Adjusting your study habits during COVID

We'll get through this together.

Things may feel out-of-control right now. You may be facing a lot of unknowns and disruptions. Try to be patient with yourself, your classmates, and your instructors during this time. See to your wellbeing first. Making a plan and adjusting your studying may help you feel even a little sense of control.

Use this resource as a starting point.

In this guide, we'll talk about:

- Staying organized

- Avoiding multitasking

- Making the most of video lectures

- Setting a schedule

- Trading old strategies for new ones

- Working with a group or project team

- Staying connected to other people

- Available resources

Your study habits may need to change.

Although more of your coursework and teamwork have to be online and remote, here are some strategies to help.

1. Staying organized

With so many things changing in your courses, you might be reliving that first-week-of-class confusion at a finals-week pace.

Here are some things you might want track for each class:

Are in-person parts of the class changing?
- What are the in-person parts of the course? (lecture, lab, etc.)
- Where can you find these parts now, and how do you access them? (live-stream, discussion board, etc.)
- Are these parts at specific times or can you watch them anytime?

Are assignments changing?
- Are there new due dates?
- Is how you are to submit assignments changing?
- Will any quizzes or exams be done online?

What should you do if you need help?
- Does the instructor have virtual office hours? When and on what platform?
- Does the course have an online forum for asking questions?

This is one way to keep track (an expanded sheet with more ideas is at the end of this document):

	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3
Important dates			Paper due Friday
Big changes	Discussion optional Recorded lectures	No lab Live lecture	Can do a paper instead of group project
Important links	Discussion link Lecture link	Lecture link Office hours link	Group paper folder

2. Avoiding multitasking

If you do more work on your own and your time is less structured, you might be more tempted to multitask. Research shows that few people can succeed at doing multiple things at once or can switch between tasks quickly.

Some downsides to multitasking:

- **Assignments take longer**. Each time you return to an assignment (from Instagram, for example) you have to get familiar with it, find your spot, remember what you were going to do next, etc.
- **You are more likely to make mistakes**. Distractions and switching between tasks tire out the brain.
- **You will remember less**. When your brain is divided, you are less able to commit what you are learning to long-term memory.

Try this instead:

- **Focus on one thing at a time.**

- **Take breaks between tasks.**

Consider working on a task for 25-minutes, then rewarding yourself with a 5-minute break. Research suggests this pattern helps achieve better concentration and alleviates "cognitive boredom" in most people.

3. Making the most of video lectures

Some tips:

- **Stick to the instructor's schedule as much as possible**. Staying on schedule will help you have a feeling of normalcy and prevent you from falling far behind.

- **Find out how to ask questions**. Is there a chat feature? A discussion forum?

- **Close distracting apps and tabs**. Humans are not as good at multitasking as they think! (See # 2 above.)

- **Continue to take notes as you would if you were there in person**. Many studies show that notetaking builds the recall of material and helps to increase test scores.

- **Watch recordings at normal speed**. Watching at faster speeds can decrease retention and result in lower test scores.

4. Setting a schedule

As the situation unfolds, you may have fewer social commitments, group meetings, or work hours. Setting a schedule for yourself can help provide structure and keep you motivated. If you don't already keep a weekly or daily calendar, try doing it. Include time for exercise and self-care. Take advantage of your Google calendar!

Here's one example:

	Scheduled Activity	Course Tasks	Personal/ Self-care
8AM			Shower & breakfast
9AM	Call in for remote lecture		
10 AM		Read Chapter 3	
11 AM			Video chat with friend
12 PM			Lunch
1 PM		Begin problem set 5	
2 PM	Recap lecture with classmate		
3 PM			Exercise

5. Trading old strategies for new ones

You may be forced to adjust your routines during this time. Look for ways to adapt your usual habits or to form new ones.

For example:

- **If you usually study in the library, at the Waypoint, or in a classroom**, ask yourself what kind of environment helps you study. Consider how you can recreate this at home. Maybe you need to study in a chair, rather than on your bed or couch. Maybe you need to move to a new spot when you change tasks. Do you need background noise? How about a white noise app?

- **If you always study in groups,** try a virtual or phone-based study session with your group.

- **If you thrive on tight timelines, but now have a more open schedule,** think about how working with others or setting up a schedule can recreate that for you. When following that becomes difficult, see if you can do even just fifteen minutes of coursework at a time.

6. Working with a group or project team

Remote collaboration will look a little different, but it is definitely possible. Here are some ideas:

- **Try not to procrastinate.** That group project may be out-of-sight, out-of-mind if you aren't seeing your group members regularly. Resist the urge to put the project off. Make small progress regularly on the project and stay in touch.

- **Meet regularly,** especially if you usually communicate during class or lab. Consider a quick text on your group chat about progress every few days. Ideally, have real conversations over video any week you're working together.

- **Set a goal for meetings and use a shared notes doc.** Meetings might now feel different when using video, even if your team was really good at working informally in the past. Try to establish the purpose of your meeting in advance. Take notes in a shared doc so you can all contribute and follow along.

- **Keep videos open when you can.** As long as you can see whatever you need to collaborate, aim to keep the video visible on your computer screen. Doing that will help you see the expressions of your teammates and stay connected to each other.

- **Check on each other and ask for backup:** if someone has been absent from your group meetings or chat, ask them directly if they're still able to participate in the project. If you aren't getting responses within a day or two, let your instructor know – this isn't being petty, it is your team's responsibility.

7. Staying connected to other people

Even if as we have to limit in-person time with the Maine Maritime Academy community, connecting with family and friends can be more important than ever. And staying in touch with instructors, classmates and team members is still important for continued classwork. Consider:

- **Scheduling video calls with family and friends.** Talking to loved ones can be really helpful when you feel stressed or nervous about something. Taking a break to laugh is also important.

- **Connect with classmates,** for example, to talk through a tough problem.

- **Attend virtual office hours or study groups** so that you can stay up on your coursework.

8. Available resources

IT personnel will continue to maintain resources to help you navigate this different environment. Check out the list on the next page, and watch your SMU email and phone notifications for changes.

Please remember, this will pass.

Even though COVID may have disrupted your life, and you may feel that it came at the worst possible time, take a minute to remember that **this is temporary**. You will find your way when the situation settles down. You will get back on track, and things will return to normal. We don't know when, but it will happen. _Until then, take a deep breath, do your best, get some rest, and wash your hands regularly_.

Campus resources during COVID-19

Many campus personnel, including faculty, will also be working from home while you do; a few will be on campus. **Continue to reach out when you need help.** You can find email and phone numbers, if you don't know them already, in the Campus Directory

Other resources include:

- **Office hours**. Your instructors will inform you of any changes to their office hour availability.

- **Peer Learning Assistants (PLA's).** Email a PLA for assistance managing your classes online.
  - **Claire Patterson** - cepatt16@smumn.edu
  - **Mariah Bell** - mxbell16@smumn.edu
  - **Edgar Medina-Ortiz** - exmedi16@smumn.edu
  - **Danielle Harris** - drharr17@smumn.edu
  - **Brookelyn Lewis** - bllewi18@smumn.edu

- **Advisors**. You still have your regular academic advisor. Please continue to contact them with questions and to schedule your advising meetings. **Registration has been pushed back to April 6, 7, 8 and 9. Check your portal for your specific date and time!**

- **Regularly scheduled course help sessions.** Check with your instructor for updates.

- **Library help.** Contact the reference librarian for specific help, or use the library guides

- **Counseling help.** Click here for helpful information

- **The Writing Studio** will support students in gaining effective writing skills.

Reach out to us. We are here to help!

Student Success Center
studentsuccess@smumn.edu