

Tips to Managing Online Coursework

Tips from our recent webinar led by Lizette Aceves '19 and Angela Lopez Hernandez '20

Our first virtual session addressed how to manage asynchronous courses. **Compared to traditional in-classroom learning, asynchronous learning is a different experience as it requires students to take complete control of their learning** with limited engagement from their professors and classmates. The following worksheet consists of the various takeaways from the virtual session. We understand that asynchronous courses will continue to be a topic for students throughout the academic year and we hope that this worksheet can serve as a key resource for students looking for help.

Benefits of Asynchronous Classes

First, it's important to highlight the potential benefits of asynchronous learning. For some, asynchronous courses are a better fit to their way of learning, more so than traditional, synchronous course structure. Here are some possible benefits:

- Easier to attend all courses because you make your own schedule; you have control over how you spend your time
- Professors could streamline the material, opting for a more straightforward approach and more consistent type of assignments (weekly discussion posts or no weekly assignments, just a midterm and final)
- If you consider yourself introverted, you can focus on yourself and your coursework
- Since most, if not, all communication for your course will be done online, it might be easier for some students to reach out or use resources since they do not need to meet someone in person
- Professors could opt for all lectures to be recorded, which provides the possibility of watching a lecture multiple times or rewinding






Challenges of Asynchronous Classes

Here are just some of the many challenges to online courses, as discussed by alums like you:


- An increased amount of screen time that can result in restlessness, tired eyes, headaches, etc.

- Required use of technology (e.g. lockdown browsers) or new methods of submitting work that can add more stress to the learning and test taking experience
- Adjusting to a completely online format
- Developing effective and consistent time management skills
- Increased likelihood of group work/ group projects
- Finding and keeping motivation
- Asking for help from either the professor or classmates
- Having to “teach yourself” more







Time Management Solutions

1.  **Calendar:** Either on paper or online, a calendar will make it easier to keep track of assignments, courses, appointments, your job, etc.
2.  **Planner:** A planner (or an online calendar) gives you the option to block off time to set aside to actually get certain things done (e.g. your art history readings)
3.  **Divide & Conquer:** by breaking up long-term and/or long assignments. It can be at times unrealistic to do everything all at once in one sitting. If you do not think you can finish the entirety of your art history reading, break it up over the course of a few days.
 - a. With long-term assignments, setting up deadlines to finish certain parts of an assignment before the final deadline can alleviate stress. At the very least, you can plan to spend an hour or two every few days to get work done for these assignments, it can help!
4.  **Block off time:** Schedule a day in your week to do your asynchronous course! Although asynchronous courses do not have a weekly meeting time for lecture, they may still have a recurring discussion section or weekly assignments due on the same day every week. If you find yourself in this situation, it is very important to find a day in the week (ideally not the day of/day before the discussion/due date of the assignment!) For these courses, you tend to do more work (seeing lectures, taking notes, doing additional work) than just weekly readings, so find a day to get all of this done will alleviate some stress.
5.  **Just do it now:** start early rather than later! For many students, they have found it helpful to start assignments earlier rather than later. If your assignments are due

Monday, it might be best to try to get some of the work done throughout the week rather than wait until Sunday

6.  **Self-Care:** schedule time for yourself! More important than scheduling assignments and work, it is important to schedule time for yourself. Self care is important and crucial to keep you going. If you need to go on a walk or just lie in your bed, scheduling that time can remind you to do it and also make it less likely that you skip it since you planned for that time!

Quick Hacks

1.  **Create a reward system:** This can look different for many people, but having some type of motivation/ reward system can be helpful to keep you going. It can be as simple as getting all my work done for the day to play my video game or getting through a busy day so you can do watercolors, a motivation/ reward is critical to find something to look forward to and focus on something you enjoy rather than always working.
2.  **Printing out the class syllabus:** Printing out your syllabi can be helpful to have handy to check-in assignments and make note of any changes that are made by the professor as the term progresses
3.  **Don't be so hard on yourself!** Whether it is missing an assignment, waking up late for a class, or not wanting to work, it is ok!
4.  **Turn your camera on:** having your camera on can motivate you to focus since others can see you. This can be powerful in breakout rooms as it motivates more people to turn them on or be more interactive!
5.  **Sending a reminder email:** with everything online, email tends to be the preferred method of communication for everyone. If you email a professor, a TA, or a classmate, it is ok if they do not respond immediately. After a few days, if there is no response, it is ok to send a reminder email!
6.  **Talk to your professors:** If you want to meet and talk to your professor after class, office hours are a great resource to use! However, it can be hard to go to office hours if you do not have a question. One way of getting around this is to review the syllabus, identify potential questions, and ask those questions. Doing this earlier in the term and talking to them frequently can help create a bond with them, which can be helpful with getting timely responses from them later in the term.

7. 🌳 **Change it up:** Being in the same space and being limited to your laptop can get monotonous. Making changes to your workspace to feel prepared and in a new space. Find little ways to make the work feel different each time.
8. 🙌 **Reach-out:** Reaching out to people is not as awkward as you think, it can be as easy as sending an email! People are looking to connect and help each other out

Use your Network

One of the best ways to manage asynchronous coursework is to **reach out to other students about how they are handling their asynchronous work**. Even if they are not taking the same courses or go to the same school, talking to students who are in a similar situation to yourself tends to lead to the best possible solutions or advice. Knowing that others are dealing with certain challenges and have found success (or not) trying out different tricks or tips, can be the push to either reach out for further help or incentive you to try something new that you may not have considered before. **Never downplay the benefit of just talking about mutual struggles!-- it can lead to some of the best brainstorming!**

Peer-Reviewed Tools & Resources!

1. Calendar (Google Calendar)
2. Phone Reminders
3. Notes (Paper and Pen, Evernote, Notion, a Google Doc/Microsoft Word)
4. Blackboard App (or other school related app)
5. Alexa
6. Pomodoro Technique ([Pomodoro Timer Online - Pomofocus](#))