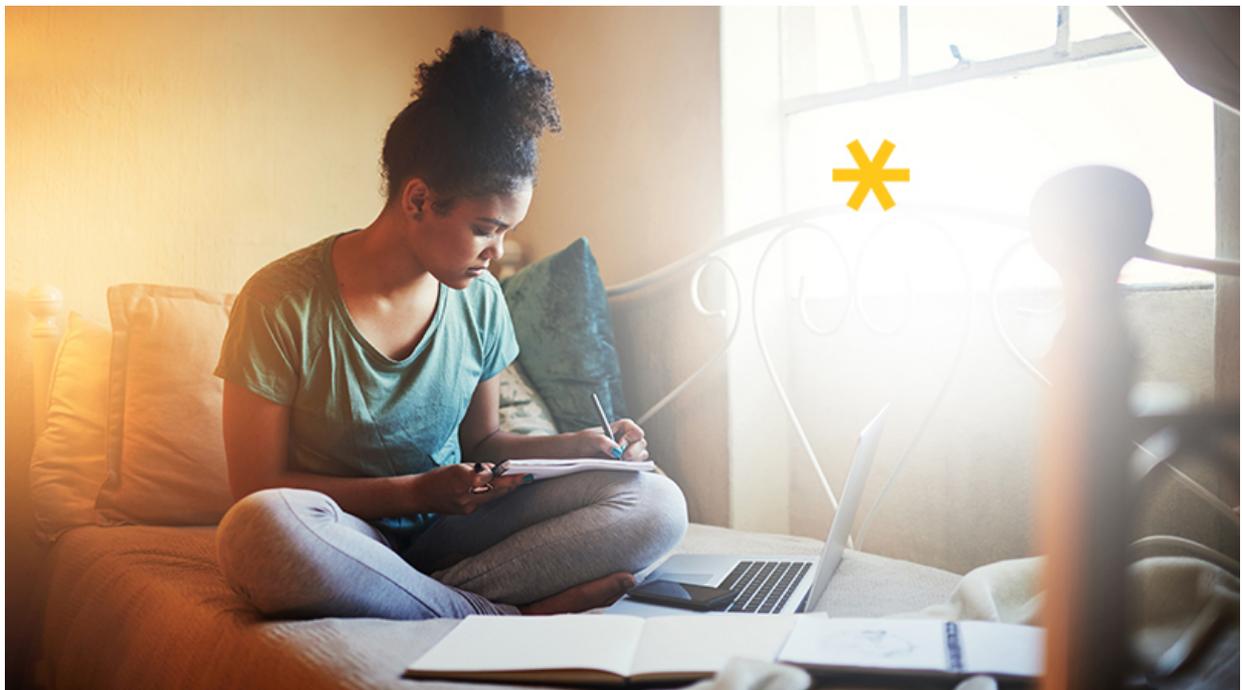


Online classes, just a little while longer

This practical home study guide helps you across the finish line



Utrecht University

Educational Consultancy &
Professional Development

Preface and content

There you are, studying at a university, but with the campus, your lecturers, and your peers at a distance. Studying from home has its advantages: you're flexible, you don't need to go anywhere and can even join a lecture in your pyjama pants with your laptop. But it is oh so very hard to get started! Why is it so difficult? And how can you make sure to keep yourself and your study progress on track?

If you attend a university, you are expected to have a high degree of self-regulation. This means that it is your responsibility to get the learning process started and to keep it going. What skills should you have or develop to ensure that you can do so? For instance: set goals, manage distractions, and plan realistically. And distance education relies even more on your ability to self-regulate.

Staying motivated is also very important and knowing how you tackle your study activities effectively and efficiently. This starts with getting a clear picture of what is expected of you when you, for instance, need to study an article or hold a presentation. Other than that, you also need to be aware of your own thoughts, preferences, or pitfalls that may hinder your efforts at studying.

To support you with the last few months of distance education, we answer seven questions in this Home study guide that will help you keep yourself and your study progress on track.

1. [Am I a procrastinator or not?](#)
2. [What do I need to make a good planning?](#)
3. [How do I get more out of my online classes?](#)
4. [What are useful self-study activities?](#)
5. [How do I prepare for an \(online\) exam?](#)
6. [How can I improve cooperation in group assignments?](#)
7. [How do I keep my audience engaged during an online presentation?](#)

Compare your own questions and approach with these tools and tips and see what if you can do more or different. Our experience is that you can make studying easier and more fun with a few small steps.

