

How to Succeed in Flexible Hybrid

When You Are Participating Remotely

1. **Watch the class “live” if at all possible.** While some instructors may record the class for later viewing, if they forget and you were planning to watch it later, you would have missed class entirely. Even if the recordings are done consistently, it’s better to watch live, as you can use the chat function in TEAMS to ask questions of the instructor, and continue to participate synchronously. Additionally, studies have shown that student engagement is lowest in non-synchronous viewings of class material.
2. **Do not allow yourself to get distracted.** Watch the class in a disruption-free environment. There is no such thing as multitasking—scientists call it “task switching,” and numerous studies point out that neither task is done well compared with focused attention. Do not be in the same room with other people, do not turn on streaming movies or videos, and do not listen to music. It’s tempting to do any of the above since you know you are not being watched, but all of them are detrimental to your ability to learn. Your whole purpose here is to focus on the class, and behave as if the teacher could see/hear you.
3. **Take notes as if you were present in the classroom.** The point of higher education is not “content” (information). If it were, you’d only need a textbook and not an instructor. The value of a college class comes from listening deeply to a lecture and “interacting” with the concepts and ideas in your own head, recording these interactions as notes. Taking good notes is tricky; you have to record enough information/context that your notes are comprehensible days later, but you also don’t want to focus only (or even, primarily) on capturing information. Aim for perhaps 30% information and 70% context/relevance/importance.
4. **Record questions to ask the instructor later.** If the class is too large for the instructor to address all questions in TEAMS chat (or is not monitoring it live), you don’t want to assume your question “in the moment” is unimportant or will be answered later. If you don’t understand a concept, connection, or argument, make a note to ask later. That can take the form of an email through Canvas, or you can pose it once you are back face to face with the instructor. But don’t ignore such questions. Research shows that active involvement and interaction with the faculty member has a high correlation with success in the class.
5. **Employ basic etiquette for video calls.** You should generally stay muted to prevent background noise and echo from interfering with the class. Use headphones or earphones, because when you unmute to ask questions, regular speakers can cause feedback and echo. Particularly in small classes, you should plan on turning video on—many faculty prefer/require this, so “dress for class” and be ready to engage the video. Remember that your video is visible to everyone, so keep things like viewing angle in mind.

When You Are Attending Class in Person

6. **Continue the effective note-taking practices done during remote.** Whether present physically or not, your job is to generate the kind of notes that you can study from later. Don’t

just duplicate information on the screen or whiteboard. Instead, listen deeply and aim primarily for synthesizing the class discussion, including only enough raw information to make it understandable when viewing with fresh eyes days later. Also, in-person classes are inherently engaging and some may be structured/administered in a way that doesn't make it obvious where or when to take notes. Take notes nonetheless.

7. **Beware the “illusion of mastery”.** There's a well-known phenomenon that students listening to an expert explain a concept or solution to a problem may understand it completely while in the classroom, and feel like they have mastered it. However, comprehension in the moment is not at all the same thing as the ability to reproduce it on your own, hours later, without the expert nearby to help. This is another reason to take detailed notes—depending on the discipline, you may need to record details about the process (and decision-making along the way) as well as the specific solution. While this illusion of mastery may be present for remote students as well, it's particularly present during in-class participation.
8. **Ask questions of the instructor.** While in-class, you may have the opportunity to ask questions of the instructor. Do not fear that questions single you out in any fashion among the other students. It frequently occurs that many students are confused, but only one or two may raise hands to ask. In some classes, no such students volunteer, to the detriment of the entire class.
9. **Participate with other students when appropriate.** Studies have shown that learning is enhanced when there is a social component. Thus, when groupwork opportunities are presented, participate as fully as you can. Listening offers less benefit than actively contributing.

In General

10. **Check Canvas every day.** Some instructors post updates or announcements frequently, and you want to take advantage of early notice. But just as importantly, you want to engage the material intellectually at least once per day to maximize learning.
11. **Complete the assigned readings and videos BEFORE class begins.** It is true that some instructors will lecture on the same material assigned in readings/videos. However, this is not a license to ignore the readings, or even to do them after the class. The idea is that the lecture, if it does repeat the readings, provides additional context and a deeper understanding. If you treat lectures as the introduction, your comprehension will be more shallow. Also, keep in mind that many instructors do not lecture on the readings/videos in full (or even in part), trusting that you will do them before class so they can use class time for activities. Some instructors avoid lecture entirely, in fact, and will jump into applications during class time. Be ready for class!
12. **Quiz yourself daily, using “keyword notes” or flashcards.** The evidence in studies is quite clear: successfully storing and retrieving academic-style memories, data, and information comes from retrieval practice. Flashcards or Quizlet are great for this, as well as covering up your notes with your hand and using only keywords on the page to challenge yourself to recall/rebuild all the notes you're covering up. The effect is most pronounced when spaced out across several days, not done as cramming shortly before a test.
13. **Use a calendar to schedule reading time and study time.** It's not enough to block off time spent in class; you will want to use a calendar app (or a paper calendar) to intentionally block off time to complete class assignments and even more time set aside for simply reviewing notes and quizzing yourself.

14. **Take handwritten notes.** On both in-class and remote days, you should take notes by longhand, not by computer. It's true that many students can type faster than they can write by hand, but this is actually the entire point. Notes done by typing are more likely to occur without much mental work (like dictation), but the mental work is the reason lectures and notes work well together. Take handwritten notes that synthesize and contextualize information, not just capture information. If you do record notes digitally, strive for the kind of notes described above, rather than recording every detail.
15. **Keep the textbook nearby during class.** On both in-class and remote days, you will want the assigned reading easily accessible for reference, double-checking information, and adding additional margin notes.
16. **Actively seek to create and participate in study groups.** Studying with a partner or in groups offers several benefits: increased "time on task," enhanced learning through social interaction, mutual enforcement of accountability, and better chances that someone in the group will have a good solution to a particular problem. Use TEAMS or the Canvas messaging tool to seek other students interested in a study group, then use TEAMS to hold study sessions on your own!
17. **Stay flexible, stay healthy, and stay strong.** Try to view this semester as an opportunity to demonstrate your adaptability. But remember not to neglect your health, including your mental health and sanity. Take the breaks you need and find ways to relieve stress.