

Tips for success at Zoom University

Eight ways to be more productive while learning from home

By Kunal Mehta • Science & Tech Editor

Adjusting to studying from home is hard; I get it. You have to learn in an unusual location without educational resources you depend upon and expect. Basic things like raising your hand to ask a question no longer work.

But it's totally doable to adjust – the key is creating a good physical space. After a year of struggling to be productive at my job, I've now spent more than five years working remotely. These are the tips that have worked for me:

Limit all the interruptions

Make sure your family knows when it's OK and not OK to interrupt you. Leave a sock on the doorknob when you're in class . . . or some other indicator. My sister tapes a sign on her door when she's busy so we know whether she's in class, doing homework or just hanging out with friends.

Get out of bed, find a desk

Find a place with decent lighting where you'll do most of your work. As tempting as it might be to sit on your bed with a laptop – don't. Staying on your bed just leaves you lethargic rather than productive. If you don't have a usable desk, consider your dining table or something similar.

Extra motivation for extra pep

It sounds cheesy, but motivational quotes are motivational for a reason. Put up a poster that energizes you, whether it's a quote from a person or from your favorite TV show. COVID-19 really sucks and messed up our lives. A little extra inspiration and positivity will always be helpful.

Don't let days blend together

If you haven't already, it's likely you'll start to forget which day of the week it is. Keep a calendar on your desk or use some other technique to distinguish the days, helping you meet your due dates. I look forward to watching a different TV show every night and use that to keep the days apart.



Start sitting up straight

I always slouch during classes — it's a bad habit, I know. But it's even worse when I'm spending the entire day sitting and drooping in my chair. I try and make an effort to at least start the day with good posture so I can afford to have slouching breaks when I need them.

You don't have to wear pants

Screw it, wear your pajamas! Other people recommend changing into your everyday clothes to bring back some sense of normalcy, but let's face it: during COVID-19 things simply aren't normal. Pajamas are fun and comfortable to wear — embrace them.

Stay hydrated, avoid snacking

Keep water on your desk to stay hydrated, but skip the snacks. It's easy to lose track of time and eat lunch and dinner late. Having convenient snacks on your desk is just going to ruin your appetite. If I do want a snack, I just take the bare minimum I need to my desk.

A lightweight distraction

Online classes can get boring and it's tempting to start scrolling on your phone. But when your professor starts saying something interesting again, you might be too sucked into your device. Having a toy to keep you entertained but not too entrapped can come in handy.