STUDY TIPS FOR REMOTE LEARNING

CENTER FOR ADVANCING TEACHING AND LEARNING (ÖGEM)

This document has been prepared by the Center for Advancing Teaching and Learning (ÖGEM) to provide Middle East Technical East University (METU) students with information about effective study tips and time management techniques.

1

Define your reasons for studying and set goals

You can start with this simple 5-minute exercise to discover your reasons for studying and motivate yourself when your motivation is low. This exercise will help you to get through the times when a part of you wants to give up. Take a piece of paper and a pen. Ask yourself;

- Why should I start studying?
- How will my life improve from my studying
- What am I expecting to get out of this studying?
- What motivates me to study?

After you come up with several reasons for why you are studying, keep this paper where you can see it. You can keep it either above your desk or on your computer. You can read this before studying or when you feel you lack motivation for studying.
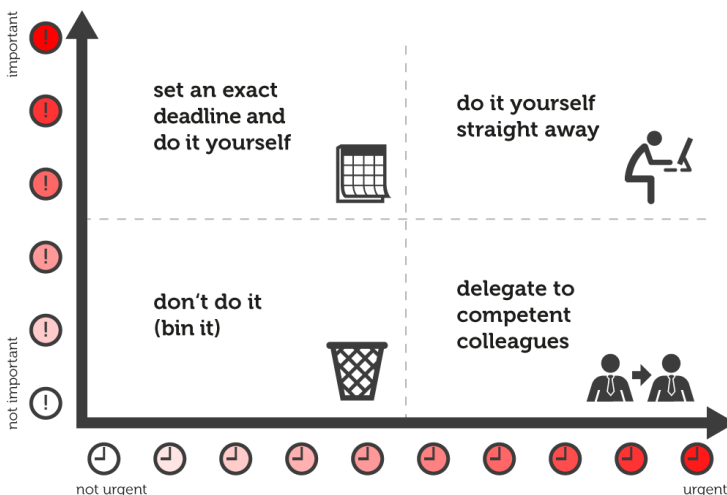
2

Define your priorities

As a remote learning student, it is your responsibility to manage your study and at the same time maintain all your other responsibilities. You can either record all your responsibilities in one place, so you can see what you have to do and your workload for the rest of the week. You can either write those down in a diary or download an app on your phone or computer. Find a method that works for you and go with it. Here is how to do this:

- *Eisenhower Matrix:* Also known as Urgent-Important Matrix, Eisenhower Matrix helps you decide on and prioritize tasks by significance and urgency in four quadrants each with different work strategies. Click here for more information. Try out these Eisenhower Matrix apps:
  - Focus Matrix – Task Manager (Mac, iOS)
  - Eisenhower matrix (Mac, iOS)
  - My Effectiveness – Goals, Tasks, ToDos, Reminders (Windows, Linux, Android)
  - Ike – To-Do List, Task List (Windows, Linux, Android)
  - Tasks (Windows, Linux, Android)
- *MoSCoW Method:* Also known as MoSCoW Prioritization or MoSCoW Analysis, this method will help you to understand and manage your priorities. The letters stand for Must-Have; Should Have; Could Have; Won't Have this time. Click here for more information.

3

Back up your files

Losing your work and starting again will be a painful and tear-inducing experience. You can prevent this by setting up a simple system. Here is how to do this:

- Every time you work on your assignment, create a new version of it and continue working in this version. For example, *Hilal Yilmaz_Assignment1_V02.*
- Back up your files online. Most people prefer using Google Drive or DropBox to save their files.
- For the notes taken by hand, you can scan them quickly by using your phone, which is simpler than using any other machine. You can download a free scanning app, such as *Microsoft Office Lens-PDF Scanner, Tiny Scanner, and Simple Scan,* and take a quick picture of each page of your notes.

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Schedule in and attend all your courses

As a remote learner, you are responsible for scheduling how to study your courses and be disciplined to stick to it. It may be hard for you to understand all of the material provided during the online course, but this is where you, as a remote learning student, should take the initiative. You can either ask your course instructor or course assistant the points you do not understand so that you can clarify them. It is also a good idea to create some time to think about and plan what you need to study before your next course.

