



How to manage stress and learn effectively at home

Here are some tips to help you get the most out of your learning during the current period, and to help you manage stress during these difficult times.

Active study, not passive

When you actively process information, you remember it better. This is because your neurons (cells in your brain) form stronger connections.

What does this mean for you?

Passive study examples	Active study examples
Reading a textbook	Highlighting the top 5 sentences on a page (limiting yourself makes you evaluate what is actually important, helping info to “stick” better)
Watching a YouTube video	Writing a quiz for yourself as you watch the video, then answer the questions in a couple of days.
Reading GCSE Bitesize or an app	Trying a past-paper, and marking it with the mark scheme.
Flicking through a revision guide	Making a mind-map that links across topics – or even subjects.
Telling someone you have revised a topic	Teaching someone else a topic! Create resources or hold a remote revision class for friends.

In summary, taking information in and *making something new from that information* is what really helps information to stick.

Setting study goals

Ask yourself:

- What do I want to achieve?
- Is this realistic?
- When will I have this done by? Do I have plenty of time?
- If my studies don't go well, what can I do?
- How will I celebrate / relax once it's all over?

Study tips

- The scale of the challenge can be so intimidating that just getting started can be really hard. If you struggle with motivation, start in good time by doing something. It doesn't matter how small, just *something* that helps.



- Make sure you make a timetable to organise the work you're going to tackle each day. It really helps if you set out what you need to do in small chunks. Small chunks are much more manageable.
- Use apps to block social media websites temporarily so you don't get distracted. Use Post-it notes to help break ideas down into bite-sized chunks and highlight key points you wish to remember. Try drawing mind maps to help you see the big picture.
- Grab a good pair of headphones and play some instrumental music. Instrumental music in the background can help to sharpen your focus.
- To make your day more manageable, try to break down each hour in to 40 minutes of solid studying followed by 20 minutes of break, so that you don't feel chained to your laptop on any given day.
- Remember that you're not a machine. You deserve time off! Make sure you factor in time to watch a film, talk with friends or grab a hot drink. The most productive brains are those that rest properly too!

How to manage stress and learn effectively at home continued

- Break up your learning with some exercise! Not only will it let your mind relax for an hour, you'll also get a burst of energy.
- Focus on you and don't worry about anyone else. You can only control what you do. Remember *your* best is good enough!

Managing stress

We react the same way to any threat. As a species, we have not evolved as quickly as our environment. Humans are built to face threats and fight for their lives, normally in rapidly escalating situations that are also over quickly. Activation and preparedness to attack are normal reactions, as well as excitement and joy of victory.

Stresses like having to study at home were non-existent in the early days of the human species. The problem is that we cannot turn off the surge of adrenaline when our "attacker" is a school issue rather than a lion. The body needs about 20 minutes to physically recover from an acute stress reaction. An adrenaline surge impacts our bodies for up to an hour. This kind of reaction is perfectly normal and natural!

We can help recover from stress reactions by managing the threat (i.e – having a plan and being organised) and using relaxation techniques such as breathing exercises and apps for your phone such as Headspace.

Breathing exercise

This calming breathing technique for stress, anxiety and panic takes just a few minutes and can be done anywhere. Breathing can help overcome the body's natural reactions to stress. You will get the most benefit if you do it regularly, as part of your daily routine.

You can do it standing up, sitting in a chair that supports your back, or lying on a bed or yoga mat on the floor. Make yourself as comfortable as you can. If you can, loosen any clothes that restrict your breathing.

If you're lying down, place your arms slightly away from your sides, with the palms up. Keep your legs straight, or bend your knees so your feet are flat on the floor. If you're sitting, place your arms on the chair arms.

If you're sitting or standing, place both feet flat on the ground. Whatever position you're in, place your feet roughly hip-width apart.

- Let your breath flow as deep down into your belly as is comfortable, without forcing it
- Try breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth
- Breathe in gently and regularly. Some people find it helpful to count steadily from one to five. You may not be able to reach five at first
- Then, without pausing or holding your breath, let it flow out gently, counting from one to five again, if you find this helpful
- Keep doing this for three to five minutes.

