Minimizing Distractions for Distance Learning

Distance learning has some great advantages for students in regard to flexibility and convenience. Unfortunately, there are some downsides to distance learning. One of the major problems I've encountered is student engagement. Students, in general, are usually more focused when they go to a physical classroom at a specific time of the week to solely study a particular topic. My goal is to deliver this material in the most effective way possible, so I've included some tips/hints/tricks for students who are learning remotely, in order to get the most out of this class.

1 - Your Workspace - Setup a designated area to study. This should be somewhat isolated, quiet, decluttered and comfortable with good lighting.

2 - A browser and other software will be required for this class. Be aware of other software applications on your computer which can be a distraction for you. The two major ones are installed games and browser tabs. I use Google Chrome and would strongly recommend the extension called StayFocusd at https://tinyurl.com/SPC-FOCUS . I've configured my browser to limit the time I can go to following websites on Monday through Friday from 9 AM to 5PM:

www.facebook.com	www.twitter.com	www.cnn.com
www.reddit.com	www.websudoku.com	

These are the main websites which I often check multiple times a day. Your list will certainly differ from mine. Limiting my access to them during my designated study time really increases my focus.

3 - Cellphone - This is the biggest distraction. Put it in another room. To quote Stan Lee, "Nuff Said".

4 - Designate a particular time and day of the week to do your online class work. Let other people you live with know about it and ask them not to bother you at that time.

5 - Plan for scheduled breaks while studying. All of my face-to-face classes are either 2 or 4 hours long. I make sure to take at least one break for a 2-hour class and two or three for a 4-hour class. Use this time to move around, check emails, use your phone, etc. Just make sure to set a time you get back to work.

6 - Make learning interactive. Make sure to pause instructional videos and replicate what the instructor is demonstrating. Don't make learning a passive experience.

7 - Get organized. Use tools like Google Calendar to keep track of when assignments are due and check/update them regularly.

8 - Create a daily to-do list. I keep a small Post-It note pad by my computer and write down the small tasks I plan to do each day. Chunking down a large goal into smaller, manageable tasks prevents overwhelm. Also, checking off each task when you complete it is a nice form of positive reinforcement.

Assignment

1 - Take a picture of your work area and include a brief description. Mention at least two things you've done to minimize distractions in the area.

2 - Identify the top 3 websites and/or installed games which are most likely to distract you during this course. Mention one step you intend to take prevent this distraction.

3 - Write down what time and day of the week you plan to designate for this class.

4 - Give one other strategy, which is not listed above, to use to help you stay on task and get the most out of this class. If you are a gamer, please let me know how your strategy to keep class time and game time separate.