Team Academic Skills,
Educational Consultancy and Professional Development

1. Am I a procrastinator or not?



You wanted to study the entire afternoon, but now that you're finally behind your desk, you're not really doing anything. You get up, get a drink, check your email or google a topic. After an hour you close your laptop and decide you don't have inspiration today and you go and do something else. This is how many students describe a typical afternoon of studying. It is easy to then conclude that you don't have any discipline or that you are a procrastinator. And you can't really change that, or can you?

What is procrastination?

Procrastination behaviour can be described as having a goal but not taking any actions to reach that goal. For instance, you want to pass an exam or write a paper and hand it in on time, but you postpone or don't do the activities you need to do to reach these goals. The consequence is that the goal is not realised or at least the result is not as good as it could have been. You get a 5,5, but if you'd started earlier, you could have gotten a higher grade. And to be honest, you wouldn't mind getting a higher grade for a change. We speak of procrastinating behaviour if you don't feel fine when doing so. You are bothered by the situation and would like to change it.

Determine the cause

Whether or not you are a procrastinator, in the sense of a difficult to change character trait, is maybe not the most important question to answer. It is clear that an afternoon like that wasn't

productive. So how can you better handle such a situation? Answering the following 4 questions may be helpful:

1. Do I know **what** I have to do?
2. Do I know **how** to approach this?
3. **Can** I do this?
4. Do I **want** to do this?

1. The first question helps to determine your goal. For instance, do you have to prepare for an exam or hand in a paper? Is it clear what the exam is about and what kind of questions you can expect? And do you know how long your paper should be, on what topic, and what the assessment criteria are?
2. Knowing what you must do is important so that you can determine how you want to realise this goal. Determine your approach by listing which tasks or activities you must do. Do you, for instance, know how to study efficiently for an exam, or which steps you have to go through to write a scientific text?
3. The third question (can I do this?) is of a more personal nature than the 'what' and 'how' questions. This concerns, among other things, your knowledge and skills, as well as your personal situation. Do you have the time for the task, and are you mentally and physically able to do the activities? Perhaps you need to spend some time and attention on something else before starting with the task. This could be solving a problem or resting. Studying does require a clear head.
4. Finally, the fourth question, on motivation. Do you want to do these study activities now? For example, do you find it interesting or fun to choose a topic for your paper? Maybe not, but do you find it important enough to do? Or does it mostly feel like an obligation?

So, what is the advice? If you notice that studying is not going well, have a look at these four questions, find out what it might be and try to work on that. Maybe you don't like every study task but if you know what to do and that you can do it, the threshold to start studying is already a lot lower. A procrastinator? Maybe not!

TIP: Practise individually or with a conversation partner

Think of a situation in which you would like to do something, but don't do it or don't even start. Use the four questions to get a clear picture of what is going on. The right 'diagnosis' helps you to get a grip on the situation and may bring you one step closer to the solution.

- What is the problem? The 1) what; 2) how; 3) being able to; or 4) wanting to?
- What will be your next step?

If you are doing this assignment individually, there is no harm in writing out the answers for yourself. If you are doing the assignment with a friend, fellow student, or family member, it is fun to interview each other. In both cases it is important that you ask the right questions and challenge yourself or the other person to make the answers as concrete as possible. A simple yes or no is not enough!

2. What do I need to make a good planning?



You might think that during the corona pandemic it is not a problem to do your study activities. After all, you have plenty of time, as many other activities are cancelled. But although time is an important aspect of planning, it is certainly not the only thing that matters if you want to study in a planned way.

Planning is more than putting deadlines in your agenda

Many students think their planning is done when you put the deadline for an assignment or test in your agenda. However, you have not yet determined what you must do and how you are going to do it, even though it is important to know exactly that. A study plan is an overview of the (study) activities with which you can realise a goal and that shows when you want to do what. So, determining the goal and the deadline is only the beginning of making a study plan.

What study activities do you have to do?

Try to get an idea of the study activities you need to do to successfully complete an assignment. What, for instance, do you have to do to write a good paper? How do you prepare for an exam and what is involved in a Bachelor research project? Try to translate the answers into a to-do list or a step-by-step plan. The more precise you are, the easier it will be to start studying and to keep on studying.

