

Learning Remote

We'll get through this together.

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 even a little sense of control.

In this guide we will talk about:

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

Your study habits may need to change.

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

1. Staying organized

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

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

How are in-person parts of the class changing?

- What are the in-person parts of this course? (lecture, lab, etc)
- Where can you find it or how do you access it? (live-stream, lecture capture, etc)
- Is it at a specific time or can you watch it anytime?

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 on what platform?
- Is there an online forum for asking questions?

Here is an example of how you can keep track:

	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3
Important Dates			Paper Due Friday
Big Changes	No lab Live lecture	Discussion optional Recorded lecture	May do paper instead of a group project
Important Links	Lecture link Office hours link	Discussion link Lecture link	Group paper folder

2. Avoiding multi-tasking

If you're doing more work on your own and your time is less structured, you might be more tempted to multi-task. Many people think they can do multiple things at once. But research shows us that only about 2% of the population can multi-task. 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 multi-tasking and micro-tasking:

- 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 longterm memory (because it doesn't get encoded properly into your brain)

What to do instead

When you need to study something important, consider *The Magic of Monotasking*.

- Focus on one thing at a time.
- Take breaks between tasks.
- Consider the "pomodoro method" to help you focus for 25- or 50-minute periods and then reward your-self 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 a discussion forum? Close distracting tabs and apps. Humans are not as good at multitasking as they think! (See #2 above.)

- Continue to take notes as you would if you were there in person.
- Watch recordings at normal speed. Research shows that playback speed of 1.5x can lower your retention and can result in lower scores on assessments. Faster playback speeds are worse for complex, multi-step material (which most of your lectures probably are). Remember: this is all about 1.5x. There hasn't even been research on 2x playback speed, which is probably even worse.

4. Setting a schedule

As the situation unfolds, you may have fewer social commitments, group meetings, or work hours. Setting a schedule for yourself can help provide structure and keep you motivated. If you don't already keep a weekly or daily calendar, try something like the example below to organize your time. Include time for exercise and self-care.

- [Schedule Template](#)

5. Trading your strategies for new ones

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

Try these:

- If you always study in groups, try a virtual or even phone-based study session with your group. Students can request a Zoom Pro account. Each account will allow up to 300 participants. For accounts the last longer than 40 minute sessions, see [here](#).
- If you thrive on tight timelines, but now have a more open schedule, think about how working with others or setting up a schedule can recreate that for you. When that gets hard, see if you can even do fifteen minutes at a time.

6. Working with a remote classroom

- Try not to procrastinate. That project may be out-of-sight, out-of-mind if you aren't seeing each other regularly. Resist the urge to put it off. Make small progress and stay in touch.
- Set a purpose for meetings and use a shared notes doc. 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.
- Utilize provided tutoring where needed. SASSI tutors are providing assistance remotely during this time period. Log in [here](#) to see your tutoring options.
- Actively participate. Read the course materials, post in discussion boards or ask questions during lectures, and interact with classmates and instructors to simulate an in-person classroom.
- Be patient with your instructors. Assume that everyone is doing the best they can. These changes were unexpected for students, faculty, and staff alike so there may be a learning curve for all involved.

7. Staying connected to other people

Even if we limit how much face-to-face time we spend with others on campus, connecting with family and friends might be more important than ever. And staying in touch with instructors, classmates, academic support services, counselors, 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.
- Attend virtual office hours or study groups so that you can stay up on your coursework.
- Schedule a remote academic coaching or counseling session. Educational specialists, our disability coordinator, and counselors at SASSI are still meeting with students via phone or Zoom. [Schedule a meeting online](#) with the experts to discuss your study strategies or stress levels from the comfort of home.
- The SASSI after-hours counseling phone is 901.690.2273. If you are concerned about yourself or another student, please share that concern [here](#) so that we can reach out.

Please remember, this will pass.

If COVID 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](#).

Additional Resources

- [Academic Continuity](#)
- [UTHSC updates on COVID-19](#)
- [Preventing COVID](#)
- [What to do if you are sick](#)
- [Student Academic Support Services and Inclusion \(SASSI\)](#)
- [University Health Services \(UHS\)](#)
- [Services for students with disabilities](#)
- [Fighting stress and anxiety surrounding COVID-19](#)
- [Additional resources](#)