Strategies for Remote Learning

Office of Academic Support | Center for Student Success | Division of Academic Affairs
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As the University transitions to remote instruction, here are strategies and evidence-based approaches to incorporate into your revised approach to each of your courses. We are here to support you as you begin learning remotely! Contact us at (330) 823-8685 or academicsupport@mountunion.edu.

Review new course format

Understand how your courses have changed. Are there new assignments? Do you have discussion posts now throughout the week? Is your class meeting in a live online format at certain times or is everything self-paced?

Write it out

Note when assignments are due for each course. Write dates and times if you will have to log into a live course meeting. Add discussion post requirements to your calendar, i.e. first post by Wednesday, respond to other students' posts by Friday.

Set up a schedule

Use these guidelines to help.

- Identify specific time to work on 2-3 courses each day from Sunday-Friday.
- Work on each course in blocks of 25-30 min. Take 5 min. breaks between each block.
  - Allow 2-4 of these blocks for each course, depending on how much you know, how much you need to learn and how much work you have to do.
- Work on each course 2-3 times throughout the week, with a day or so between. Exceptions to this are courses that require a lot of practice and/or memorization, such as foreign languages, math, computer coding, and music performance. These courses require focus most days of the week. For example:
  - THE 200A on Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays for three blocks of 30 minutes each.
  - MTH 105 every day but Saturdays for 30-60 minutes each.

Find a place to work

Identify physical space where you can go online, work with few distractions and spread out your materials. Just like going to a study room in KHIC or to a lab in Bracy, you will be more focused and ready to work effectively when you have a consistent space just for schoolwork.

Learning remotely

Without face-to-face instruction, you must read, remember and understand course material on your own so you can apply that information to solve problems, participate in discussions, write essays, etc. You must be able to *demonstrate* that you've done the work and that you understand enough to apply it. Here are some evidence-based strategies to assess your own learning and be more effective with your time.

Read to remember

Break up reading assignments into smaller sections.

- Focus on 25-30 min. windows – with 5-min. breaks between
  - This may mean you spend a few sessions reading one assignment.
  - Scholarly reading is a skill that we develop with practice. You will get faster the more you do it.
- 2-5 min.: Preview entire reading assignment
  - Look at bold words and terms. Glance over diagrams, photos and captions. Skim the questions at the end of the chapter.
  - This adds intentionality to what you are doing. Knowing the learning objectives makes reading a better use of your time. Know what you have to understand before you even begin.
- Begin with one short section. You decide how long it should be based on how long you can pay attention.
  - Two paragraphs? One column? Three pages? It's different for every student, and no one will know where you start.
- Read that short section. Focus on what you are reading. Visualize what is happening. Make sure you understand what is going on in each paragraph as you read.
  - Then push the book or text away. Put the information in your own words. Does it make sense? What do you remember?
  - Write a few key takeaways from that short section.
- Read another short section. Focus again on the meaning of the words.
  - Then push the book away. Put that new information in your own words. Does this tie into the last section you read? Does it make sense? What do you remember?
  - Write a few key takeaways from that short section.

This may be a slower approach – at first – but remember you will:

- Understand and remember what you read.
- Never go backward. You will not have to keep re-reading passages because your mind was wandering.
  - This is from the short windows of focus – AND the small sections you are reading one at a time.
- Create your own guided notes from that reading to review before lecture, as part of exam prep, etc.
- Get faster at scholarly reading with more practice.

Self-testing

- Within 24 hours of reading or learning new material, focus for about 30 minutes on that information. Go to a whiteboard, get blank sheets of paper, speak aloud, or use your laptop/device.
- <u>Start with no notes, no materials.</u> Do an initial brain dump. Set your timer to 10 minutes and write/draw/talk about everything you remember from that new information.
- Use your notes/handouts/textbook to check your accuracy.
- Focus on wrong, missing or incomplete information for the next 15-20 minutes.
- Erase the whiteboard, delete the file. Do another brain dump. Take note of improvements and also areas that still need focus.

The goal of self-testing is to understand course material to the standard that you can explain it in your own words. Once you understand it well enough to explain it in your own words, you are better equipped to apply that information to write papers, solve problems, participate in discussions – to demonstrate that you've done the work.

Extra benefit: Self-testing decreases test anxiety. Tests often require students to put course content in their own words. Consistent self-testing to honestly assess how well you can talk about or explain course content can make actual tests less scary.