Think about what studying is all about

Think about this on your own or look for information about what studying is all about. Do you know how to read and study texts efficiently? And when to take notes or make a schematic

overview to summarize the course content? Find out about the different stages of research and the small steps you can distinguish to break down this task. Sometimes this is explained in study material and you can read more about it yourself. But perhaps you need to ask a lecturer or take a course to improve specific skills.

Procrastinating behaviour?

Do you find yourself procrastinating? Then ask yourself if you actually know what you should be doing now. Or have you not yet thought about it, or have you only got a vague idea about it? If it is not clear, find out first. Or read the chapter about Procrastination again.

An overall or week plan?

Planning starts with knowing your deadlines and formulating your goals. Next, you make an overview of the activities with which you can achieve the goal. Then you try to estimate how much time it will take to carry them out and how much time you actually have. If you have enough time for what you need to do, you can record what you want to do when. If you have too little time, you will first have to choose what you will or will not do and only then make the planning. In this way, you are more likely to be able to stick to a schedule.

Sometimes you make a global plan for a longer period and at other times a precise one for a shorter period. For example, a global plan for an educational period of 10 weeks, in which you determine what your weekly goals are. In addition to this, you can make a detailed week plan, in which you list the study activities for a certain week, so that you know what you need to achieve your weekly goal.

Getting started with a week plan

When making a week plan, use a form that works for you. The internet provides many examples, but if you take the following tips to heart, you will already have made a good start.

✓ **Determine how many hours you have available for your studies**

Determine what is a realistic number of hours to schedule for your studies in the coming week. If necessary, divide the available hours into contact hours and study time. Strictly cut out the time of which you know you won't be studying anyway, because you already have other appointments or because you already spend enough hours on your studies that day.

✓ **Make an activity plan**

Make an activity plan for each subject, insofar as this is possible based on the information you have. In it you indicate how you would like to approach this subject in the coming week. It may be useful to first make an overview of all the courses you are currently taking, including the exam requirements, the material, and the learning objectives. This helps in choosing the right activities.

✓ **Try to estimate how much time you will need**

Make an estimate of the time you think you will need to carry out the different activities. Plan some extra time for unforeseen events. We recommend that you keep two half-days free, so that you can postpone activities if you are running late or aren't able to study. In this way, you prevent procrastination from becoming a cancellation.

✓ **Compare the time available with the time needed**

If you do not have enough time for everything you have planned, take action. For example, choose to adjust your activity plan, or make more time available by cancelling or moving other activities.

✓ **Organise and schedule your activities**

Think about how you want to organise or cluster your activities. Many students like to plan the activities or tasks for each day, with an estimate of the time needed, but do not like to plan exactly what they are going to do at what time. It can also be unpleasant to do too many different subjects on one day. Think about what kind of planning suits you and find a template (on the internet) that gives you enough support and overview.

✓ **Look ahead**

Look at your week plan and think about what could go wrong at the times you want to study. Always try to find two possible solutions.

3. How do I get more out of my online classes?



Studying from home can be nice, because you have more freedom to arrange your own time. But it is usually not very motivating. During the lectures, you sit alone behind your laptop instead of in a lecture hall with your fellow students. During the break, you can get a cup of tea or coffee, but that's it. A quick scroll and then on to the second part of the lecture. Most other students have their cameras off, so you have done the same. Noisy housemates or clutter around you don't exactly help either. Studying like this can become a real pain.

Focus and concentration

Most courses record their lectures during the corona crisis. Following recorded lectures requires different skills than a physical lecture. For example, you probably have more distractions at home than in the lecture hall. Think of housemates or family members making noise or creating a distraction in some other way. But also, the washing up that still needs to be done, or the temptation to watch your favourite series online. Your environment is very decisive for your study mode. And a lecture hall is more inviting to active participation than your bedroom or the dining table.

Tips on how to find focus:

- ✓ Make sure you arrange your room or workplace so that it invites learning. It can help to empty your desk, perhaps move it to a different place and put a notebook there. In this way, you create a learning environment for yourself.
- ✓ Check whether you have enough light (daylight is preferable) and whether the room is sufficiently ventilated. Poor lighting and a lack of oxygen cause a loss of energy, which you need to concentrate.
- ✓ You can usually decide when you watch the lecture. Are you a procrastinator or do you find it difficult to motivate yourself to watch the lecture? It might help if you stick to the same times for the lectures as mentioned in the study guide. If no times are indicated, it's a good idea to watch your lectures and work on a subject at set times. Creating fixed habits helps to keep structure in your day and week. There is a reason they say: *Motivation is what gets you started; habit is what keeps you going!*
- ✓ It helps to be physically active when you want to concentrate. So, try to go outside before (and after) the lecture. Take a walk or a ride on your bike, as if you were going to the Utrecht Science Park or the city centre. This way you build in a *warming up* (becoming active) or *cooling down* (processing time), as it were, between the various activities.

