

SETTING YOUR DAY FOR SUCCESS

Being productive can be surprisingly hard. Here are some tips to help you while working at home: try them out, and be in touch if you'd like to know more!

Physical space affects mental space

- Create a work space that is quiet and distraction-free. Ideally, this shouldn't be a space where you do things like play games or watch movies: you might be more likely to do them instead.
- Keep your course materials at hand. If you're working in a multiple-purpose space, keep your supplies in a basket or bag to make it easier to set up when it's time to start.
- Working at a table is often 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.
- When you're attending virtual classes, remember that people can see and hear you. Find a work space with good lighting.

Stay informed, but find calm

- If it distracts you or makes you anxious, don't check the news at the start of your day.
- Be mindful of whether your social media use brings you happiness and connection or feelings of guilt and isolation. Balance your screen time with other things that can satisfy you instead.
- Distance yourself from the internet, distracting apps and video games when you're trying to work: you can use website blocking or focus apps to help.
- Log out of your social media while you attend your online classes or do your school work.
- Focus on the things you can control, the tasks you can do and the outcomes that you hope for in your daily life.

Save your best times of day for your most important work

- Setting a nine-to-five workday for yourself might not suit your needs. Note your optimal work times and try to save them for your most important work.
- It might not be possible to put in a regular, eight-hour workday. Set reasonable expectations for what you can accomplish in a day and remember that you can't control everything. If you can't follow a regular schedule, set a prioritized to-do list.
- Don't confuse urgency with importance. Planning and prioritizing the things that matter most can involve devoting less time to other things.
- For writing projects, it's often best to begin before distractions take hold and your energy drops. Experiment to see what works best for you.

Plan out the day the night before

- Making a to-do list of small action items for you to do the next day can make it easier for you to start your work, be effective, see your progress and set new plans to move forward. Keep goals specific, measurable, achievable, rewarded and timely.
- Collect your materials and set up your workspace the night before so you can get started immediately.
- Reduce any obstacles that might get in the way of starting your work. Leaving a sentence unfinished or a promise hanging can help you resume your work the next day because you know the next step to take.
- Letting yourself sleep on it can also activate what is known as “diffuse-mode” thinking. When we’re not actively trying to solve a problem, our brain can make associations and connections that we might not have expected.

Keep track of what you achieve, as well as what you still have to do

- It’s easy to criticize yourself for what hasn’t been done. Keep an eye on these things, but also be sure to recognize the work you have done. Don’t expect yourself to be perfect.
- Record your successes, even if they’re different from your original plans. Doing this can give you a realistic picture of what you’re doing and can help boost your self confidence.
- If you’re struggling with something, talk it out with a family member, friend or mentor who you trust and admire. They might be able to help you see things in a new light.

Want to know more?

Academic Success has resources, workshops, events and appointments to support you.

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