

10 TIPS for successful home study

Are you looking for some tips to stay focused on your studies, now that education has gone online? Have a read through the tips below from the Study Success research group. These tips have been compiled on the basis of scientific insight from cognitive psychology, neuropsychology and educational science, as well as our own studies into motivation, stress, enthusiasm and drop-out. Have you got an online study tip you'd like to share? Email it to studiesucces@inholland.nl or tweet @Inhstudiesucces.



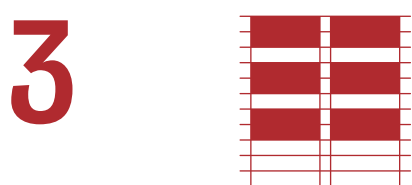
Your brain in start mode

You can use rituals to put your brain in a ready-to-use mode, which means you can condition your brain and tell it that 'we'll get started in a minute'. If you turn it into a ritual that is useful for your studies, such as cleaning up your desk, you'll kill two birds with one stone. Another example of a ritual is briefly checking your favourite website or doing a meditation exercise before getting started.



A clear head

A clear head makes it easier to concentrate. Piles of work at your workplace may distract you, because you can literally see the work you still have to do. Tidying up your desk will give you a clear head. To-dos that are constantly flying through your head also cause a lot of stress. Schedule them by writing them down in your diary or write them on a to-do list. Your subconscious will then tick them off as 'done'. In addition, lists can help to organise your day and prioritise tasks.



Systematic and regular study

Divide your day into blocks and take regular breaks. A good method for doing this is the Pomodoro Technique. Alternate blocks of 25 to 50 minutes of concentrated work with short breaks. Following a few blocks, take a longer break. Our maximum attention span, by the way, is 50 minutes. If you can achieve this, you are working optimally.



Dealing with distractions

It can be challenging to study on your own: it's easy to 'take refuge' in social media or Netflix. See our infographic with 10 tips for greater focus, less distraction and better performance. In addition, it can be useful to visit a digital study area where you can see other students (e.g. Study Vibes). This enables you to motivate and stimulate each other.



Be realistic

Some people find it easier to work from home than others. It can be particularly difficult if several people (housemates) are working from home simultaneously. Let each other know when there are, for example, online lectures. Don't be too hard on yourself if you find it takes some time to adapt to the new situation.

Having a hard time working from home? Keep in mind you're not the only one: have a look.



Eat, sleep, drink, repeat

A good night's sleep and eating and drinking sufficiently are essential for studying effectively at home. Your prefrontal cortex (the area in which you process information and make decisions) needs sufficient rest, which is achieved with about eight hours of sleep per night. Research has also shown that drinking enough water is good for your focus. A 5% water deficiency already reduces your concentration by 25%! In addition, water and tea have a positive effect on the functioning of neurotransmitters in your brain. Coffee and energy drinks only have a temporary effect, so those are less useful.



Exercise!

Regular exercise is crucial for your health in general and study concentration in particular. Various studies have shown that just 10 to 40 minutes of exercise already has positive effects. Even a short, brisk walk can have a positive impact. Exercise improves your subsequent concentration for up to as many as three hours. In addition, exercise increases self-confidence in your ability to complete (tricky) tasks, reduces stress and ensures a better night's sleep. A win-win!

Many schools and gyms offer online mindfulness, fitness and yoga courses. Plan to take part in an online course every day, and encourage at least one fellow student every day to do the same (do it together).



Participate actively in digital lectures and tutorials

Students who attend all lectures, seminars and classes and prepare for classes obtain higher marks, need fewer resits and obtain more credits. It's the best thing to do! Of course, this tip also applies to learning in an online environment. Join in and do it together.



Do it together and stay in touch

Make clear agreements with each other on who does what, and when you will work online. Also make clear agreements on when you will be in touch. There are various online tools for cooperation (see practical tips). Stay in touch with your lecturers and study coach as well, and join in on online hang-outs/meetings/social events.

'Keep an eye on each other'
(Mark Rutte, 16 March 2020)



Asking for help is not a sign of weakness

You are expected to be able to study independently. However, do ask for help in time if you get stuck. Depending on the issue (subject matter, motivation, stress), you can always talk to your study coach, fellow students or a student counsellor. Offer to support each other and encourage each other; a sympathetic ear is often all that's needed.

A few more practical tips

- Be mindful of your posture when sitting in front of a screen for prolonged periods.
- Close all applications you're not using before joining a conference call to ensure an optimal connection.
- Go offline at least one hour before going to sleep. More information.
- Use a kanban planning method. A kanban planning board shows you at a glance what you still need to do and what you've already done.
- Trello is a convenient online collaboration app, which shows you exactly who is working on what.