

The background features a dark blue gradient with vibrant, multi-colored geometric shapes (polygons) in shades of red, orange, yellow, green, and purple. These shapes are scattered across the frame, some overlapping. Faint, white dashed lines form wavy, contour-like patterns, particularly on the left side. In the upper right corner, there is a cluster of small, colorful dots connected by thin lines, resembling a network or data visualization.

Distance Learning Toolkit

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This Toolkit is full of practical advice and resources for anyone attempting to navigate the virtual learning world.

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Study and Work Techniques



Thinking about your working style and habits can help you to define what works best for you. Here are some tried and true work and study techniques that you might consider:

Dedicated Workspaces: Choose a place and time. Everyone has their own idea about the best place and time to work. For some it is their bedroom at night, and for others it is a quiet staircase in the daytime. Workspaces don't have to be conventional. Many great works were written in cars, courtyards, and parks at night. Think about what spaces and times might work for you and give them a shot.

Tools for Your Workspace: Many individuals are piecing together spaces to work comfortably and avoid distraction right now. If you fit this description, you may want to considering trying some of these:

Standup desks: There are many health benefits of standing such as lowered blood sugar levels and increased energy. You don't have to run out and buy an adjustable desk though, a kitchen tabletop or dresser might be just the right height.

Study and Work Techniques (continued)



Blue light blockers: There is a relationship between exposure to “blue light” from screens before bedtime and disruptions in REM sleep. Blue Light is also thought to cause an overall eye soreness. Eyeglasses that block Blue Light have become popular in job fields that require staring at screens for long periods of time. You can pick up a pair of these “Blue Blockers” for as little as five bucks. Most PCs and MACs also have [settings for Blue Light filters and blockers](#).

Separate yourself from your cellphone and other distracting devices while you work. If you can’t be without your phone for too long try silencing it, sleep mode, or “do not disturb.”

Notetaking: Most online courses involve video lectures. While it’s tempting to just listen, it’s often important to also take notes the same way you would in a traditional course.

Captioning: Onboard captioning for live video lectures are available on [Zoom](#) and [Microsoft Teams](#) (see [IT Resources for Students](#) for additional information). Also, on both platforms it’s possible for the host to enable access to written transcripts for attendees after a meeting is completed.

Study and Work Techniques (continued)



Early Scheduling and Breaking Down Assignments:

As soon as the semester starts read your course syllabus and schedule exams, assignments, and any project that has a due date on your preferred calendar so you can stay ahead on your studies. Include personal days and (events, holidays, vacation) so that your schedule stays realistic. Consider the logical order of completing tasks and schedule time on your calendar for:

- Timelines
- Outlines
- Drafts and research
- Conclusions and summaries

Complete the tasks above early enough to have some time for a final review, ideally after some rest.

Study and Work Techniques (continued)



Scheduling Breaks:

Study in chunked sessions: Your ability to retain information diminishes after about 25-30 minutes, so break it up into multiple, smaller sessions ([Pomodoro Technique](#)).

Break things down by task: estimate how long you will work at each sitting to complete a section of work.

Reward yourself with fun activities during your breaks. Make sure you get away from your desk or study space.

A bit of physical activity, even just a stroll around the block can sometimes help you look at a problem in a different way and could even help you to solve it.

School/Work/Life Balance



Balancing school, work and life is stressful for anyone. Consider these tips for taking care of yourself when you find the time.

Nutrition:

Scheduling meals: Foods that are high in protein like meats and nuts contain the amino acid Tryptophan that is a precursor to the chemical Serotonin which make human beings sleepy. Think about the right and wrong times to have a hearty meal.

Healthy snacking: One way to stay focused and avoid any health challenges is by eating healthy snacks. Here are some suggestions for snacks to keep your mind focused and energized: avocado, nuts, apples, veggies, grapes, granola bars, hummus, yogurt, sunflower seeds, apples, string cheese, and hard-boiled eggs.

Sunlight:

Sunlight is the best source of Vitamin D. When the sun's Ultraviolet B (UVB) rays hit skin cells, they produce energy for vitamin D synthesis. Low Vitamin D levels are associated with symptoms like fatigue, muscle weakness, and mood changes. Even during the winter, try to get some sunlight by sitting close to a window or going outside when the sun is out.

School/Work/Life Balance (continued)



Yoga and Mindfulness:

If your life involves hours of sitting at a desk or computer each day, it's a good idea to work-in stretching and mindfulness breaks. This doesn't mean you have to join a gym or sign up for yoga. YouTube is full of free lessons and there are also a lot of great free apps that offer 5 or 10 minute exercises. Consider these easy options for including mindfulness and stretching exercises into your routine:

[5 Minute Yoga](#) is a free app that offers lessons broken down into 5 minute blocks.

[Smiling Mind](#) is a free mindfulness app that offers free mindfulness exercises.

