

SETTING UP YOUR HOME FOR LEARNING SUCCESS

The space you live in—and the people you share it with—can have a big impact on your ability to study effectively at home. Here are some tips for managing your home environment.

Understand your needs

- Consider the time you're going to bed and waking up, how tidy you want your space to be and your daily routines. Also consider how your behaviours impact your housemates.
- Ask yourself how things could be improved. Could a regular sleep schedule help you feel more balanced? Could a daily walk be helpful for fresh air and a break?

Express your needs and desires

- If you want to establish or change behaviours happening in your home, invite your housemates to sit down for a conversation. Consider having these discussions on a regular basis to work together effectively.
- Talk about how you can each adjust or compromise to fit each other's needs.
- Figure out rules and responsibilities, and devise ways to maintain them. A chore wheel can help everyone keep track; apps like bouncyballs.org can monitor noise levels; a sign on a door can signal that you don't want to be disturbed.
- Agree on cleanliness measures to keep everyone safe. If you feel at risk, act like you're sharing the space with someone who has a cold or flu: wash your hands, avoid close proximity, try not to touch your face and keep things clean. If a housemate is unwell, don't hesitate to take a strong stance.

Plan activities to maintain good relations

- Try cooking, movie nights, self-care activities, walks or learning a new hobby. Set plans to do them at particular times.
- Working together can help to maintain motivation and accountability, and can create a productive environment for everyone.

Give time and space to others

- Stagger your "business hours" so everyone gets a chance to use shared space. Set a schedule that accommodates everyone's preferred times for productivity. Create a workstation that can be easily set up and taken down.
- Make each other aware of important upcoming deadlines.
- Offer your housemates the benefit of the doubt when something goes wrong. Be respectful of their needs.
- See if you can help ease others' burdens. If you're going to the store, ask if they need anything.

Create an environment for productivity

- Create a work space that is quiet and distraction-free. You might need to wear headphones, use a white noise app or put in pair of earplugs.
- Working at a table is best. Put your keyboard at an accessible level and your screen slightly below eye level. If you work on a sofa or in bed, you'll be prone to falling asleep when you try to work and to staying awake late at night.
- Create a space that makes you as happy and productive as possible. *The Wirecutter* offers four tips on boosting your productivity¹:
 1. Find a bright spot to work in: Natural light can help you stay alert, reduce strain on your eyes, improve your mood and support your sleep cycles.
 2. Bring in some plants: An Exeter University study found that having them in the workplace significantly increased productivity.
 3. Stay warm: A study from Cornell University found that an office temperature of 25°C was optimal to reduce errors and increase output.
 4. Adjust the colour in your room. Studies have found that bright colours are stimulating, while muted colours are soothing.

1 Melanie Pinola, "4 Small Home Office Upgrades That Can Give a Big Boost to Your Productivity," *The Wirecutter*, 25 March 2020, <https://thewirecutter.com/blog/productivity-home-office-upgrades>

Take care of yourself

- Be sure to take some time for breaks and to stretch. Check out our other resources for more tips on working productively at home and be in touch with us for more personalized supports!

Want to know more?

The Centre for Learning Strategy Support has resources, workshops, events and appointments to support you.

→ look us up online at learningstrategy.utoronto.ca

→ register for appointments and events at folio.utoronto.ca

→ or email us at clss@utoronto.ca