Actively following lectures

Watching an online lecture is different from watching your favourite Netflix show. But while this can be tricky, recorded lectures can also provide opportunities. For instance, you can pause the video and watch something again. Take advantage of this.

Tips for staying focused during a lecture:

- ✓ If you find it difficult to stay focused throughout the lecture, you can set a timer and watch the lecture in bits. Until the alarm goes off (a good 25 minutes or less if you think it's necessary), you focus only on the lecture. Close other windows in your browser and preferably put your mobile phone in another room.
- ✓ Taking active notes during the lecture can also help. Many students enjoy taking notes by hand, especially in these times. It makes for a different dynamic than constantly looking at your screen and typing. When taking notes, make sure not to write down literally everything the lecturer says. Try to pick out the main points.
- ✓ Always try to ask yourself: "Do I understand what the lecturer is saying? Whenever you don't understand it anymore, you can go back to when you did understand it. Is it still unclear to

you? Pause the lecture and write down your question. You can find an answer to it later. For instance, by discussing it with fellow students, via a forum on Blackboard or via MS Teams with the lecturer. Make sure you keep track of whether you understand the subject matter in the lectures.

- ✓ Prepare for the lecture by spending 10-15 minutes going through your notes and marking what the lecturer covered in detail (is extra important) and what you don't fully understand yet. Use this information to think about what you still need to look up and how you will go about it. Plan this next step!

Actively following tutorials

The aim of tutorials is to deepen and apply knowledge and skills in smaller groups, in which interaction between students is very important. During the tutorials, you practice with the material that has been covered during the lecture. This practice can be very different. Sometimes you have to debate or discuss. Other times, you have to do assignments or apply formulas.

Learning does not only take place during lectures, but often also during informal moments. For example, in the conversations you have with your fellow students during the coffee breaks and afterwards. Or the moments when you linger to ask your lecturer something. Informal learning is very important, but it happens less spontaneously online. Fortunately, more and more courses are taking this into account. For instance, a coffee corner is made in MS Teams where you can chat with fellow students during the break.

Tips for staying connected with the course and your fellow students:

- ✓ Because you are home immediately after the tutorial, you are not so likely to do something with fellow students. Consider having a chat after the tutorial or playing a game together (tip: [Boardgamearena](#)). This is fun and lowers the threshold to knock on someone's door if you have problems.
- ✓ Turn on your camera! If you are aware that others can see you, you are less inclined to slouch or do other things.
- ✓ As with the lectures, you have to remain active during the seminar. Make sure you keep up with the assignments and participate in the discussions. By participating actively, you think more deeply about the subject matter. This way, you really master the contents of the subject, which helps you to understand and remember things better.
- ✓ Do not be afraid to speak up. The point is not to give the right answer or to be right, but to learn something from it. Therefore, it is also important to keep track of your own

understanding of the arguments (or statements) made during the tutorial.

- ✓ Ask your questions via the chat or discuss them with other students during the break. In this way, you are already learning for the exam or preparing to write a paper.

In short: don't lean back when attending lectures and seminars but participate actively!

4. What are useful study activities?



Studying goes beyond opening your book and just getting started. Depending on the subject and the subject matter, different learning activities are required if you want to master the content of a course. In this chapter, you will find useful study tips and alternative strategies to summarize and learn information.

Determine the learning objective

Start a new term by reading through the course manual. In addition to the summary of the content and the deadlines, you should take a good look at the learning objectives. These contain information about what will be tested, and therefore what you should know, be able to do, or understand after the course. Learning objectives can usually be categorised using Bloom's taxonomy (see figure 1). If there are no clear learning objectives in the course manual, don't hesitate to ask your lecturer for them!



Figure 1. Bloom's taxonomy – From lower order to higher order thinking.

If the aim of a course is primarily to acquire knowledge, lecturers expect you to be able to reproduce the material you have learned without making any substantial additions yourself. These are often level 1 courses. If, on the other hand, the goal is to learn to understand certain phenomena, you are expected to have insight into the subject matter and be able to explain the information in your own words. Applying means that you can use your knowledge to solve a (new) problem, and analysing means that you can investigate, dissect, interpret, reform, and critically evaluate information.

