

Adjusting your habits for success in distance classes

We are here to support you and we will get through this together.



Your study habits may need to change for you to be successful with distance classes.

This guide will help you:

1. Understand your new course format
2. Make the most of distance lectures
3. Set a regular schedule and daily goals
4. Develop strategies for learning in a distance format
5. Work with a group or team via distance



Pro Tip: Add deadlines for lessons, projects, exams to an electronic or paper calendar so you can stay on top of when things are due.

1. Understand your new course format

If you haven't had communication from your instructors, contact them to ask how the rest of the semester will work! Here are a few things you'll need to determine:

1. Will lectures be offered at a specific time live or are they recorded?
2. If live meetings are required, determine how to access them for each of your courses (e.g. Zoom, Blackboard Collaborate) before your first meeting so you don't miss class. If you are not in Alaska, make sure to adjust for your current timezone.
3. If lectures will be recorded, schedule time each week (possibly use your previous in-person class time) to watch them so you don't get behind.
4. Determine if your courses will have virtual office hours. If yes, when they are (adjust for your current timezone) and know how to access them.
5. Check to see if due dates for assignments have changed and how to submit assignments. Some faculty are specific about the time when assignments are due. It is better to submit early just in case you have tech issues.
6. Take time to explore your course so you know what resources are available and how to access discussion boards or meetings or lecture recordings ahead of time.

2. Make the most of distance lectures

1. Take notes during lectures. Immediately after class, review your notes and expand on them to add depth and flesh them out. Waiting even a couple of hours will reduce what you remember.
2. Study actively:
 - A good way to learn a concept is to teach it to someone else. If no one is around, talk to an empty chair but it is important to talk out loud (even if it feels silly).
 - Write out the concepts in your own words rather than just copying from the instructor's slides.



Pro Tip: Don't multitask during live or recorded lectures. Splitting your attention will reduce your retention.

3. Set a regular schedule and daily goals

Staying on a regular schedule will help you have a sense of normalcy.

1. Your class will require time for lectures, homework and studying just like when you met in person.
2. Ask everyone in your daily living situation to give you personal time to devote to your class without interruptions.
3. Without the structure of an in-person class lecture or instruction, you need to read all the course material on time. It is easy to fall behind in a distance course.
4. Some students use organization tools like [Trello](#) or [Smartsheet](#). If you prefer a traditional to-do list, check out digital notebooks like [Todoist](#) or [Evernote](#). It doesn't have to be fancy, you can use Google Keep for free with Google Suite.
5. Set discreet daily goals and write them down to stay accountable to yourself.

Where to find technology help:

OIT Helpdesk: 907-450-8300, helpdesk@alaska.edu
Set up Zoom at alaska.zoom.us
[Blackboard Collaborate help](#)

4. Develop new strategies for learning in a distance format

You may need to experiment for the first week or two with changes in your behavior/study area to figure out what works best for you. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

1. Communicate your new schedule to those around you and set firm boundaries for not distracting you when you are working on your courses.
2. Limit distractions as much as possible. Some things to try: temporarily disable notifications or intentionally schedule your social media time for after your coursework.
 - Websites like [Cold Turkey](#) and [Freedom](#) can help eliminate distractions by blocking apps and websites.
3. Most students find it helpful to set up a dedicated workspace and environment for when they are working on their courses. Suggestions for setting up your study space:
 - Have a specific lamp that you use only when you are studying and not for any other purpose so that when the light is on, you are in learning mode.
 - Face your desk/study area away from your bed or other distractions like food cues.
 - Study alone or with other students in your class virtually if you can. Many students find that it is difficult to focus in the face of family or roommate distractions.
 - Determine what you need in your environment to study successfully - get creative, sometimes a quiet place could be in your car outside of somewhere that has wifi.
4. Study/work in chunks and take small breaks at least every 25 minutes to give your brain a rest and do something enjoyable.



Pro Tip: Determine what time of day and location where your studies are most productive and schedule your study time to maximize your learning.

5. Working with a group or team via distance

Working in a group will be different than what you are used to in the classroom, but it is still possible!

1. For many students, studying in a group can help with motivation and give you an opportunity to test your understanding by explaining concepts in your own words.
2. You can set up chats, calls or Google Hangouts with classmates for study sessions. This also works well for group projects.
3. Students have access to Google Suite for free (call OIT at 907-450-8300 if you need help getting started). This is a great way to collaborate with classmates on documents, presentations or spreadsheets.
4. Try not to procrastinate - sometimes when you don't see each other in class it can be easy to put off getting started with group work. Meet regularly and resist the urge to put it off.



Pro Tip: Stay connected to other people, social distancing doesn't mean complete isolation.

Be patient with yourself, classmates, instructors and the university. We're all trying to get through this time of change together! Remember, this situation is temporary and eventually things will get back to normal.