One of the disadvantages of remote learning is the hardships and delays in communication between you and your instructor. It might take time to get an e-mail reply. Attending all your courses will also provide you with an opportunity to ask questions and get a further understanding of assignments. The clearer the assignments are getting for you, the more likely you will get higher grades.

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Create a dedicated study space

In your home, you need to create a study space where you can do your work. Some of you may already have a study space (a desk, a chair, good lighting, and some cool stationery), others might not. If you have enough space, you can change the arrangement of your room or desk, which may help you to increase your productivity and also stay focused.

While studying, keep your desk as clear as possible, and avoid other distractions (e.g., social media, online games, chatting, etc.). You can turn off your mobile phone, put it on airplane mode, or basically move it away.

Try to discover the times of the day you work best in studying for your courses and create a study routine for yourself. Try different study methods. There is not one perfect study method for all courses. Various courses may require different study methods. Even your note-taking practices might differ depending on the course.

"There is no right or wrong place to study – if it works for you, that's great"

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Find other students that take the course with you

Remote learning can be isolating at times, and it can be a very different experience for you than being on campus and socializing with your classmates face-to-face. There might be times when you need further clarification on the materials or feel stressed. It is precious trying to work through a problem by yourself. However, if you have spent a lot of time, then you were planned and still do not know what to do – ask for help!

All of us may find ourselves struggling at times. What matters is how you react when you feel stuck. Connecting with your classmates will help you to share your questions and problems with each other so you will feel supported. Learning from others is an excellent opportunity for your development. If you get in contact with other students;

- Form an online study group and define your goals
- Contact with each other when you need further clarifications
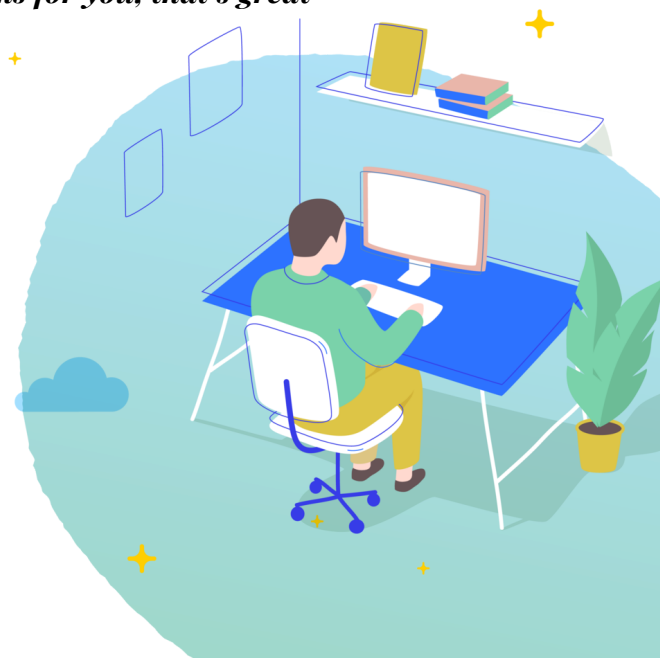- Listen to others feedback

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Create a quick and straightforward study routine for yourself

Create a focused study routine, so you will get more things done with your precious study time. You can download a study calendar or a study timetable to help you plan each week, create a routine, and get organized.

Set SMART goals. Here is how to do this:

- **Specific:** Rather than saying, "I will study Calculus today," be specific and formulate this as "I will complete Chapter 1, pages 1-50."
- **Measurable:** This means how you will know whether you reach your goals or not. For example, if your goal is "I will complete Chapter 1, pages 1-50 today," then you will be able to see or measure whether or not you achieved your goal at the end of the day.
- **Acceptable:** Criticize whether your goals are formulated in line with your needs. If you are studying a course just because you are enjoying it and leaving the others because you had hardships in understanding the material, then your goals are not acceptable. Ensure that you are studying what you need.
- **Realistic:** Your goals should be doable. Setting yourself 200 pages in a day may not be realistic, but you can read 50 pages in a day.
- **Time-framed:** Give a deadline for your goals and make sure that you will be able to complete them in this expected date/week. For instance, "I will complete the first assignment on Friday afternoon" or "I will study the first three chapters of the exam by the end of this week". It will be wise to complete your assignments before 1-2 days before the submission dates, so when something urgent happens, you won't fall behind. Check your assignments for errors.