Spread your study time

Make sure you spread your study time throughout the term. If you don't do this, you will have to process all the material for the exam at once and it will be more difficult to follow lectures and carry out assignments. Make sure you have already looked at the subject matter before a lecture or work session ('exploratory reading'): what is it about, what is expected of me? During the lecture, you take notes and pay extra attention to the slides that the lecturer spends a lot of time on. After a lecture, you determine where the gaps in your knowledge or skills lie: which paragraphs you still need to study thoroughly, or which exercises you need to do or run through?

Distinguishing between main and secondary points through question-oriented reading

Many students find it difficult to distinguish between the main points and the secondary points. During exams, they notice that they have studied too much or too little. Question-oriented reading can help you avoid this. Before you start reading, ask yourself: what is the purpose of this text (learning goal)? What kind of information am I looking for? When you start reading, first look at the title, sub-headings and any pictures or tables. What is the subject of the text? What do I already know about it? In this way, you look for the parts that are important to you, because they have been dealt with in the lecture, for example. If you work from a goal, you will find that you can understand and remember information better.

Active learning does not only mean reading in a question-oriented way, but also making the subject matter your own by re-structuring it and making connections. However, many students use 'passive' learning activities such as marking, rereading and summarising. The danger then is that you start learning by recognition. For example, if you come across a marked passage while studying for a test, you think you know it. However, when you have to produce your own answer to an exam question about the marked content, you find out that you do not. You may remember what the page looked like, but you cannot remember what exactly you had highlighted and why.

So, try studying with these active learning activities:

1. If your aim is to *remember* something, such as the names of diseases, medicines, or people, [flashcards](#) can work very well. You can also make flashcards online and quiz yourself effectively.

2. If the goal is to *understand* the relationships between certain phenomena, principles, or events, for example in history or law, then mind maps or concept maps work well.
3. When *applying* or *analysing* knowledge, it is best to work with diagrams: for example, an argumentation diagram or a matrix diagram.

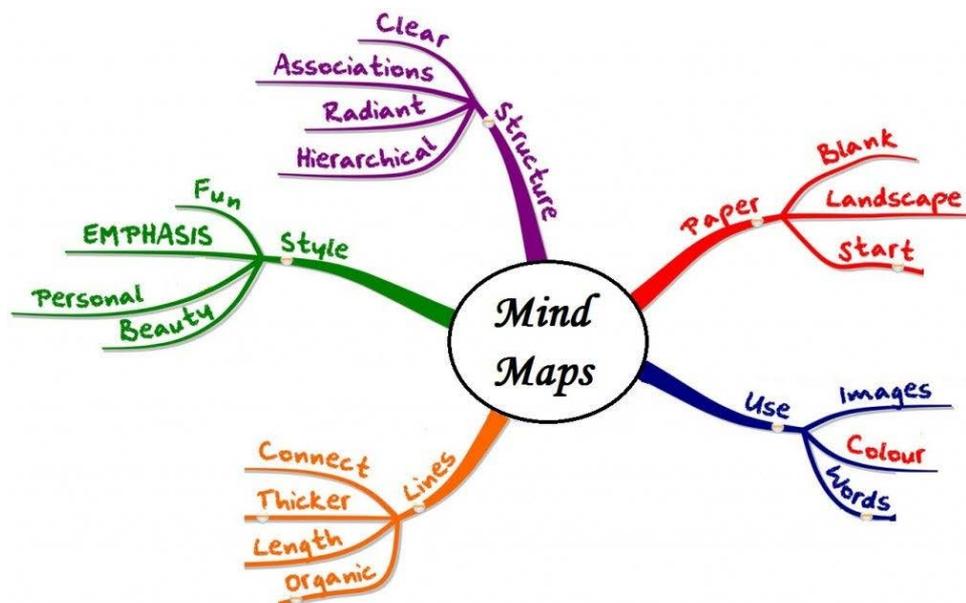
Read more about mind mapping and matrices in the next section.

Learning through schemas

Mind mapping

Mind mapping is a thinking tool: you are creating a "road map" of what happens in your head when you study a subject. It helps you to restructure the subject matter and make connections. Mind mapping connects to what the brain likes to do: associative thinking. You can use this method not only to process study material, but also to get *an overview* of the content you need to process for the course or to take notes during the lecture.

