

# ONLINE STUDY



The current circumstances have made it necessary to rethink the classic presence studies. Thus, the learning contents are offered as online courses, too. Here a distinction is made between synchronous and asynchronous formats. Synchronous online teaching is characterized by the idea that it takes place at the same time and collectively. In contrast, asynchronous courses are characterized by the fact that you as a student decide independently when you want to watch the teaching video, answer questions, etc.

Digital teaching requires you as a student to be able to work productively as a member of a virtual team, to show commitment and presence. At the same time, the ability to distinguish, filter and understand information according to importance. In contrary to classroom teaching, digital teaching poses different challenges.

The following guidelines should help you to complete your online studies effectively.  
The following questions will therefore be answered:

1. How can you motivate yourself to learn online?
2. How can you set learning goals?
3. How do you get an overview of your time budget?
4. How can you plan regular learning times?
5. What should your working place look like?
  - a. Taking care of yourself
  - b. Rewarding yourself
  - c. Staying in contact with other students

## 1. How can you motivate yourself to learn online?

The start of a degree course in the form of an online study programme is associated with a variety of requirements. The importance of independent, autonomous learning requires a high degree of self-discipline and self-motivation. Now is an especially important time to participate in online courses, as they will support you in giving structure to your everyday life and also enable you to establish or maintain contact with other students.

From the very beginning, online studies require a high degree of autonomy in preparing and planning this semester. For you as a student, planning questions regarding goals, ways and times of learning as well as the design of the learning environment arise right from the start. The planning aids and methods described in the following should therefore support you in your individual learning planning.

## 2. How can you set learning goals?

At the beginning of your studies it may be unusual for you to set yourself learning goals. Especially now, your autonomy is particularly required and is the important key to your success. A good study schedule supports you in effective learning and difficult learning phases (e.g. preparation for an exam) can be planned ahead of time. Basically, planning means realizing goals, in this case learning goals.

In general, the following principle applies:

Distributed phases of study make more sense than one massive learning session in one day. Plan realistic daily goals, because the better you achieve your goals, the more motivated you are. Formulate your goals clearly so that they are understandable for you and easy to measure and check off.

Formulating questions has proven to be a useful planning aid. The following questions could be helpful:

- What types of events must be attended, and in what order?
- Which topics need to be covered?
- What types of examinations are there (oral, written, presentation, project, etc.)?
- Which books, collections of texts, media offers do I have to work on by myself?
- What important deadlines do I have to meet?

Keep a written record of your planning. This method relieves you cognitively, so you also have the possibility to monitor goals, revise them and there is no overlap with other goals. In a realistic planning you should name your goals concretely. Therefore, do not write down „study“ as a goal, but rather in concrete terms what you need to learn. Divide your goals into intermediate goals. Dividing many tasks into subtasks supports your motivation. Goals that can be reached quickly should be completed first. In this way you create a sense of achievement.

### 3. How do you form an overview of your time schedule?

During study there are many interrelated activities that limit the actual time for learning. Honest time management implies a realistic assessment of both the time you realistically have available for learning and the individual learning time you need. An analysis of your time schedule helps you to correctly estimate your individual available time. In intensive study periods you can adapt other activities.

The following self-control sheet for determining your personal time budget can support you in this.

Activity	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	Total	On average
Family									
Online Course									
Special Literature									
Other learning activities									
Household									
Hobby									
Relaxation									
Friends									
Sports, Exercise									

Based on the self-control sheet for determining personal time budgets according to Schröder-Naef 1994, 84.

How can you now work with this table? The times that are fixed can be entered quickly but the times you need for planning upcoming learning periods can be tricky to judge. The following information can be helpful: when reading study texts, about 15 pages per hour are read for light texts, about 10 pages per hour for medium texts, and about 5-6 pages per hour for difficult texts. The reading time also includes the clarification of questions, making notes and any comprehension problems that may arise.

You will probably find that the time available is very short. Here it helps to set priorities.

The following questions can help you to decide:

- Is it necessary to postpone less important activities?
- Does my actual use of time correspond to my real goals?
- Are there activities that take up a disproportionate amount of time?

