

## Basic rules for a productive working structure in times of Corona

Especially these days, students are confronted with an exceptional and new situation, and face new challenges of self-organization. In times of Corona, daily structure changed, and basic routines stopped. While one could think this is an opportunity for efficient studying (less classes, less leisure activities, few social contacts, often work is shut down as well), it can happen that the contrary is the case, and there is little progress in independent learning.

Now, more than ever, it is important to find a good and healthy working routine that is neither sub challenging, nor overstraining, and that avoids procrastination (meaning consciously putting off/postponing/starting last minute/starting and not finishing an important task that needs to be accomplished, despite negative consequences). Excessive procrastination can hinder productivity and lead to feelings of stress, guilt, self-doubt and loss of personal productivity, which then might promote further procrastination. In order to break out of this vicious circle and to find a good working structure, regard yourself as your own employee and organize your study as if it was an employment.

### 1. Create a weekly schedule and a daily structure

- ✓ Plan your weekly schedule in advance (once a week).
- ✓ Divide projects into small, specific tasks.
- ✓ Form working units of 45 minutes, followed by a 15 minute break.
- ✓ Plan a realistic amount of working units per day. Set yourself tasks you can fulfill and increase the amount slowly. Manageable tasks lead to success. This, in turn, increases the motivation to continue.
- ✓ Work during the day, not in the late evening or at night.
- ✓ Do the toughest task when you feel freshest.
- ✓ Example: “Today I’ll learn pages 1-15 from 10:00-10:45 and 11:00-11:45, and then I’ll take a break till 14:00 and continue with a repetition for 1 working unit.”

### 2. Study = job

- ✓ Start at the scheduled time.
- ✓ Displeasure is not an excuse to change plans.
- ✓ In case you have massive difficulties starting the working unit, use the “*10-minute-rule*”: Set your timer to 10 minutes and promise yourself, that you’ll try to work for those 10 minutes. After that, you can decide if you’ll continue working or not (most of the times, you’ll see that you can manage to continue).
- ✓ Schedule other appointments (doctor etc.) outside of your “working hours”.
- ✓ Separate work from all other activities.
- ✓ Arrange your working environment in a way that minimizes noise or distraction (e.g. don’t bring your smartphone, try to keep your desk clean).

### 3. Working environment in case of home-office:

- ✓ Normally, we recommend choosing a working environment that is not at home, e.g. the library. In case this is not possible, try to find a workplace at home where you can best concentrate, and that is ideally associated with only working. Therefore, try to clean your desk from private utilities and take breaks outside your workplace. Do not work in bed!

- ✓ If it helps, put on “working clothes” as if you were to go outside.
  - ✓ Try to find a way to use social control, e.g. use online platforms to meeting a friend/fellow student to start your working day together, review each other’s working progress, support each other or take lunch breaks together.
  - ✓ During breaks, do little breathing and stretching exercises.
    - ✓ Be kind to yourself if it doesn’t work out as you had planned or wished. Special circumstances require special measures and the ability to forgive yourself, if it doesn’t work out perfectly.
4. Write down distracting thoughts that appear during the task (take an extra notebook for that). It is okay to have other thoughts, but also tell yourself, that you can deal with them later. After that, concentrate only on your work.
5. Basic rule: Completing is more important than perfectionism!
6. Plan enjoyable activities:
- ✓ Reward yourself after work, even if you have just made little progress.
  - ✓ Find activities that you like to do at home or outside if possible.
  - ✓ Socialize with others (also possible to do it online) at least once a day.
  - ✓ Sport exercises are important for physical and mental well-being.
  - ✓ The weekend is for enjoyable activities, not for work.