

# Adjusting your study habits during COVID

**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

## 2. Avoiding multitasking

If you're doing more work on your own and your time is less structured, 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, you're probably not... really, you're switching between tasks very quickly (some call this "micro-tasking").

### The downsides of multitasking and microtasking:

- **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 long-term 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 yourself 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](#)

	Scheduled Activity	Course Tasks	Personal / Self-care
8am			Shower, Breakfast
9am	Call in for remote lecture		
10am		Read chapter 3	
11am			Break - video call with friend
12pm			Lunch
1pm		Read chapter 4	
2pm	Recap lecture with classmate		

## 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.

For example:

- **–I \RX XVXDOO\ VWXG\ LQ D FR•HH VKRS RU OLEUDU**, ask yourself what kind of environment helps you study. See if you can recreate that at home. Maybe it's studying in a chair, rather than on your bed or couch, or moving to a new spot when you change tasks. If you feel you need background noise, consider a white noise app.
- **If you always study in groups**, try a virtual or even phone-based study session with your group.
- **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 group or team

Remote collaboration will look a little different, but it is definitely possible.

- **Try not to procrastinate.** That group 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.
- **Meet regularly**, especially if you usually touch base during class or lab. Consider a quick text on your group chat about progress every couple of days. Ideally, have real conversations over video any week you're working together. [Check out tools you have access to as U-M students.](#)
- **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.
- **Keep videos open when you can.** As long as you can see whatever you need to collaborate, aim to keep the video visible on your computer screen. It'll help you see the expressions of your teammates and stay connected to each other.
- **Check on each other and ask for backup:** If someone has been absent from your group

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