

Tips for Students Struggling with Online Learning

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OVERVIEW

Most of us chose Michigan Tech at least in part for the opportunities provided to learn hands-on, often in small groups and directly with instructors. We prefer direct interaction. And we were far enough into the Spring 2020 semester that we had developed our routines. Switching to online learning typically would not be our first choice, but at a time when we need to protect our family and friends by sheltering in place, we are all called on to make adjustments.

Following are some tips and suggestions for shifting to the online learning environment, while also creating new routines to support your academic success.

ROUTINE AND HOW TO CREATE IT

Humans require some routine in order to feel a measure of control in a world that can otherwise seem chaotic or out of control. This is particularly true at times of upheaval. Re-establishing routine can help reduce our sense of anxiety.

- Work school like a job. Make yourself get up in the morning and work all day.
- Have a work zone.
 - Try to identify a place that will be used for study/homework and **not** for playing video games or general chats with friends.
 - Even if your ‘relaxing’ space and your ‘work’ space are just two different chairs that are four feet apart, physical differences make a difference to your brain/body and these differences help to trigger ways of thinking, i.e. “When I sit here, I work on academics...this is where I sit to play video games or IM friends.”
- Clear your work zone of distractions.
- Move to a different physical space to relax.
- Schedule breaks
 - Try to maintain a designated time for working, relaxing, eating, sleeping.
 - Make a schedule, adjust if necessary, but keep a schedule.
- Get up and move during your break, do not sit in your work zone.
- Do ‘break things’ like chatting with friends, walking, checking for instructors’ emails.
- If you have to take other people’s schedules into account then a Success Coach at the Wahtera Center ([online contact](#)) can help you design a modified schedule that has you working while others are sleeping or out of the home.

SELF-CARE IS PART OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Routine is important but it is only part of what we need. Self-care is probably even more important now than it has been, not just because we need to be mindful of our health but because we are all living with elevated anxiety.

- We're still allowed to take walks.
 - Go out and walk after lunch as part of clearing your head before starting your afternoon work.
- Keep a daily 'to do' list.
 - At the end of the day write your list for the next day.
- Start each day by previewing what you need to accomplish.
 - Tentatively schedule the times when you will work on each task.
- Focus on one task at a time, do not try to multitask.
 - We're all prone to being distracted when we're under stress and we're all currently under stress.
 - Chunk work into shorter time units if you're having trouble with focusing for your normal amount of time.
 - When you cannot concentrate, take a break: stand up and move.
 - Limit your breaks to 3 minutes at a time if you need frequent breaks but make sure to take at least 30 - 45 mins for lunch, and allow yourself 15 minutes mid-morning and 15 minutes mid-afternoon or evening (depending on your schedule).
 - Use your 15 minute breaks to move and think about non-academic things.

WHAT ABOUT 'HOW TO LEARN'

- Try connecting with other students.
 - Ask others what their main takeaways were from a lecture.
 - When allowed, share notes. For example use google drive to share notes, allowing multiple people to make additions/clarifications.
 - Do your reading before class so that you can identify key terms/ideas during lecture.
- Don't know anyone in class?
 - Try explaining the key ideas from class to a family member/friend/pet.
 - Make a written note of the things you can't explain.
 - Review your textbook, talk to the appropriate learning center online, email your TA or instructor - find a way to learn more about the points you don't understand.
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Is the class recorded?

- Pause every ten minutes and write a synopsis of what has been said so far
- At the end of the class summarize all the main points that have been covered.
 - Make a written note of those concepts which you need to review further through textbooks, learning centers, or homework.

Keep up with homework:

- Create a homework routine and schedule.
- **Focus:** *no* multitasking when doing your academic work. No talking to friends.
- When you hit a roadblock (something you don't understand, a problem you can't solve) reach out for help: contact the online learning centers; email the class TA or instructor; look for online explanations & examples.
- Remember, with so many colleges moving to online learning this semester, more online resources are being posted.

UNDERSTAND YOUR RESOURCES

Know your supports:

- Learning centers are still working with students.
- Counseling Services are available.
- Success coaches in the Wahtera Center will have online meetings with you.
- Faculty are holding online office hours.
- If your class had a TA, they are still working online.
- Staff in the Dean of Students, Wahtera Center including Disability Services, and all other departments continue to work during regular office hours; like you they now work virtually and can meet via Zoom or Google Hangouts or over the phone.

It's hard to study if you're hungry:

- Food pantries remain open, although some, like HuskyFan, have moved to ready-to-go meal packs (Huskies still in the Houghton area can pick these up from Police and Public Safety on campus).
- Search for 'food pantries near me' if you're not familiar with your community's resources
- Learn your local resources which will include private business, schools, places of worship (such as ELCA affiliated Lutheran Churches), and the Salvation Army.
- If you are responsible for feeding minor children, some restaurants are offering free meals to those under 18, while most schools are continuing to make food available for pickup.