Tips for remote learning

Preparing for remote learning: suggestions on organizing your study plan

- **Create a workplace environment at home**: wherever possible try to create a dedicated workspace in a quiet place. Make sure that you keep everything you will need nearby (e.g., notebook, post-its, pen, pencil, water, etc.). If you are sharing an apartment with someone, try to communicate to those around you about your need to focus.

- **Try to stick to “normal” daily routines**: in the environment of full remote work and self-isolation, it might be difficult to distinguish between time for study and time for leisure. In this respect, try to maintain or create routines for study time, breaks, eating and sleeping times, and exercise. Try to make your day as normal as possible.

- **Create weekly schedules**: make a weekly schedule and a to-do list for each day, which will help you to stay organized and on track with your studies.

- **Eliminate distractions**: identify any distractions in your environment – put away the cell phone or have it on silent mode; shut down programs and social media on your computer that you do not need. If there are other people in your living space - divide the area so that you have your own workplace.

- **Keep contact with others**: even when you study remotely, you need to rely and keep in touch with your course mates. Try to meet your colleagues online via video-conferencing apps or chat. You can also discuss lectures and course literature or give each other feedback on texts. Make sure to connect with people in ways that are possible during the time of social isolation and remote work.

- **Remember to take breaks**: don’t forget to take break between your classes and during your study process! Make sure you get enough time for recovery both by taking short breaks during the day and by scheduling longer breaks for lunch.

Study tips for studying and completing courses remotely

- **Familiarize yourself with the course environment and course requirements**: make sure that you are familiar with the technical setup and course structure: have a look at the documents located in the introductory section of the course and scroll through the course page, making sure that you can easily navigate through the course and its course sections. Besides technical and organizational design of the course, it is also crucial that you have a good understanding of the course requirements: grading system, assignments and deadlines. Be sure to check the course syllabus and feel free to approach the teaching staff if some points are not clear.

- **Do not be afraid to ask questions and engage with other course participants**: if you come across unfamiliar term or you have questions about course material, do not be afraid to reach out to the teaching staff as well as seek help from you peers.

- **Create your study plan and outline your study goals**: things might get very busy during the academic semester, to it is always good to set out your study goals (i.e. what do you want to achieve at the end of the course) right at the beginning and try to commit to the course by creating your own study plan. Never wait until the day
before an assignment due date to start working on it. It will stress you and stress will prevent you from effectively completing the online task (Pappas, C. 2015)

- **Keep up with the course news and announcements:** before the start of the course, make sure that you signed up to the course forum and you follow weekly announcements from the teaching staff. Following course news and updates is an important factors for keeping yourself updated and on track with the course flow.

- **Stay motivated:** do not underestimate the effort needed to fully commit and complete a course remotely. To stay motivated by keeping in mind your learning objectives. Create a study community group, might be also a good way to stay connected with course mates and help each other to stay focused and motivated during the course. (Pappas, C. 2015)

**Study tips for Moodle and other e-learning tools:**

The main learning management system (LMS) at the University of Tartu is Moodle. Every course at the J. Skytte Institute of Political Studies has its own page on Moodle, where you will be able to find all the necessary information about the course, reading materials, assignments and other relevant study-related content. Moodle is connected with our Study Information System (SIS), where you can find course information and register to a respective course. Once matriculated, you will gain access to our SIS and Moodle (a separate information with your login credentials will be sent out to you). In order to help you to get started with our systems and make your learning process a little bit easier, we suggest you to have a look at the following tips:

- **Provide basic information in your Moodle profile:** once you get access to Moodle - make sure that you update some basic information in your profile. It would be nice if you could upload a profile picture (especially, if you are taking a course fully remotely and there is no opportunity for other students in the course to meet you in person yet); add your email address and most importantly make sure that the time-zone in your profile is set up correctly and it displays the time where you are currently based. This is very important! By setting the correct time zone in your Moodle page - you are not only going to be able to see all Moodle deadlines based on your respective time-zone; but also help the course lecturer and other students in the course to better arrange course activities and communication. NB! Please note that all deadlines in the course are originally based on the Estonian/Eastern European Time (GMT/UTC+02:00). Moodle profile update simply helps you to convert the time to your local time zone for better convenience.
• **Keep an eye on the “planning” tools on the Moodle course page:** such Moodle tools as "Calendar" with basic deadlines and "Progress bar" will help you to better plan your study process. Make sure to find them on the course page and keep an eye on your progress. These course features should be set by the course leader before the start of the course.

![Moodle Calendar and Progress Bar](image)

• **Take a look at Moodle instructions for students:** Lifelong Learning Centre has put together a more detailed guidelines for students on how to use and navigate through Moodle, which you can access here - [https://sisu.ut.ee/juhendid/moodle-instructions-students](https://sisu.ut.ee/juhendid/moodle-instructions-students)

• **Familiarize yourself with other relevant e-tools and programs:** during your study process you might come across such programs as Panopto (tool which allows lecturers and students to pre-record videos, lectures, and presentations); BigBlueButton, Microsoft Teams (MS Teams) and Zoom – the last three tools can be used for video-conferencing, conducting webinars and presentations. MS Teams could be also used as a collaborative space for group work and other collective assignments.

• **Test your equipment and ensure stable internet connection:** make sure that you have stable internet connection while you are watching videos and completing your assignments. Before joining video-conferencing – make sure that your equipment (laptop, headset/audio, and video camera) is working properly and you completed a test-run.

**References:**


• Uppsala University. *Advice on Distance learning*. Available at: [https://www.uu.se/en/students/support-and-services/advice-for-distance-learning/](https://www.uu.se/en/students/support-and-services/advice-for-distance-learning/) (Accessed July 8, 2020).