LEARNING
DEVELOPMENT & SUCCESS

ONLINE COURSES: MAINTAINING MOTIVATION

Study for two minutes. Check Instagram. Study for two minutes. Browse Netflix. Study for two minutes. Check email. Study for two minutes. Get lost in TikTok indefinitely.

If this sounds like your typical study session, you're certainly not alone, but you might need a little help to kick your motivation into high gear, especially if you have a test coming up.

Among the challenges of online learning is losing motivation. Since students usually complete online courses from their homes away from their classmates, it can be difficult to remain motivated to study. Not every motivation strategy is going to work for everyone, but there's something out there that will work for you. Here are some tips to help you maintain your motivation when you just need to buckle down and get it done.

Break it Down

Thinking about doing something all at once can give you that feeling where there's so much to do you don't even know where to start.

Stay motivated by developing short-term goals and following specific steps to reach them. One effective way to do this is to break down your tasks into smaller, actionable steps that you can tackle one at a time. Then, write short-term goals on specific days of your calendar. Once you have achieved the goal, cross the day off on the calendar. Seeing your list get smaller and smaller is very motivating.

Build Connections

Make efforts to communicate with other people enrolled in the same online class as you. Take advance of the online forums and discussion boards. This is the easiest way to communicate with classmates. If possible, exchange emails with other people in the course. If you cannot communicate with others taking the same class, talk to friends and family about the material you're studying. This will help you learn.

It is also helpful to communicate regularly with the course instructor. That way, you can ask questions and discuss the course material.

Use Website and App blockers

One of the biggest distractions when working from home is the lure of websites and social media. Download a plugin for your computer that will prevent you from wondering away from your work and surfing distracting websites: try Freedom or AppBlock. These plugins can either limit the time you spend on these websites or block access to them completely.

Other apps can help you track the time you spend on any one task and help you identify when in your day you are getting distracted. This can help you understand your own habits and devise strategies for staying focused throughout the day.

Treat Online Courses Like In-Class Courses

You might want to get comfy, slip into your pajamas and relax while you're taking your online courses. Resist the urge! Structure your day so that you're in a routine, just like you would be on campus. Start with waking up at the same time every day, starting your online work at the same time, and finishing at the same time.

And, don't stop there! Ditch the pajamas and get dressed like you would for an actual course. Make sure that you create an effective work environment for yourself. This means putting yourself on a schedule and dressing up for class like you normally would.

Don't be Afraid to Take Breaks

It is true that you'll want to treat your online coursework similar to how you treat your classes, but the one benefit of working home that you will want to take advantage of is the chance to take breaks.

Working at one task for too long can actually be detrimental. It leads to a loss of focus, and makes it harder to get through work. Instead, take breaks every 30 minutes to help reinvigorate your mind and get you back on task. When you take a break, stretch, walk around a little, and maybe get a drink of water.

However, don't let your break last too long. An ideal break lasts for no longer than 10 minutes - you don't want to get lost in games or TV shows. Make sure that you get back to your work within a brief amount of time so that you stay focused on your courses. There are even apps that can help you limit your break time and get back to your work without too much of a delay. Try FocusMe to stay on track.

Just get started

With so many strategies and tips, there's bound to be at least once that works for you. Test a few out and see if they make a difference, and remember that many of these strategies can work well together. Then, just sit down and start studying. Often the hardest part is staying, so if you simply sit down and start, you might get into the groove.