How do you do that, make a mind map? For example, watch [this video on YouTube](#) or google for tips on making mind maps. It's something you have to learn, so just start and practise! It's not about making the mind map look fancy. Take your time, let your mind run free, and see it as a tool to help you study independently. There are also free mind mapping toolkits on the internet that can help you learn this technique.



After making a mind map, you have already come a long way: you have processed the material in an active way and should mainly practise and check whether you understand it before the exam. Explain the mind map to a fellow student, for example.

Matrix

Sometimes other diagrams work better as a means of processing the subject matter. A matrix is a good tool if you need to compare components, e.g. diseases or disorders, on the basis of similar characteristics (e.g. definition, symptoms or complaints, diagnosis, treatment). Incorporating the various sub-chapters into a single matrix helps you to distinguish and compare aspects, for example illnesses.

	A	B	C	D
aspect A				
aspect B				
aspect C				

Additionally, there are label diagrams, argumentation diagrams, and flow or procedure diagrams. Some diagrams will be more useful for your studies. Law students, for example, will more often need a procedure diagram to map out legal processes. And a philosophy or history student might use argumentation diagrams more often. Look at the learning objectives and the type of information central to a subject to determine which diagram will help you master the content.

Finally: Ask your lecturer

With online education, you often have less contact with your lecturer and your fellow students, or at least it feels that way. This makes it especially important to ask questions about the subject matter, the testing, or about planning and expectations. Some lecturers are often already online before the lecture or tutorial starts. Sometimes specifically for answering your questions. Make use of this: don't think that your question might be 'stupid'. If something is unclear to you, it will be to others.

5. How do I prepare for an (online) exam?



Most exams are currently not held on location. This means that lecturers have to adapt exams or even make new ones. This is of course a big job for lecturers, but as a student it also takes some getting used to. Below are a number of tips that can be useful when preparing for an exam.

✓ **Check the learning objectives**

A problem you may encounter as a student is that it is not clear what exactly is expected of you. In that case, we advise you to consult the learning objectives of the course. You can usually find these in the course manual. Learning objectives provide information about what you should be able to do at the end of the course with what you have learned and what kind of exam questions you can expect (see also chapter 4).

✓ **Check what the exam might look like**

Look in the course guide/on Blackboard or ask a fellow student if there is any information about the exam. It is useful to know how many multiple choice and open questions you can expect. With this information you can prepare for the exam in a more targeted way.

You can also ask your lecturer or the course coordinator if they can say anything about the type of questions that will be asked. If you are lucky, a number of sample questions will be included in the course or made available via Blackboard. This can be very useful, even if there is only one example question. If you analyse the question well, you will get an idea of the level at which you need to master the material, you can also see what approach is appropriate for this type of question.

✓ **Make a schedule**

Work from an overview. The following steps can help:

1. Determine what you need to focus on in preparation of your test. How should you master the material (learning objectives, trial exam, cues given by lecturers)? Can you distinguish main issues from side issues? If not, pick up the course manual and your lecture notes again.
2. List the themes/subjects you have mastered well.
3. Make a list of themes/subjects you haven't got to grips with yet.
4. Decide how you will set your priorities. You could use the table below for this:

Priority number	Theme/subject	Level of mastery (good-average-insufficient)	Approach (how to learn/practice)
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			

5. Make your own time/study schedule based on the table. Work from the back (the day before the test) to the front (the moment you start learning for the test).

✓ **Test yourself and your fellow students**

Do you want to practice with open questions? It helps to make a small diagram beforehand of how you are going to answer the question. Make the diagram, check that all the components of the question are present in the diagram and then start writing down the answer.

Finally, you can get your fellow students together to make up more sample questions and test each other. Apart from being a good way of studying, this is also a nice way of studying together. Which is nice in these times.

6. How can I improve cooperation in group assignments?



During your studies, you will regularly have to work together with others on an assignment or project. Perhaps more often than you would like. Working in a team can be quite a challenge. A common complaint is that group work takes more time than working on an individual assignment. First of all, it is more difficult to organise because you have to coordinate different agendas. In addition, tasks and workload have to be divided fairly. And then, in the course of the process, it often becomes apparent that the expectations, wishes, skills and commitment of the group members can be quite different. In this chapter you will read why teamwork is important and how to do it effectively.

