While many classes have been moved to hybrid, remote, or online instruction for the semester in an effort to slow the spread of COVID-19, we recognize that many of you are nervous about being successful as an online student. Although many things are unpredictable and stressful at this moment, we are here to assure you that you can and will be successful with hybrid and online courses. We are here to help you! The Student Success Center, in collaboration with other departments on campus, has put together this guide with ten tips to help you navigate this new online environment. Under tip #3 you’ll find all of the information about Tutoring, Study Groups, the Writing Center, the Library, Counseling Services, the Disability Resource Center, and Academic Advising. Please reach out to us as umcssc@crk.umn.edu if you have any questions at all. You are not alone. We want to help you stay on track and be successful!

**Tips on Being Successful with Online Instruction**

1. Stay healthy.

Please continue to keep in mind the health warnings we have heard since this situation began. **Wash your hands**; take care of yourselves; and whether you are an older adult, **have high-risk health concerns**, or are going to be in contact with anyone who may, please stay home. Even those not experiencing symptoms may unknowingly spread COVID-19 to others. We are asking for your best effort on all fronts.

In addition to the public health warnings, **focus on all areas of wellness**! While more classes and meetings are taking place online, remember that our brain can only work to its fullest if our body is well. Take regular breaks that involve exercise and fresh air and eat good food! Preparing a healthy meal or going for a run is not wasting your time. Eating well, getting plenty of sleep (7 to 9 hours per night), and taking regular breaks for 10-15 mins to stretch the arms and legs helps you keep focus and avoid eye strain from computer monitors in an online learning environment.

We are being asked to practice “social distancing” (i.e. physical distancing) but stay as social as ever. Text, tweet, and Snapchat with your friends. Use Zoom, Google Meet, or Facetime to have video meetings with your classmates or form study groups. Use these platforms to **connect and uplift each other**. We’ll get through this together.

If you are unsure of how to use UMN’s online platforms, click the links to learn how to host a [Zoom meeting](https://zoom.us) or to learn how to [set up a Google Meet session](https://calendar.google.com). Check your laptop microphone to make sure it is working. If it is not, look for headphones with a built-in microphone.

2. Treat an online course like a “real” course.

Some of your instructors may choose to meet **synchronously** on a regularly scheduled day and time over a Zoom or Google Meet video conference. Some of your instructors, however, may
choose to teach your class in an asynchronous format, meaning there will be recorded videos and other resources that you can access at a time that is convenient for you. In either case, it is important to treat all of your online courses like “real” courses. Even though they are now online, each class is just as important as if it were on campus.

Even in this online format, instructors are still expected to be available for office hours. However, these office hours will likely be virtual. Check your syllabi to find out when and how each instructor plans to hold their office hours. Depending on each class and instructor, you will have the option of communicating with your instructor through your Canvas site, via email, by phone, or through video conference (i.e. Zoom or Google Meet). It is important to ask questions when you have them, so stay in close contact with your instructors and reach out to them when you have questions.

3. Your campus resources still exist.

While the mode of delivery may look different than normal, most offices across campus will still be offering resources. For academic resources, the Student Success Center (SSC) is still providing many forms of support for students during this time. UMC’s Writing Center and subject tutoring were already offering similar services to our online students and are ready to provide assistance. If you are not already using them, please be aware that these resources exist:

a. Tutoring
Whether you are an on-campus or an online student, you can request a tutor for any class you’re enrolled in. Visit the SSC Tutoring page to learn more and request a tutor. It may take a few days to find a tutor for you, but we are here to support you. If you are nervous about meeting with a tutor online, the staff from the SSC are ready to train you on how to use various video conference software. If you have any questions about tutoring, please email them to umctutor@crk.umn.edu.

b. Extend the Classroom (ETC) Study Groups
The SSC also offers evening study sessions for College Algebra, Calculus, Introductory Chemistry, Intro to Sociology, and Intro to Animal Science. These take place in Evergreen Classroom once per week. Participation in the group study sessions is voluntary. To find out the days/times, click on the Extending the Classroom Sign-Up Form. Fill out the form so you will be added to the group study Google Calendar event.

c. Writing Center
Through the Writing Center webpage, both online and on-campus students can get help on any essay or writing project. Depending on the type of feedback you would like to receive, you can sign up one of two ways:
If you would like to have a live consultation (either in-person or via video conference) about your project, use the “Live Consultation” dropdown and click the “Make Appointment” button to schedule a time with a Writing Center Consultant. Select a time that works for you and upload your writing project. Your Writing Center Consultant will then email you to confirm the modality of your meeting.

