

Managing Distractions – Remote Learning

1. Start by creating a study plan. Identify periods of the day when you are most productive.
2. Create a schedule for your kids. Setting a schedule for your kids is key to having a productive e-learning day. I.e. dedicate a specific time when everyone is involved in online learning. Plan ahead of time activities you want to put in place for your children, as well a set time each for meals, naps, baths, etc. Setting up virtual enrichment activities for your kids after school may not cut it, playing outside burns off excess energy and improves moods. If applicable, enlist help to have someone watch the kids while you study and trade off times. Ask family and friends to respect your established study time and study area.
 - Let Kids Make Some Choices. Giving children the ability to choose some of their own activities and self-serve meals and snacks helps build independence—and allows you to get more unbroken time for school work. Put a list on the fridge of lunch choices and snack choices. The children can get all of their own snacks, eliminating the need to take them through the options. Prepare a BUNCH of snack kits the night before and put in little snack bags and cups. They can be ready on their own shelf so anyone can get them easily.
 - Another suggested list for the fridge could be labeled ‘Bored?’ with various activity suggestions such as coloring, dance party, and crafts. The last item on the list could be ‘clean.’ Interesting to see if anyone chooses that one or something else. Keep a running list of activities—the adults and children can pitch in thinking of ideas—and deploy the ones that work in the moment. If you give the kids your full attention during breaks, they can look forward to them, and it might just be easier for them to get through your studying blocks too. During your “off” time, play with the kids, preside over schoolwork, or get outside.
 - Use Visual Cues to Minimize Interruptions. Designate a specific area as your study zone and use it consistently. Build the association that when you are sitting there, you’re working. Another way to enforce this rule is to signal when it is OK to talk to you. If they understand when they can interrupt you, they’re more likely to wait until that time.
 - Be gentle with your kids (and yourselves)
“Be gentle with your kids; they’re not used to this either,” says a mom who’s worked from home for almost nine years. “Mine get [that I need to focus] but they still need attention, especially now when their world is also upside down. Aim for 48 minute increments of productivity (yes, this is a magic number).”
3. Limit your digital distraction. Digitally distracted students may cut study sessions short and neglect assignments. They take longer to complete tasks because their focus is fragmented. Put away your phone.
4. Avoid TV and household chores during your study time. Multitasking actually leads to a decrease in productivity because it take your brain extra time to switch mental gears between tasks.

5. Make a daily plan:
 - Schedule time for each task that you have to do. Plan to work in short chunks (no more than one hour at a time) and then take a break! Incorporating breaks will help you stay focused during your work time.
 - Incorporate a change of scenery. Take a break by going on a short walk around your neighborhood or apartment complex.
 - Discover the best time of day for you to tackle challenging assignments. Doing the most challenging tasks first thing in the morning can help prevent getting caught up with distractions, but do what works best for you. Start by creating a study plan. Identify periods of the day when you are most productive.
 - Discover where you study best. Does working in your bed make you tired? Try studying somewhere you designate exclusively for work, like a desk, a comfy chair in your house, kitchen table, or even outside.
 - Incorporate movement and fun. Make sure to schedule in times to participate in activities that you enjoy each day and week. Add some movement or exercise into your daily schedule. This could mean taking a walk, following an exercise video online, or dancing. Movement while studying can also help you stay focused. Try using a cardboard box to turn your desk or table into a standing desk. How about using a white board?
6. Manage your thoughts while studying
 - Plan an activity to transition your mind for focus, like deep breathing or listening to music.
 - Write down competing and distracting thoughts on a post-it or notebook and save them for later. This way, you won't forget about them but you hopefully will be able to put them aside until you are done working.
 - Consider building movement into your study time.
 - Get a still background. It is easier to keep yourself focused on your studies if there are no distractions behind your monitor. Look around your space for an open area against a wall.
 - Background noise can keep you focused. Music or TV turned down low.
7. Be prepared ahead of time for distractions like hunger, feeling cold, or getting restless. Bring a snack to your desk, put on an extra layer and try to go for a walk before sitting down to prevent these feelings from pulling you away from your focus.
8. Be sure to reward yourself with something you would like to do once you've finished studying for the day, such as playing games, talking with family and friends, or watching a movie. You'll look forward to getting your homework and studying done so you can get to something else fun or productive without relentless interruptions.
9. Take a few minutes to outline the assignments and quizzes you have for the week. Keeping a detailed list of everything will help you track of what to focus on first, and you can start working on assignments as you cover the topics in class. You'll feel organized and satisfied checking everything off towards the end of the week.
10. A clean environment will motivate you more and distract you less than if you had to work with a messy desk.
11. Keep track of what distracts you so you can prepare for them the next time you sit down for your classes.