Why we must (continue to) work together

Setting up good group projects is also a challenge for lecturers, especially online. The question then is: Why do we do it? An obvious answer is that working with fellow students prepares you for life as a professional or researcher. Being able to work in a team is an important skill in the workplace. And since this will probably happen more often online in the future, we can use the situation we are in now to learn from it.

Research into collaborative learning shows that, under the right conditions, you can learn a lot from working in a team. Collaborative learning:

- increases motivation and interest in the subject;
- creates an environment in which social and intercultural skills can develop;
- strengthens skills such as problem identification, interpersonal communication and project management;
- promotes interaction between students.

In particular, promoting interaction is more important than ever at a time when you do not meet on campus. UU students indicated in a survey that the lack of interaction with fellow students is one of the biggest disadvantages of distance learning. Working together on a project can be an excellent way to feel connected with fellow students and the study programme. Perhaps in time you might once again be able to make an appointment to work on an assignment at someone's home.

Tips for effective remote collaboration

Below are some concrete and practical tips you can use to make remote collaboration run more smoothly.

✓ **Know yourself and the others in your group**

Working together is more efficient and more fun if you know your group members. Plan simple and concrete tasks for the first meeting, so that you have a chance to get to know each other without too much pressure. If necessary, start with an energiser or some fun questions, so that you really learn something about the other person and you have a pleasant start together. Meet regularly and plan time for informal moments. This way, you build a group relationship and people are more committed to the project and to each other. If you know each other, the communication will run more smoothly, and people will alert you in time if something is not working. A good relationship not only promotes job satisfaction, but also benefits the quality of the result.

✓ **Choose a communication platform that everyone can work with**

One place for live meetings and one place to store, edit and share documents. That doesn't have to be the same as what you use for lectures. Do you prefer to consult via Skype or WhatsApp instead of Teams? Then do so.

✓ **Make a schedule**

Be proactive and determine early which project activities need to be carried out, in what order and when. Take the deadline as your starting point and plan from the back to the front, as it were.

✓ **Divide and share the tasks**

Depending on the size of the task and the size of the group, you might consider assigning each task to two members. That way you always share the responsibility, and you can help each other to get going and to stay going. Small groups also give you more flexibility. For instance, you can choose not to sit behind the Teams, but to call each other while walking or even to meet each other on location. That way, you keep it fun and dynamic.

✓ **Keep in touch and keep track**

Do keep in touch with the rest of the group and plan regular meetings where everyone participates. Preferably meet weekly at a fixed time when everyone presents their progress. This way, you can keep all project members involved in the project and in each other.

7. How do I keep my audience engaged during an online presentation?



Almost all presentations now take place online. This may be a relief because you don't have to stand in front of a group. It may also be that you find it more difficult, because you have less feeling for the audience, and it is more difficult to assess whether your message comes across. One thing is certain: In the online world, your audience is more easily distracted.

Preparing your presentation

You will probably have experienced them before. Those endless presentations during work group meetings. If someone were to ask you afterwards what the presentation was about, you'd remain silent. Why is that? And what can you do about it? The biggest problem is the general understanding of the presentation assignment: You have to tell your audience 'something' about a subject or research. This then results in a recited version of a written article or a story about everything there is to know about a subject. Consequence: Your audience shuts off, or at the very least is less able to follow and remember your story. The tips below will help you prepare your presentation.

✓ **Formulate a core message**

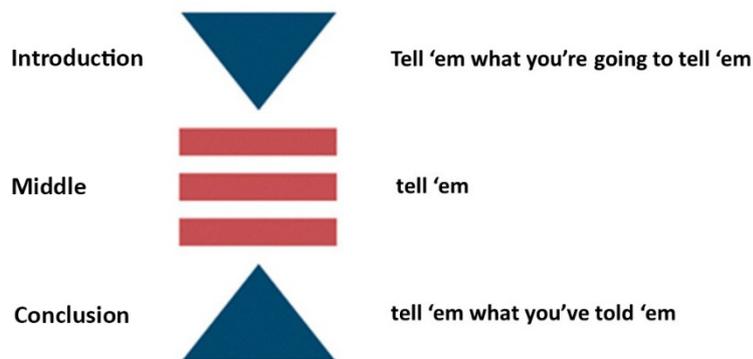
Your core message is a specific statement on a subject, which you use as a guiding principle when designing your presentation.

