watching tutorial videos.

Schedule Your Time

- **Treat your studies like a job**. With less structured face-to-face courses, online learning requires more independence, self-discipline, motivation and developed time management skills. Your investment into developing your skills will benefit you throughout life.

- **Plan ahead by creating schedules and sticking to them**. Set aside enough time each week to study without distraction for all of your courses.

- **Use time-blocking to create structure**. Schedule a time for watching lecture recordings, readings, coursework and review. Wake up and eat lunch at the same time each day to develop a predictable routine.

Create a Good Study Space

- **Identify a quiet study space**. Select a spot you don’t use for other activities to be away from distractions. Let roommates know this is your ‘quiet zone’ and share your study schedule.

- **Set up your study space to work for you**. Make your space comfortable and consider ergonomic principles (e.g., height of your desk, monitor and chair and positioning of wrist and forearms). Adjust the lighting if needed and be prepared to listen to music if this is your preference.

- **Manage digital distractions**. Log off of all social media and close or block distracting websites to avoid getting sucked into the black holes of the internet. Put your cell phone on silent and put it in another room or tucked away and out of sight.
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Participate Fully

- **Online courses do not mean isolated learning.** Some of the best learning will come from the different perspectives of your peers. Class participation may not count for much towards your grade, but participation and connection can positively impact your grade.

- **Set aside time to interact with others.** Participate in class and speak up in live lectures. Connect with a like-minded peer in each of your courses and consider organizing a study group. You may develop some valuable life-long friendships.

- **Remember the human.** Kindness and respect matter in online communication and positively impact the quality of conversations. When responding to others, critique the ideas and not the person and be mindful of your tone.

- **Err on the formal side when communicating with your instructor.** Address your instructor with “Professor Black” instead of “Hey”.
  Write in complete sentences, avoid using abbreviations, and provide your full name and your USask NSID when sending email.

Motivate!

- **Motivation-Building Strategy #1: Concentrate on your goals.** Always keep in mind your ultimate goal for taking university courses. Use your goal as a powerful motivator to study and as a measuring stick to determine when you’ve accomplished your goals.

- **Strategy #2: Take regular study breaks.** It’s difficult to maintain concentration and properly learn new material when tired and distracted. Re-energize and re-focus by taking regular breaks. Go for a walk outside and get away from your regular study area.

- **Strategy #3: Accept that you’ll have good and bad days.** The world is an unpredictable and sometimes messy place. Accepting the reality that we all have good and bad days will go a long way in keeping a positive perspective and forward momentum in your studies.

Study Effectively

- **Take notes, all the time.** Have a notebook or a note-taking program accessible to take notes during live lectures, while reading, and watching videos. Stop and start videos to record key information and find answers to your questions. Expect to spend 2 hrs actively watching recordings for every 1 hr video.

- **Space your study and test your knowledge.** Research shows that learning and retention happen best when studying is spread over a period of time. Get started early—Solve practice exams, create your own test questions, or create questions with a study group. Self-testing shows what you don’t understand and is important practice for writing exams.

- **Use your resources and ask for help.** Look for how to access help in your course syllabi. Consult with the USask Student Services page and see what services are available to you.
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Combat Procrastination

• **Anti-Procrastination Strategy #1:** Break larger projects into smaller pieces. Assign mini-deadlines to each step. Work on one step at a time. Celebrate your progress as you complete the steps and you’ll be finished your project before you know it.

• **Strategy #2:** Structure your time into short and focused study or work sessions. Instead of long marathon study sessions, break your study time into short bursts of focused study. Try the Pomodoro Method: study for 25 minutes, followed by a 5-minute break. Repeat for four cycles, then take a rejuvenating longer break.

• **Strategy #3:** Concentrate on the process and not the outcome. Direct your attention on the process for achieving your goals. If you have an outcome goal of obtaining an 80% on a research paper, focus your efforts on the steps you need to do to achieve that goal, e.g., create your thesis statement, research, and submitting a draft of the paper to Online Writing Support for assistance or feedback.

Invest in Your Health

• **Take good care of yourself.** Go for regular walks. Make time to eat well, exercise, and socialize. Get adequate sleep. Schedule time in your calendar to do things you enjoy and celebrate both big and small accomplishments.

• **Be easy and patient with yourself.** We are dealing with imperfect conditions. You, we all, will experience unforeseen challenges and discouragement in this difficult time.

Works Consulted:
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