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Stay aware of your workload

Your instructors may give you a syllabus about that includes information regarding what is expected of you from the course. This guideline may include what readings, activities, and assignments you should complete during the course. Start with recording all-important submission dates so you won't miss them. Here is how to do this:

- Download a study calendar or study timetable app on your computer or phone such as *myHomework Student Planner, Student Planner – Homework Agenda & Subtasks, Study Planner*. You can use a pen and paper to draw a timetable for yourself.
- Start by filling in all the critical deadlines for tasks such as assignment and exam dates.
- Fill other vital periods such as holidays since they will impact your plans.
- Work out how much time you will need to study each week for your courses.
- Leave some time in case of the unexpected happened, such as getting sick. Planning for the unexpected will provide you with flexibility so that if something goes wrong, you will have extra time available.

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Take breaks

Studying for long hours without breaks might affect your chance of succeeding in your studies. It would be great if you give yourself regular breaks to stretch your limbs and relax. This will also help you to remember the information better. It is suggested to study for about 30-45 minutes, review what you have learned, and then take a 5 to 10 minutes break.
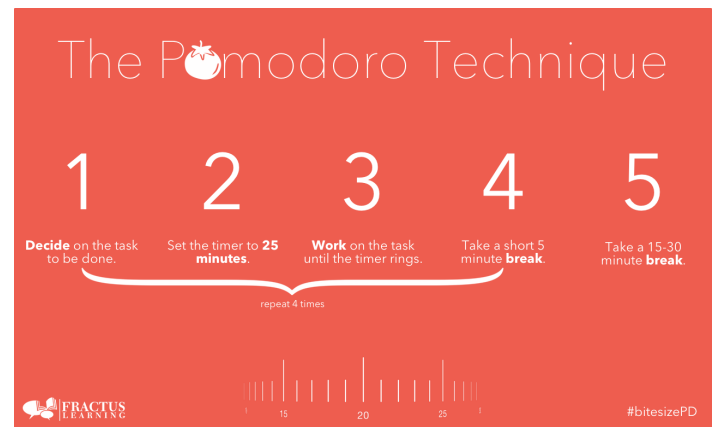
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Create a toolkit of anti-procrastination techniques

As a remote learning student, having things that need to be done in each course means you don't have time to procrastinate. We all procrastinate at times but if you can use a toolkit of anti-procrastinating, it can help you to arrange your time and balance academic and personal life. Here is how to do this: Pomodoro studying technique prompts you to stay focused in a manageable time and which will tend to result in achieving more. You can download a Pomodoro app on your phone and start trying. Click here for more information. Try out these Pomodoro apps:

- Be Focused – Focus Timer (Mac, iOS)
- Focus To-Do: Pomodoro & Tasks (Mac, Windows, Linux, iOS, Android)
- Easy Pomodoro – Pomodoro Timer (Mac, iOS)
- Flow – Focus and Work Timer (Mac, iOS)
- Clockwork Tomato (Windows, Linux, Android)
- Pomodoro Timer Lite (Windows, Linux, Android)
- Pomodoro Smart Timer (Windows, Linux, Android)

The Pomodoro Technique

1 Decide on the task to be done.
2 Set the timer to **25 minutes**.
3 **Work** on the task until the timer rings.
4 Take a short 5 minute **break**.
5 Take a 15-30 minute **break**.

repeat 4 times

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"The Pomodoro technique focuses on doing tasks on time as opposed to planning them. Therefore, it will be better to combine the Pomodoro technique with other productivity methods."

