**UTSA Student Disability Services**

**Study Tips for Taking Classes Online**

**Get Organized**

Take some time to get familiar with changes and the new online format for each class.

* Find out where can you find or how can you access different parts of your class (live-stream, lecture capture, etc.)
* Make a new calendar with the revised syllabus. Print this calendar and tape on the wall.
* Find out where to submit your assignments and how to take the quizzes or exams.
* Communicate regularly with your professor. How can you ask questions? Will your professor hold virtual office hours?

Designate a study space.

* Keep this space organized and uncluttered.
* This space is not your bed or couch. Your brain is conditioned to fall asleep or relax in your bed or couch.
* Use this space just for studying.

**Stay Focused**

Avoid multi-tasking.

* Multi-tasking keeps your thinking at a shallow level. This will undermine critical thinking and analytical thinking. You will make more mistakes when multi-taking.
* Focus on one thing at time and take regular breaks.
* Turn off online distractions. Use website blockers.

Capture interrupting or distracting thoughts.

* Whenever a random or distracting idea pops into your head, write it down on a piece of paper that is just for writing these types of ideas.
* Then return your focus to your academic work.
* Visit this list of distracting random ideas during your break and if you want to act on that idea, then schedule it into your daily calendar.

Think about your course work in three categories and plan time for each.

* *Professor’s delivery of academic concepts.* This could include video lectures, reading assignments, videos, office hours. Watch the video lectures at the normal speed. Take notes during the video lectures.
* *Assignments for a grade with a due date.* The assignments are designed to support learning, so completing the assignment should help you learn and understand the concepts that will be tested.
* *Independent learning required for mastery of concepts.* You will be tested on these concepts.

**Manage Your Time**

Designate time for each class.

* Have the mindset that you have appointments with your schoolwork or a scheduled class time.
* Use a timer to help you stay on task.

Create a realistic study plan.

* Create small goals for your study blocks. Be realistic.
* Write these daily plans down.

Keep a routine.

* Keep a weekly schedule. Do not let every day become a “Saturday.” Stick to the professor’s schedule.
* Have a start time and an end time for the day.
* Keep regular eating, sleeping, and exercising routine.
* Designate time for relaxing and for fun.

**Stay Productive**

Adapt and be flexible.

* We are all learning and adjusting to new situations.
* You will improve at managing your time at home and getting things done.

Find healthy ways to express your frustrations.

* Journaling as a healthy coping mechanism.
* Exercise
* Be creative

Stay engaged and encouraged.

* Explore new interests, or hobbies, or read a book.
* Stay connected with family and friends.
* Focus on what you can control.
* Give yourself small rewards for staying on task or for completing a task.
* Take breaks from the internet and be physically present.

**Tips for Taking Exams Online**

**Exam Environment**

Students who are use to coming to the Adaptive Test Center for a more controlled environment to minimize distractions will need to create a similar setting. Students need to prepare their space before starting an exam online.

* Set up your space before taking your exam to minimize distractions. Make the environment feel like a testing environment (in other words, do not have your television on in the background).
* Turn off phones. If you have a landline, set the ringer to silent or low.
* Place a “do not disturb” or “testing in progress” sign on your door.
* Inform family members (who might also be home) that you will be taking an exam for a specific span of time to minimize interruptions.
* You might want to use a lock down browser if you are prone to surfing the internet.
* Have all allowed materials available and organized before starting the exam.
* At least 15 minutes before the exam, set up your environment to make sure you do not have any computer or internet access issues.

**In General**

* Know the rules and expectations of taking the exam online. Is it open book/ note or are students held to the honor system? Are you being proctored remotely by your professor or a computer program?
* Can you start the exam at any time or is the exam only available during a certain time frame?
* If your accommodations allow for breaks during exam, is there a way to pause the exam?
* Before starting the exam, make sure you know how many questions are on the exam and how much time you have so you can plan accordingly. Since SDS staff will not be there to give a warning, you might want to set a timer to go off 10 minutes before your time is up.
* Have a clock or timer nearby so you can track how much time you have.
* Have scrap paper so that you can note questions you want to revisit.
* Questions may be presented one at a time. It may be more difficult to navigate an exam and go back to review questions. Jot down question numbers and note any questions you may have.
* If you have clarification questions for your professor, will you be able to reach the professor? How will you do this? Find out before you take your exam.
* You may have finally gotten used to the format of your teacher’s in-class exams and suddenly that format might be different as it shifts to an online platform.
  + Reach out to your teachers and ask if the exams will be different. The more prepared you are with what to expect, the better.
  + If you are suddenly allowed to use notes or access your books during an exam, be careful not to use up all of your time and rely too heavily on these materials. It is better to put an answer down that you think is correct and then return to that question later if you have time at the end to double check than to spend time searching for each of the answers.

**Migraines and Eye Strain**

Prolonged computer usage can cause a strain on your eyes. If you are prone to migraines or have other visual issues, you will want to take extra steps to minimize the impact as much as possible by adding some adjustments to your computer monitor and workstation.

* Your desk setup can trigger a migraine. Make sure your monitor is placed directly in front of your face to reduce neck strain. Your monitor should be 20 to 40 inches away from your face at eye level.
* Adjust the refresh rate of your monitor to its highest rating.
* Adjust the display settings of your computer to help reduce eye strain and fatigue.
  + Brightness: Adjust the brightness of the display so it is approximately the same as the brightness of your surrounding workstation. As a test, look at the white background of this page. If it looks like a light source, it is too bright. If it seems dull and gray, it may be too dark.
  + Text size and contrast: Adjust the text size (enlarge) and contrast for comfort. Usually, black print on a white background is the best combination for comfort.
  + Color temperature: This is a technical term used to describe the spectrum of visible light emitted by a color display. Blue light is short-wavelength visible light that is associated with more eyestrain than longer wavelength hues, such as orange and red. Reducing the color temperature of your display lowers the amount of blue light emitted by a color display for better long-term viewing comfort.
* To reduce your risk of tiring your eyes by constantly focusing on your screen, use the “20-20-20 rule.” Look away from your computer at least every 20 minutes and gaze at a distant object (at least 20 feet away) for at least 20 seconds.