School/Work/Life Balance (continued)



Attitude: Your attitude impacts your overall productivity, study performance, and effectiveness of learning.

Positive Affirmations are positive statements that can help you to challenge and overcome negative thoughts. If you doubt yourself or tell yourself “I can’t do this,” attempting a task is likely to be more difficult. If instead you focus your mind on positive outcomes and on how you can use your own individual strengths to achieve goals you will perform better. Tell yourself “I can do this” or “I got this” more often.

Sleep: It’s easier said than done but we all know getting a good night’s sleep can make a difference. Consider these techniques for catching some decent Z’s:

- Take time for relaxing activities away from your screen before sleep. Artwork, music, cooking or reading a good book are some popular choices but everyone is different.
- Limit caffeine, nicotine, alcohol, and big meals at night.
- Create a calm and restful sleep environment. Soft lighting, relaxing music, or plush bedding can make all the difference.
- Try to go to sleep and get up at the same time every day.

E-mail and Written Etiquette



Written words live forever. As a distance learner it's a good idea to think about how to express yourself in posts and e-mails.

Writing Formally: when e-mailing professors, employees or colleagues at your school:

Choose a clear subject line for your e-mails and posts. If contacting a professor, for example, your subject might be: "Course Code_ Questions on Final." For a Financial Aid question you might write; "Question about my Financial Aid_ StudentID: XXXXXXXX."

Use a formal salutation like "Dear Professor ____, Dear Ms. or Mr. ____, or "To whom it may concern". Sign off with a courteous statement like "Thank you for your time and consideration"

Consider running your writing through [Grammarly](#), a free writing app that screens your writing and offers tips to help you with grammar, clarity, and effectiveness.

Attend virtual office hours. If you prefer to speak with your professor via phone or video, contact them and ask about their office hours.

Video Conferencing Strategies



Lighting: having one good light source pointed on your face will help reduce any shading effects. If you are using natural light, try to face the light source instead of having your back to it.

Background noise: mute your audio when listening to avoid broadcasting any background noise or typing sounds.

Audio/mic/screen sharing checks: schedule a meeting with a friend or classmate who can help make sure your audio and video are optimal before any important presentations or meetings.

Although you can pass with wearing shorts during a Zoom meeting it is a good idea to throw on a business casual top. Solid colors help to prevent the blurring effects sometimes caused by checkered or striped shirts. Try a sitting position where you're centered and sitting upright. Consider using a virtual background to ensure privacy especially on days when your space may be less presentable to friends, classmates and colleagues.

These practices are especially important for presentations and job interviews.

Virtual Learning Tools



Click here for a full list of [software available to you as a student at Cooper Union.](#)

Software that students can download directly from software vendors:

- [Microsoft Office 365](#) (Email, Word, Excel, Teams, OneDrive and more)
- [Student Self-Service](#) (Portal to our Student Information System)
- [Moodle](#) (class documents, assignments)
- [Adobe Creative Cloud](#)
- [Altair Hyperworks](#)
- [Ansys](#) - (Click on Ansys Student) [note: Cooper labs have Ansys 2020R1 installed. If you want to download and install Ansys 2020R1, please click on “prior versions” and select 2020R1)
- [Autodesk](#) – sign-up [here](#) with your Cooper e-mail address to download and install Autodesk apps.
- Bentley - Sign up at <https://apps.bentley.com/studentserver/home/index> For CE students, please contact your professor for the school code.
- [Matlab](#) – sign-up [here](#) with your Cooper e-mail address to download and install Matlab.
- [Rhino for Windows](#)
- [Rhino for Mac](#)
- [Solidworks](#) – Download the Student Development Kit at <https://www.solidworks.com/SDK> and the SDK code is 9SDK2020
- [Zoom](#)

For other software resources available for students, please visit the [IT Resources for Students](#) webpage.

Connecting and Working with Peers



Consider how to distinguish work versus casual video meetings.

Building Virtual Spaces for Social Life:

MS Teams, WhatsApp, FB Video Chat, Google Hangouts and Zoom (personal) are some of the most widely used platforms for chatting with classmates or peers.

Popular options for casual virtual meetups are game nights, happy hours, video game nights, Netflix & Amazon “Watch Parties” and group study sessions.

Group Assignments:

- Determine if your group should meet via email, video chat or phone.
- Establish roles for group members in the assignment like editor, project manager, note taker or researcher for each section of the assignment
- Be responsible of your portion of the assignment and communicate with other members if you need help or extensions
- Connect with your instructor early on if you need clarification on the assignment
- Use a shared document to schedule goals and benchmarks to ensure you meet your deadline

Campus Resources



Take advantage of the campus resources and services provided by the [Office of Student Affairs](#):

- + [Counseling and Mental Health Services](#)
- + [Disability Support Services](#)
- + [Immigration Resources](#)
- + [Student Medical Care](#)

For more information, please visit the [Office of Student Affairs](#) webpage.