A clear core message is not: "I am going to tell you something about the heart",
but:
"Research shows that the heart of long-distance runners can be up to 50 per cent larger than that of someone who does not exercise."

So, a good presentation is a substantiated answer to a question. If you get hold of that question or the core message, your presentation will be more convincing and interesting! You can then explain why.

✓ **Provide a to-the-point structure**

To ensure that your audience remembers the core message, you will have to refer to it regularly in your presentation. The following rule of thumb will help you select and structure your story:



✓ **Involve your audience in your story**

An online presentation often feels much more like one-way traffic because you cannot see your audience (properly). The attention for and of your audience is therefore crucial. Think of ways to involve people in your story. You can do this in various ways, for example by coming up with a catchy opener, in which you present your audience with a situation and get them to think about it.

"What do you see here?"
"What would happen if ..."
"Imagine ... What would you do?"
"You can imagine that ..."

By addressing your audience directly (with 'you') on a regular basis, you keep people on their toes. You can seek interaction by letting the audience give input via chat, the microphone, or by letting them vote. Think carefully about the function of your question, the kind of answers you can expect and how you are going to use them in your story. You can also choose to interact less directly, by asking a rhetorical question or by drawing on a common experience.

✓ **Use PowerPoint in a smart way**

Make sure that your PowerPoint is dynamic and visually attractive. Limit the amount of text and let your PowerPoint act as a backdrop to your story. Guide your audience through the charts and pictures like a guide in a museum. In this way, you focus the attention and use the PowerPoint as a tool to reinforce your story.

When you look at this dog, there are probably a number of things you will notice. First of all, you see that he is..."

"In particular, I want to take a look at the left column with you. What you see here is..."

✓ **Be visible as a presenter**

If you are using PowerPoint, you are just a small figure at the bottom of the screen in front of your audience, but still. If you want to stand out more and appear more professional as a presenter, we recommend a clean, quiet background. A plain top (preferably) in a bright colour also works well on a screen. The most important thing, of course, is that you feel comfortable in it.

Giving your presentation

Normally, you can use your posture, supporting gestures, expression and use of space to reinforce your story and keep your audience interested. Now they have to rely on what they hear. To hold their attention, therefore, you have to use the means at your disposal very consciously. Your voice is your most important tool. The tips below will help you to let your words do the talking:

✓ **Intonation is number one**

You use intonation to give meaning to spoken sentences, which makes it easier for the listener to absorb the content. Good intonation expresses emotion or liveliness, which helps you hold the listener's attention. You can use your voice to "highlight" the main message, make a point, create atmosphere, and tell a story in such a way that your audience is fully immersed. Think about the message or feeling you want to convey with your presentation. Select at least 3 points in your presentation where you 'play' with your intonation.

✓ **Articulate**

You listen not only with your ears, but also with your eyes. Now that the audience cannot 'read' your face, you can articulate more emphatically. You do not have to exaggerate this, but by placing words at the front of your mouth, you sound 'closer' and you do not necessarily have to speak louder. This is also useful if you have a naturally soft voice.

✓ **Vary the pace**

It is not necessarily the case that you cannot talk fast. The trick is to vary the pace. This will make your presentation more dynamic. If you reveal complex material or make a key statement, it is useful to slow down the pace a little. If you then give an example or deal with information that is easy to understand, you can speak a little faster.

✓ **Regularly leave well-timed silences**

Your audience needs time to process information. So, if you ramble on without a pause, your message will no longer get through to them. Therefore, after formulating your core message, an important argument, or a concluding statement, pause for about 3 seconds. Plan these silences and practise them. If you can do this, your words will have more impact and you will appear more self-assured.

Great tips, but how can you learn? Watch or listen to other good speakers. TED Talks, press conferences, podcasts, television presenters are a source of inspiration. Analyse fragments on the basis of the aforementioned points. What does a speaker do? What effect does this have on you as a listener? And what suits you? Next, practise with this yourself. Try out new things and record yourself! You often have the idea that you are exaggerating, but when you watch or listen to your recordings, it turns out in many cases that you can still go the extra mile. The more you practise, the more natural it will feel. And when you reach that point, you not only control the content of your story, but also your audience.

About us

This Home study guide was made by Angela Markenhof, Steven Raaijmakers, Esther Slot, Ivana Brasileiro and Elma Zijdeveld of Educational Consultancy & Professional Development (ECPD). As a student at the UU, you can contact ECPD to bring your academic skills to a higher level.

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