

Virtual Lectures: Skip the commute, but stay on track!

Establish a new context: Create a physical context for “attending” classes to improve focus.

- Your environment influences performance and well-being (Sander, Caza and Jordan, 2018). Set up a formal, clutter-free workspace, and be prepared with a pen and paper.
- Minimize distractions and ask others in your home to avoid interrupting you.
 - Use headphones to concentrate on the talk. Limit background music, which can worsen performance (Cassidy and MacDonald, 2007).
 - Block notifications and focus on the lecture. “Multitasking” divides our attention and performance between several tasks (Rosen, 2008).

Transition to study mode: Even simple preparation habits can boost productivity. (Rampton, 2019).

- Get dressed and sit upright at a table. Eat breakfast and practice self-care.
- Review course content before a lecture.
 - Look over past notes to highlight key concepts and write focus questions (Tofade, Elsner and Haines, 2013). Meet with peers to discuss past readings, notes, and questions.
 - Identify interesting topics and do a bit more reading about them.
 - Check your syllabus. Write down your questions about assignments.

Develop engagement strategies: Don’t scroll through social media! Write notes to pay attention.

- Use pen and paper. Handwriting encourages you to process and summarize information (Smoker, Murphy and Rockwell, 2009).
- Add to your notes before, during, and after a lecture (Porter-O'Donnell, 2004). Write practice questions and emphasize possible exam content.
- Connect prior knowledge and experience with new content to help you remember.

Beware procrastination: Try to watch lectures in real-time to establish a routine.

- Get timely announcements about assignments, readings, and schedule changes.
- Avoid ‘cramming’ recorded lectures. You’re unlikely to retain information this way.
 - IMPORTANT: Don’t skip! Not all lecture content will be available in your readings.

Improve your writing and study skills! Book an appointment with a writing advisor and/or academic coach on OSCARplus. Questions? Email skills@mcmaster.ca.

References (Special thanks to Henrietta Den Dekker and Joseph Oluwasola for providing research support):

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