

Office of Student Support

Best Practices for Online Classes – COVID-19

Treat an online course just as you would an in-person one. One of the easiest ways to ensure you will have a successful time taking an online class is treating it like a traditional, in-person class. You must “show up” if you’re going to get real value out of your class. A helpful tip is to begin your day just like you would any other—make your bed, get dressed, and grab a cup of coffee (or tea!) This will allow you to create a more structured schedule and will help you keep your energy up throughout the day.

Create a regular study space

Set up a dedicated learning environment while you are taking your online class. By completing your work there repeatedly, you will begin to establish a routine. Wherever your workplace is, it is important to determine what type of environment will work best for you. However, you may want to consider *avoiding* logging in from your bedroom, specifically from your bed, so you can stay more alert and productive during your online courses.

When setting up your study space, make sure you have access to:

- A high-speed internet connection
- All required books, materials, and software for the course
- A USB headset or earbuds for listening to lectures and participating in class discussions
- A webcam for appearing on camera

Actively participate

Engagement and participation is critical to your success. “Raise” your hand, ask questions, and utilize the chat box to engage with your classmates and professor. Faculty are there to support you and are accessible during office hours and via email. We highly recommend that you participate in class sessions with your webcam on; this will help you feel more included and will contribute to fostering a sense of community for the class as a whole.

Eliminate distractions

Working from home, you may find yourself surrounded with distractions that can easily derail your studies. Some might find that they can tune out a noisy home by putting on headphones to eliminate their urge to multitask at home. Consider turning your cell phone off to avoid losing focus every time a text message or notification pops up. If you find yourself frequently checking email, Facebook, or the news during class, consider downloading a website blocker. Ultimately, you will need to find a strategy that works best for you.

Set boundaries

Taking classes online with roommates, friends or family present can be challenging, especially if the person around you has never taken classes or worked from home before. It might be beneficial to set boundaries with people around by asking them not to disturb you unless it’s an emergency. Minimizing interruptions is key to staying as productive as possible.

Take breaks

It is important that you take breaks throughout the day! Take a moment to stand and stretch. Excuse yourself to go to the restroom. If you would prefer to stand for parts of the class, try making yourself a standing desk by stacking books on a table or countertop.

Stay active

One difference you might encounter while working from home or taking online classes is that you’re moving less. Be sure to take stretching breaks throughout the day, even if that means just standing up and doing a few squats or a lap around the apartment every hour or so.

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Technology Resources

The following list has been created to allow students to quickly find resources, information, and guidance related to digital content and online learning at the School of Professional Studies.

Remote Learning Support

A list of course technologies and support services for your online classes.

Remote Learning Guide

An in-depth overview on how to prepare for online courses with details on how to set up and access Zoom, Canvas, and other tools.

Website Blockers*

You can download this as an extension to Safari or Chrome and block distracting websites (Netflix, Facebook, etc.).

**The website blocker is not provided by, endorsed, or in any way affiliated with Columbia University School of Professional Studies. Please use at your own discretion.*

Columbia University Disability Services

Columbia University welcomes students with disabilities into all University programs. If you are visually impaired or have accessibility issues with online content, please register with the **Disability Services at Columbia University (DS)**. Students must be approved by ODS in order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations including but not limited to:

- Note-taking accommodations
- Test-taking accommodations
- Recording lectures
- Assistive technology
- Materials in an alternative format

Trouble accessing your online course materials? Do you have a technology concern?

Submit a ticket to the SPS Help Desk or call 844-654-9872.