

Online Learning Tips during COVID-19

With the COVID-19 virus suddenly moving classes online, you will need to shift your approach to learning in your courses. Here are some tips that can help you get through this difficult time.

Be Gracious

None of us planned on this happening. Be patient with your faculty members. They are figuring things out too. We will get through this together. Communicate with compassion.

Bring Time Management to the Forefront

Time management is *the* most important skill you will need while taking an online class. There will be no physical class to attend, so you have to make sure you keep track of assignments, take time to learn the material and study, and not let a day go by without thinking of your class. Be aware that faculty will not be available to you 24/7. As you manage your time, build in time to wait on responses to emails or phone calls.

Check Email and Moodle Regularly

If you have readily available access to internet, you should check email and moodle several times a day. If you need help getting UNO email on your phone, check with the helpdesk at helpdesk@uno.edu or 504-280-4357. If you do not have access to internet at your home, make every effort to check once a day. At this time campus will remain open so internet can be accessed in the UNO library or other areas of campus. Public libraries, many coffee shops and restaurants, and City Park all offer free wifi. If you do not have access where you are staying, it may be helpful to let your faculty members know and keep an open line of communication about your needs.

Wait to Change Your Schedule

Some professors will decide to have asynchronous classes, meaning that they will post materials and you can work on things at your own pace on your own time. Other instructors may choose to host virtual classes in real time. Wait to hear from your instructors before changing your work schedule or taking on other responsibilities.

Rethink Your Approach

As you learn how your instructors will shift their instruction, you may find that you need a new approach to studying. Brainstorm ideas for new ways of looking at information. Talk with your classmates to get new ideas. If you find yourself at a loss for how to study or learn in this new format, the Learning Resource Center staff is happy to work with you to review your course materials and help you figure out a plan of attack for your new course format.

Don't Assume Online Classes are Easy

It's true that you can complete online coursework more at your leisure, but that doesn't make the material easier. If anything, online classes can be harder because you aren't going to a lecture class, you're learning on your own, and it's entirely possible to just forget about the class if you don't actively plan time for it.

Learn Your Resources

Spend some time playing around with the Moodle page for your online class. Click links, open tabs, download documents. This will make it easier when you need to find something on Moodle, because you'll have an understanding of how it's organized. If you have questions, email your instructor. Be patient with their responses as they are also balancing a lot.

Block Your Work Time

Have dedicated study blocks for each class. Working on the same class at the same times each week helps you build a routine that is easier to manage. Do not try to convince yourself to work. Instead, focus on a specific class on specific days and times because it is what you do MWF at 4PM, for example.

Set Up a Good Workspace

Set up good lighting and comfortable seating. Lighting in the room should be at least as bright as the computer screen to avoid eye strain. Try to Eliminate Distractions. Limit social media; don't have it open in another tab. If you're working on an assignment that doesn't need Wi-Fi, then turn it off. Putting a barrier between yourself and a social media account can help. Try to find a quiet place to study. Let family members or housemates know not to distract you when you are "in class."

Break Down Tasks

Look ahead at your assignments and try to schedule them in your calendar in small increments. Have a paper or project? Mark off the weeks until it's due every week, then add in a goal each week for what you'd like to get done for that project. What do you have due every week for the class? Mark down what days you'll get what done. Have a response and a vocab test every week? Maybe do the response over the weekend and make flashcards for next week's vocab test every Wednesday.

Be Mentally Engaged

Take notes. Just because your online class isn't in a lecture hall doesn't mean you shouldn't take notes. Writing down important information helps you learn, keeps you engaged in the material, and helps you study for tests. Create sections, sub-sections, highlight important facts or vocab. Are you really absorbing the information? At the end of every study session, or chapter, or section, ask yourself if you really understood what you were learning. If not, see if you can write down a few questions, pinpoint where you got confused, or re-read the material if that would help.

Ask Questions

Online students do not have the advantage of raising their hands to ask the professor a question in class. Instead, you will need to contact your professor by phone, email, or Skype if you need help clarifying concepts, assignments, discussions, etc. The more you ask, the more you know!

Create Accountability

If you're having trouble holding yourself responsible for completing assignments on time, pair up with a fellow classmate, or enlist the help of a spouse or friend to check in as an accountability partner. You can also contact the Learning Resource Center at lrc@uno.edu to schedule a check in with one of our staff.