If you would prefer to submit a paper for feedback but skip the live interaction, use the “Email Feedback” dropdown and click the “Online Consultation Request” button. Complete the questionnaire and be sure to upload the draft of your writing project and the instructions from your professor. A Writing Center Consultant will record a video with some suggestions and email them back to you within a day or two.

Both forms of feedback will require time for the Writing Center Consultants to read your draft and form ideas on improving your writing projects. Please request the Writing Center help at least two days prior to the due date of the project so that the Writing Center can give useful feedback to improve your project. As you have questions pertaining to writing, please email them to umcwrite@crk.umn.edu.

d. Library
The UMC Library is open! Check out their current hours on their website. In addition, they continue to support students in an online environment and have created a UMC Library Online Learning Guide aimed at supporting students in their online learning at the University of Minnesota Crookston. Questions for UMC librarians can be sent to umclib@crk.umn.edu.

e. Counseling Services
We recognize that this is a very stressful and unpredictable time. Your mental health is a top priority. UMC Counseling Services is providing phone/video counseling and referral services. For more information contact Tim Menard (menard021@umn.edu) or Christen Schoenborn (berge361@crk.umn.edu) or call 218-281-8571. Additional resources that may be helpful include Learn to Live (enter code “UMN”), Effective U, and Jed Foundation - COVID-19 and Managing Mental Health. As always, the crisis line is available 24 hours a day: 800-282-5005 or text “UMN” to 61222.

f. Disability Resource Center (DRC)
The Disability Resource Center continues to work with students and faculty to foster accommodations, adaptations, and universal design support. With many classes switching to online formats, your accommodations may need to be revisited. Reach out to the DRC by email at umcdrc@crk.umn.edu or by phone at 218-281-8587 (or 800-627-3529 TTY).

g. Academic Advising
Your faculty advisor, as well as the professional advisors in the SSC, are still available to you during this time via email, phone, or video conference. It’s important to check in with your
advisor before registering for classes. Be sure to reach out to your advisor to schedule an appointment to discuss course planning or ask questions. You can also email us at umcssc@crk.umn.edu if you have questions.

4. Ask questions and communicate with instructors.

It is important if you are struggling with a topic to be proactive and seek out help. Ask questions when you have them. Even faculty who have taught online before may not anticipate the question(s) you will have. Because of the rapid switch to the online environment, there may be things your instructor overlooked. They may even need your help navigating the technology. If you are confused about a course or have questions about an assignment, please ask your instructor. They are there to guide students in the learning process. They want to help students succeed. Be patient and stay in close communication with your instructors.

5. Practice time management.

The flexibility to create your own schedule is often one of the biggest benefits of online classes. However, that freedom can also be detrimental if you do not have solid time management skills. Without them, you might easily find yourself cramming before classes or handing in subpar assignments. Follow these tips to help practice and improve your time management skills:

- **Make note of major assignments.** Mark them on a calendar that you check regularly so you know your workload each week.
- **Create a weekly schedule that you follow.** Designating certain hours each week to reading, participating in live lectures, watching recorded lectures or videos, taking notes, completing assignments, and studying is extremely important to be successful in your courses. Your online coursework is a top priority and part of your weekly routine. It may be helpful to set reminders for yourself to complete these tasks.
- **When working on your courses, try time-blocking,** which is allotting yourself a certain amount of time for each task before moving on to the next one and setting a timer to keep yourself accountable.
- **Take frequent, short breaks.** Our minds become a little numb after an hour of looking at the computer screen, so taking a few minutes to yourself is important to rejuvenate your brain. A quick coffee break, grabbing a snack, snuggling with the dog, or a short amount of time outside can really revitalize you to continue your studies. Schedule breaks of 5-10 minutes between blocks of study time. It will help you get a few minutes of peace and relief to stay on track with your study plan.

6. Hold yourself accountable.
Set goals at the beginning of each week and check-in with yourself daily. In an on-campus classroom setting, you will often receive verbal or visual reminders of an assignment’s upcoming due date or the date of the next quiz/exam. Without a professor actively reminding you, it is up to you to make sure you have allotted enough time to complete the work so you are not starting the assignment or studying at the last minute.

