

How to manage sleep stress during pandemic

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Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

Effective learning is a [two-way process](#) between the teacher and students, meaning both need to engage.

If a student simply sits and listens to new information without engaging or applying it, it's called [passive learning](#). Active learning is where [students engage](#) with new learning making connections to concepts they have learned previously.

According to one of the world's leading university educators, [Harvard University's Professor Eric Mazur](#), "interactive learning triples students' gains in knowledge."

Here are six things students can do while studying online to ensure they are learning actively and and making gains.

1. Organise a learning space and dress for learning

Balancing a laptop on your knees on your bed, or with the television on in the background, is not the best way to study. Students learn best when their [learning space minimises distractions](#).

A [good learning space](#) has a table and chair, good lighting, good air flow, is away from distractions like television and noise, has good connectivity for [digital devices](#), and is organised with the usual things students have at school such as pens, paper, calculator and others study materials.

Learning online is like being at school in that you need to be physically and mentally prepared to learn. One [study suggests](#) what you wear can affect your attention to a task. So it might help not to be in your pyjamas even if your study space is in your bedroom.

2. Organise your learning time

Students with [good time management skills](#) tend to do better academically.

There is no easy answer to how long students should be studying at home each day. Students should plan a study timetable dividing their day into learning, revision and rest blocks.

"Zoom fatigue" has been [identified as an emerging problem](#) with online studying and meetings caused by the different ways our brains process information delivered online. One suggestion is an [online session should be](#) no longer than 45 minutes with a 15-minute break.

Back-to-back sessions should be avoided and the time between sessions should be used to step away from the computer to rest your brain, body and eyes. It is important to [stand up and move](#) around every 30 minutes.

Students should work with teachers to revise their schedule each day and stick to what works for them.

3. Manage distractions

Because students will be studying in an different space, they may get distracted by what other people are doing. If you can, share your study timetable with others in the house, and ask for their help to keep focused.

When you're in a learning block of time, turn off social media and close browser tabs you don't need. If you're using the Google Chrome browser, it has an extension called [Stay Focusd](#). Students can use this to set the period of time to block potential distractions like notifications from Instagram, Snapchat and other applications.

If you are sharing a digital device with other family members, try to agree on a roster that fits with everyone's timetables. Work out who needs the device at specific times and put that time on a master timetable that is shared by everyone.

4. Take notes

Our memories are not stable and we [frequently overestimate](#) how much

we can remember. We forget at least 40% of new information within the first 24 hours of first reading or hearing it. That's why it's important to take notes.

Research [is unclear about](#) whether it is better to take notes digitally or by hand. Some [researchers think](#) it is a matter of preference.

The most important thing is to follow a good note-taking process. This involves:

- writing an essential question that captures the key learning points of the topic
- revising your notes. Use different colours and highlighters to make connections between chunks of information; add new ideas and write study questions in the margin. Compare notes with a study buddy to improve and learn from each other
- writing a summary that links all the information together and answers the essential question you wrote down initially
- revising your notes within 24 hours, seven days, and then each month until you are tested on that knowledge.

5. Adopt a growth mindset

In the 1990s, American psychologist Carol Dweck developed the theory of the growth mindset.

It [grew out of studies](#) in which primary school children were engaged in a task, and then praised either for their existing capacities, such as intelligence, or the effort they invested in the task.

The students who were praised for their effort were more likely to persist with finding a solution to the task. They were also more likely to seek feedback about how to improve. Those praised for their intelligence

were less likely to persist with the more difficult tasks and to seek feedback on how their peers did on the task.

The growth mindset assumes capacities can be developed or "grown" through learning and effort. So if you don't understand something straight away, working at it will help you get there.

If you are engaging in negative self-talk, [change the words](#). For example, instead of saying, "This is too hard," try saying, "What haven't I tried yet to figure this out?"

6. Ask questions and collaborate

Ask teachers questions about anything that is unclear as soon as possible. Give teachers frequent feedback. Teachers appreciate suggestions that help improve [student](#) learning.

Set up online study groups. Learning is a social activity. We [learn best](#) by learning with others, and when learning is fun. Studying with friends helps clarify new concepts and language, and stay connected.

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