The decisive factor here is that the activities to be completed for your studies are not neglected. Important and urgent activities must therefore be completed immediately. Then there are important but non-urgent activities, which do not have to be completed immediately, but are long-term activities. You should attend to these activities most intensively. Then there are activities which are neither urgent nor important. These are so-called time wasters and you must stop them immediately.

You should only plan 60% of the time available to you. 20% for unexpected and 20% for spontaneous activities. This procedure helps you to avoid time constraints.

#### 4. How can you plan regular learning times?

Your online studies will be characterized by your courses being both synchronous and asynchronous. Nevertheless, you should plan fixed learning times in your calendar. This will help you to structure your day. At the same time, it helps you to keep to fixed deadlines, just as you would expect to do in a presence study. Organizing your own learning time has the advantage that you can work according to your individual performance times (individual learning cycle). It is therefore useful to know in which time which tasks can be completed, i.e. to distinguish between „good“ and „bad“ performance times. The performance curve is individual for each person. However, it is not difficult to determine your own performance curve. Over a period of one week, observe your study performance in relation to the time of day. Write down the time of day at which you were able to concentrate particularly well or when it was easy for you to solve a difficult learning task. Additionally, make a note of when your concentration weakens.

The following table could be helpful to note your changes:

Time	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
6 - 8							
8 - 10							
10 - 12							
12 - 14							
14 - 16							
16 - 18							
18 - 20							
20 - 22							
22 - 24							

At the end of the week, the notes you make will show your individual performance curve. This gives you an idea of how your inner clock is ticking and allows you to adjust your learning times appropriately. This way you can optimize your concentration and motivation.

Once you have determined when your best performance times are daily, you can schedule fixed phases of study during this time. The decisive factor is regularity. A work phase lasts between 60 and 90 minutes. You should then take a 15-minute break. After two to four study phases, you should take a longer break. Breaks serve to regain your strength. In addition, they help to prevent early fatigue and support you in storing and organizing the contents you have worked on so far. Results are not possible without breaks.

The weekly schedule on page 4 supports you in your weekly planning.

Time	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
7 - 8							
8 - 9							
9 - 10							
10 - 11							
11 - 12							
12 - 13							
13 - 14							
14 - 15							
15 - 16							
16 - 17							
17 - 18							
18 - 19							
19 - 20							
20 - 21							
21 - 22							
22 - 23							
23 - 24							

### 5. What should your working place look like?

First of all find a workplace that you can use regularly, i.e. one that will be available to you throughout the semester. When choosing your place to study, you should make sure that it is a quiet and distraction-free place. Since the chosen workplace is crucial for the success of self-study, you should choose a place that you can design individually, according to your taste, so that you feel comfortable and motivated to work there. Sufficient daylight and regular ventilation are just as important as a good sitting position and sufficient exercise.

Only the books, writing materials, etc. necessary for studying should be at the workplace. It is important that your workplace is well organized. You should therefore take the time to clean up your workplace regularly. This also

applies to your own laptop. Effective studying includes not only considering how to organize your home office, but also how to organize your desktop system. Decide on a system that helps you to find important documents quickly. Remove old files, split your projects into appropriate folders.

Distractions and disturbances affect the effectiveness of your learning time. Think about what distracts you personally and could weaken your concentration. If you find that over time the workplace you have chosen is too monotonous, simply try a different place for certain learning activities, e.g. revision. The important thing is that it feels good for you.

#### a. Taking care of yourself

This semester presents us all with great challenges. It will not always be easy for you to maintain your motivation. There will be good days and bad days. It will therefore not always be easy to maintain your own motivation. Acknowledge this and look at the advantages of online studies. You have the possibility to freely arrange your time, a nice workplace, healthy food that you always have access to, the possibility to freely arrange your breaks, etc.

#### b. Rewarding yourself

The experience of success motivates your future work. Put a rather strenuous or unpleasant activity between two light/pleasant activities. Afterwards, reward yourself by consciously enjoying your learning effort. Think about which reward feels good for you.

#### c. Staying in contact with other students

Learning in groups can support you. Having worked together in a group on something difficult, having been guided through strenuous and enjoyable phases of learning, connects you with other students and allows strong relationships to develop. This is one of the best experiences of student life.

Good luck with your studies!

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