If you are having trouble holding yourself responsible, pair up with a classmate or enlist the help of a family member or friend to check in with as an accountability partner. Call or text each other with a daily update. Schedule a biweekly Zoom meeting. By being organized, proactive, and self-aware, you can get the most from your online classes even though life is stressful and unpredictable right now.

7. Create a regular study space and stay organized.

Set up a dedicated learning environment for studying. By completing your work there repeatedly, you will begin to establish a routine. Wherever your workspace is, it is important to determine what type of environment will work best for you. Experiment to discover which type of setting boosts your productivity. Wherever you choose, make sure there is high-speed internet access so you are not trying to take an online course over a lagging connection.

Setting up a regular workspace will also help you to stay organized. Knowing exactly where important dates, files, forms, syllabi, books, and assignments live will help keep you on track towards hitting your goals. When setting up your study space, make sure you:

- Have a high-speed internet connection
- Have the required books, materials, and software for the course
- Have headphones for listening to lectures or discussions (especially important in shared spaces)

8. Eliminate distractions.

From Netflix to social media to family members constantly interrupting you, you will be faced with many distractions that can easily derail your studies. The best online students know how to lessen these distractions and set aside time to focus.

Exactly how much of a challenge these distractions will prove to be will depend on your own unique personality and situation. Some might find that they can tune out a noisy home by listening to music or closing the door. Others find they will be more productive early in the morning or late at night when family members are in bed. Ultimately, you will need to find a strategy that works best for you.

Regardless of where you choose to work, consider turning your cell phone off or on silent to avoid losing focus every time a text message or notification pops up. And if you are still having trouble resisting the temptation to check your email or surf the web, try downloading a website blocker. Using applications like Cold Turkey and Freedom can help eliminate distractions by blocking the apps or websites that tend to compete for your attention, such as TikTok, Snapchat, Instagram, and Twitter.
9. **Use what works for you.**

Once you have established where you will learn, think about **when and how you accomplish your best work.** If you are a morning person, make time to study first thing. More of a night owl? Set aside an hour or two after dinner to cozy up to your laptop. If family members or family obligations require your attention, **set clear boundaries** and let them know the times of day when school is your priority. Brew your usual cup of coffee, put on your go-to playlist, and do whatever you need to get into the zone and down to business.

Not everyone learns the same way, so think about what types of information help you best grasp new concepts and employ relevant study strategies. If you are a visual learner, for example, print out transcripts of the video lectures to review. Learn best by listening? Make sure to build time into your schedule to play and replay all audio- and video-based course content. In some instances, you may not be able to study in your preferred learning style. People who prefer hands-on learning may need to adjust to a different learning style to take in the information being presented to them. While this may be uncomfortable, the act of working through your discomfort can help you actually learn the information better.

10. **Actively participate and take notes.**

**Actively participate** in the course’s Canvas site and Zoom classes (if applicable) to help you better understand course materials and engage with your classmates. Your active participation might involve commenting on a classmate’s response on a discussion board, posting a question about a project you are working on, asking a question during a live Zoom class, or emailing the instructor when you have a question. Read what other students and your professor are saying, and if you have a question, ask for clarification.

**Write down important notes.** Just like in a traditional on-campus classroom setting, taking notes, whether during a live Zoom class or when watching a recorded lecture or video, will make it easier to remember the important pieces of information you will need to retain. If it is a long recorded video lecture, divide it into smaller chunks and include timestamps in the margins of your notes. It can also be helpful to take notes in a regular Word document or other digital formats, so that you can click “Ctrl” & “F” to easily find information. This can be a tremendous help when completing assignments.

**Find outside resources.** There are many supplemental resources available online. Go out and find them. [Khan Academy](https://www.khanacademy.org) has great video tutorials in a variety of subjects. [StudyEdge.com](https://www.studiedge.com) and [Clutchprep.com](https://www.clutchprep.com) are similar sites that are growing the number of subjects they cover. [WolframAlpha](https://www.wolframalpha.com) has a lot of resources for math and science. [Google Images](https://images.google.com) is a very simple but helpful tool for a variety of subjects, whether it’s identifying different biological species or remembering the quadratic formula. There are many [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com) channels that focus on specific subjects. Be proactive and explore ways to supplement your learning.