

Top Tips for Learning Online

- 1. Test your software:** Attending your classes online might require unfamiliar software, which means new downloads and skillsets. Take advantage of services on offer from the University, such as video guides or download instructions to ensure that everything you need is functional before your first class starts.
- 2. Set up a healthy work station:** Don't panic! We don't mean that you need to rush to order a fancy desk, but hunching over a tablet on the sofa is a very unhealthy way to spend four hours of class time! Try to set up a space where you can sit comfortably but upright, with good back support. Some of the staff from the University are sitting at a kitchen counter, using a bookshelf, or even setting up on an ironing board. Whatever works!
- 3. Keep in touch with lecturers and staff:** Now is a time to stay connected, and the lecturers and staff of the Birmingham Learning Centre have lots of ways for you to get in contact. You can phone student-facing support teams during their traditional Help Desk hours, set up support meetings with lecturers, or even use the "meeting chat" function within your Microsoft Teams classroom to text your lecturer a question in real time (just remember that everyone in your class can view the chat).
- 4. Create a dedicated workspace:** We know that home life might be chaotic right now, so having a space that "belongs" to your school work will make student life much easier. Collect all the things you might need in one place - your laptop or tablet, some paper and pens, a set of headphones – and don't forget to include some comforting extras like tissues, chewing gum, or even snacks and sweets.
- 5. Take notes:** It can seem tempting to rely on technology – after all, your class sessions are recorded on Teams and will be available to view later – but there's very little that takes the place of note-taking to help cement new ideas and concepts in your brain. Take notes just like you would in a face-to-face classroom!
- 6. Use the materials provided:** In order to support the transition to learning online, your lecturers have created lots of fun and interesting online materials that are available via your course Moodle page. They will also be regularly updated. Be sure to use these resources in order to give yourself the best learning experience!
- 7. Minimise interruptions:** We know it's easier said than done, especially if you are in a busy household, but even small steps can take you in the right direction! Something as simple as sharing your class timetable with friends and family and asking them not to disturb you during lessons will make a big difference.
- 8. Have a tech "back-up plan":** Let's face it: technology is not fool-proof! Even with the best of intentions and preparation, we can all be let down by tech failures such as a dropped WiFi connection, a laptop that chooses the middle of your lecture to "automatically update" or a power chord that gives up the ghost. Limit the disruption by having a back-up plan for emergencies, such as downloading Teams onto your phone.
- 9. Take breaks:** Your lecturers will be working to ensure that you get plenty of breaks during your session in order to support your learning, but you also know your own body and needs. While staying connected is key to your learning, so is allowing yourself to stand up for a stretch or grab a glass of water. We are all better able to focus when we are comfortable.
- 10. Build relationships with classmates:** It may not feel like it in this time of social distancing and self-isolation, but you are not alone! Many of your classmates will be experiencing the same highs and lows as you will over the course of the term. Don't hesitate to reach out for help, advice, or even some "virtual socialising"!

