

Adjusting Your Study Habits for Online Learning

Online learning is a lot different than in-person learning. You face more distractions, use more technology, and have to keep track of your time and due dates on your own. **Making a plan and adjusting your study habits will help stay on track and keep you feeling in control of your work.**

Use this guide to get started on the right foot.

In this guide, we'll talk about:

1. Staying organized
2. Setting a schedule
3. Avoiding multitasking
4. Making the most out of video lectures
5. Trading your routines for new ones during COVID-19
6. Working with a group or team
7. Staying connected during COVID-19

1. Staying organized

Here are some great first questions you want to ask for each class:

What parts of class are “synchronous” or “asynchronous?”

- Are there specific class times I need to log in for lecture or discussion (“synchronous”), and how do I access it? (live-stream, Zoom, etc.)
- Are there due dates for things I have to do, read, or watch on my own (“asynchronous”)?
- How do I submit my assignments (Blackboard, email, etc.)?
- How will I be taking my quizzes or exams?

What should I do if I need help?

- Is my instructor offering virtual office hours?
- When, and on what platform?
- How does my instructor want me to communicate with them if I have questions?

Here's one example of a way you could start to keep track of your online classes:

	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3
Important dates	Take home quiz ea. Friday	HW assigned during lecture	Mid-term paper
Any changes	No lab Zoom lecture	Discussion optional Recorded lecture	May due paper instead of group project
Important links	Lecture link Office hours link	Discussion link Lecture link	Google Drive folder link

2. Setting a schedule

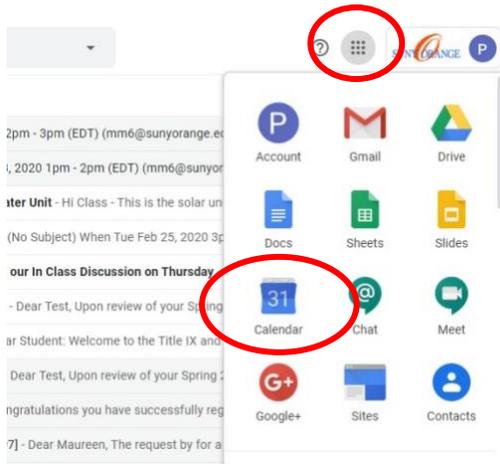
If you don't already, **now is a very important time to start using a calendar.** With online learning, your time will start to become very hard to manage alongside other commitments. Use your calendar to create weekly lists of assignment due dates and tasks you may need to complete those assignments.

How do I use a calendar? You want at least 3 ways to view your time and record your commitments:

Monthly → Weekly → Daily

Online Calendar Options

- Here's a handy [weekly schedule template](#).
- **Did you know you have a Google Calendar that's part of your SUNY Orange email?** Go to your email and click on the app locker to get started.



Not sure where to start with your calendar? [Contact us](#) to set up a session with a tutor.

3. Avoiding multitasking

Online learning means you're working on your own and your time is less structured—which means you might be more tempted to multitask. Many people think they can do multiple things at once but research shows us that only about 2% of the population can multitask. Even if you feel like you're multitasking, what you're really doing is switching between tasks very quickly without making meaningful progress toward bigger goals (e.g. completing a project).

Why doesn't multitasking work?

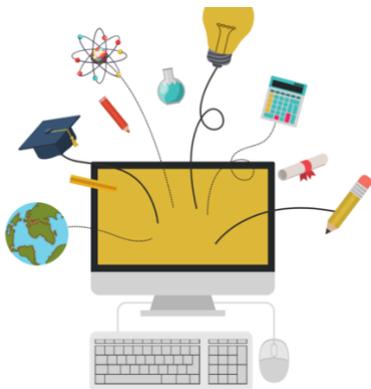
- **Assignments take longer.** Each time you go between an assignment and Instagram (for example), you have to remind yourself where you left off, find your spot, recall what you were going to do next, etc.
- **You're more likely to make mistakes.** Distractions and switching between tasks tires out 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.

What do I do instead?

- Use [this timer](#) to structure your study sessions. Set it for 25-50 minute period, with 5-10 minute breaks.
- Make a plan for your study time (**focused study sessions**). Not sure what that looks like? Follow the [Focused Study Sessions handout on Center for Student Success' Resources](#) page.

4. Making the most out of video lectures

- **Show up to synchronous class like you would in-person class.** Staying on a schedule will help your feeling of normalcy and prevent you from falling behind.
- **Find out how to ask questions *during* class.** Is there a chat feature? Are there designated times during class to ask questions?
- **Close distracting tabs and apps.** Humans are not as good at multitasking as they think!
- **Continue to take notes as you would if you were there in person.**



5. Trading your routines for new ones during COVID-19

COVID-19 means our classes are online, and our routines or strategies are thrown way out of whack. What are your usual habits, and how can you go about forming new ones?

- **I usually study in a coffeeshop or library.** What about these spaces helps you study? Maybe it's using a chair (as opposed to a bed or couch), or the amount of background noise (lots of "white noise" vs. quiet).
- **I always study when my kids are in daycare but now we're all home together.** If your kids are old enough, create family study times where you all work on homework together. Take the time to "teach" little ones what you're learning. This method actually helps with memory and your understanding of material!
- **I usually have a tight timeline but now everything's all over the place.** Set a morning alarm and get up early. Set a timer for your study sessions. Set calendar alerts.

Keeping a routine is vital not just for getting the work done, but for your mental health.

6. Working with a group or team

Online collaboration and study groups definitely *look* different, but can be equally productive!

- **Consider setting up a virtual tutor-led study group.** [Contact us to get started.](#)
- **Meet regularly online, especially if you're used to touching base during class or lab.** Consider a text group with your classmates. Ideally, have real conversations over video and supplement with chat.
- **Set a goal or purpose for meetings and use shared notes or a shared Google Doc.** Meetings might feel different when using video, even if your team was really good at working informally in the past. Try to set up the goal or purpose beforehand ("study for the test on Friday," for example). Use a Shared Doc to keep everyone on the same page.
- **Check on each other and ask for backup.** If someone has been absent from your group, ask them directly if they're doing okay and if they're still able to participate. If you're not getting any responses, always share concerns with your instructor.

7. Stay connected during COVID-19

Even if we have to limit how much face-to-face time we spend with others on campus, connecting with family and friends might be more important than ever. *You are not alone during these difficult times.* And staying in touch with instructors, classmates, friends and family is more important than ever for your academic and personal wellbeing.

- **Schedule video calls with friends and family.** Talking with loved ones is critical when you're managing stress or anxiety.
- [Schedule a tutoring session with us.](#)
- **Attend instructor virtual office hours or classmate study groups** even if it's just to check in, and check the accuracy of your notes!



Know your SUNY Orange resources, follow your routine, and stay connected.

[SUNY Orange Updates on COVID-19](#)

[SUNY Orange Office of Accessibility Services](#)

[SUNY Orange Wellness Center](#)