Here is how to do this:

Getting Things Done (GTD) Method

- GTD is time management, written organizational, and productivity system that helps you to organize your work. Try out these apps for GTD:
  - Microsoft To Do (Mac, Windows, Linux, iOS, Android)
  - Wunderlist: To-Do List & Tasks (Mac, Windows, Linux, iOS, Android)
  - Todoist: To-Do List & Tasks (Mac, Windows, Linux, iOS, Android)

Click here for more information >>

Action Method

The Action Method based on the premise that "everything is a project." It helps you to manage your projects (your life) with an emphasis on action. Each project has three primary components (Action Steps, References, and Backburner Items). Action steps are concrete tasks such as creating a draft for the presentation. References are the resources you will need for studying, such as course books, notes, manuals, and websites. Lastly, Backburner Items are the things that you may want to do in the future.

Click here for more information >>

Don't Break The Chain

Also known as Seinfeld's Productivity Secret, this method is a motivation technique that suggests getting a big wall calendar that has a whole year on one page and hang it on the wall where you can see. Then, pick a goal and mark off the days on which you work toward that goal with a big red X. The marked off days are referred to as Chain and do not break the Chain. Here are some apps for trying this method:

- Don't Break The Chain! (iOS)
- Be Steady -Don't Break Chain! (iOS)
- HabitHub – Habit tracker & Goal tracker motivation (Windows, Linux, Android)
- My Chain (Windows, Linux, Android)

Click here for more information >>

Zen to Done

This method based on the premise that *"it is about the habits and the doing, not the system or the tools"* and therefore, encourages you to focus on your work and get organized by providing you 10 habits range from goal setting to regular maintenance of your e-mail. It helps you to focus on what you are doing, staying in the here and now instead of losing time on planning.

Click here for more information >>

Eat That Frog

"If it's your job to eat a frog, it's best to do it first thing in the morning. and if it's your job to eat two frogs, it's best to eat the biggest one first. (Mark Twain)".
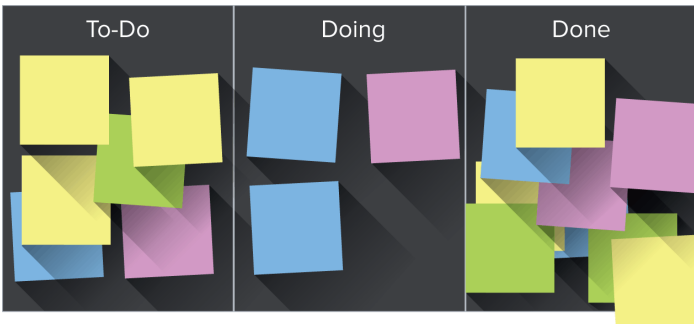
This method suggests you focus on the most challenging tasks, the frogs, first and continue your studying with the others.

10 Minute Hack

10 Minute Hack implies to invest 10 minutes every morning on a task and work on that thing non-stop.

To-Do	Doing	Done

Time Blocking

This method allows you to plan your day and/or week with the tasks and things you want to do. It helps you to focus on one task at a time and thus increase your productiveness. It can be used together with the Eisenhower Matrix to define your priorities and create your "blocks."

Here are some apps for trying this method:

- Plan (Mac, iOS)
- Planny 3 – Smart To Do List (Mac, iOS)
- TimeBlock – Time Block, Plan, Organize & Schedule (Windows, Linux, Android)
- TimeBlocks – Calendar/Todo/Note (Windows, Linux, Android)
- Boasted – Productivity & Time Tracker(Windows, Linux, Android)

Kanban Method

- Kanban Method helps you to visualize every piece of your work on a board with three columns – "Requested," "In Progress," and "Done." Thus, you can see all your tasks, get organized, and focus on the tasks until they are done. Click here for more information. Try out these Kanban apps:
    - Trello (Mac, Windows, Linux, iOS, Android)
    - Daily Task Manager: Kanban (Mac, iOS)
    - Meister Task (Mac, iOS)
    - Task & Project Management – Meister Task (Windows, Linux, Android)
    - Pocket Kanban (Windows, Linux, Android)

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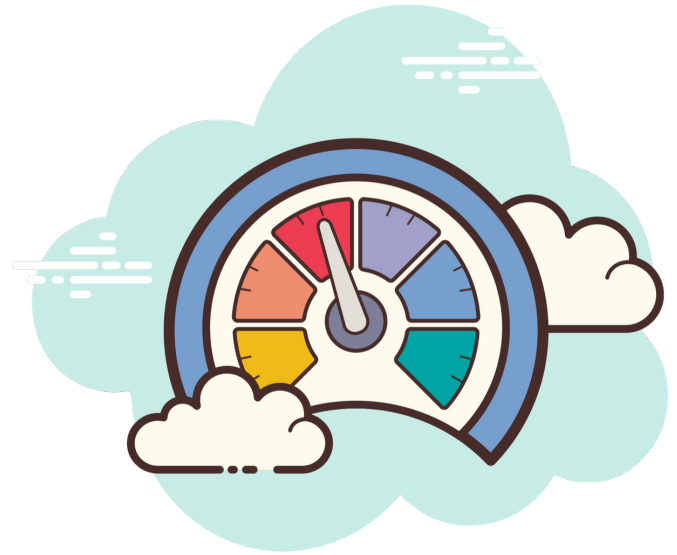**MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY**

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And, here are other techniques which you may want to give a chance and find the one that fits in your studies best:

- The Medium Method
- Agile Results
- The To-Done List and The To-Don't List
- Flowtime Technique
- The Checklist Manifesto
- The Basic Time-Box
- The Healthy Time-Box
- Chetan Surpur's 30-30 Work Cycle
- The Superfocus System
- The Franklin Planner
- A "Do-Later" List
- The 80/20 rule (Pareto Principle)
- An Unpleasant Task A Day
- Dream, Dump, Map, Chunk System
- The MIT Method
- The Six Lists Method
- Workstation Popcorn
- 18 Minutes A Day
- Doing a "4 p.m. Triage"

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Record what you have done so far

You sometimes may miss how far you have come while looking forward with your studies. However, your progress and journey so far is as important as the end result. Focusing on the end goal can be demotivating some time. Instead, concentrating on your small steps and short terms goals will help you stay motivated and realize what you have achieved so far. Focus on the process of what it takes to be successful. Embrace your effort you have been putting on. Record your success and arrange some fun treats for yourself after completing your assignments. This will help keep you motivated. Feel proud of yourself after every good grade, productive session, and big assignment to boost your motivation.

"Focus on the process of what it takes to be successful."

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Benefit from the services of METU- Center for Advancing Learning and Teaching (ODTÜ ÖGEM)

As the Center for Advancing Learning and Teaching (ÖGEM), we support student development by providing services such as academic counseling, psycho-education groups, and resources for learning. You can also follow us on social media to stay updated about our programs and services.

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Keep trying- stay positive

Studying remotely might be challenging. There can be times when you find it hard to sit down to study. Check your self-talk and accept that studying is hard work. When you find yourself into negative thoughts, stop for a while, and take a deep breath. Do not let these temporary negative thoughts to block your academic performance.

Motivation helps you to stay focused and increase your academic success. Here are some tips about how to improve your motivation:

- Think about what you have achieved in the past and make a list of things you have done successfully in the past. This could be anything that you can name as achievement and be proud of yourself. It can be cooking a good meal, trying hard to achieve your goals, getting high scores from your exams. Think about what helped you during these times to achieve and what techniques you have used. You can benefit from your past achievements to lead the way to success again.
- Take control of your studies – Stop for a while and think about how you approach your learning. Think about what works for you and what does not. What makes you be motivated? You can find yourself in trying to use those strategies that actually do not help you. Try to find new strategies and personalize them.
- Reward yourself – Provide yourself with small positive reinforcements or rewards. For example, a great cup of tea and dessert, a chocolate biscuit, or an episode of your favorite show.

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