

## **Getting the Best of Online Education in 5 Steps**

**by Didem Özçakır**

Unfortunately, many schools had to switch to online education due to the ongoing pandemic. We tried to continue our departments online for a semester and most of us felt that we could not learn anything. A concept called "online graduate" was created to make fun of the fact that people did not understand the lessons in virtual classes. Memes were made to show how online graduates would fail in their work. Even though this is the case, it seems like we do not have any chance to switch to face-to-face traditional education for a while. So, we must understand how we can still learn properly in virtual classes because it will be very difficult to make up for all this, to learn everything in detail again later. If we get distracted from high school education as it is online, we will have to learn a whole year of high school education from the beginning in the last year of high school for the university entrance exam. Those in primary or secondary school will also lack a certain academic foundation and discipline. It is crucial for university students to learn these lessons to do their jobs properly in the future. How can an economist be expected to do his job properly if he passed macroeconomics courses by making someone else attend the exams?

Let us admit, most of us went to class while lying in bed or checking out WhatsApp Web, dealing with video games or other hobbies. Even if we tried to listen, we found ourselves scrolling on Instagram. It was never possible to maintain concentration during the lesson because we already had a lot of distracting stimuli while trying to listen to something boring. In this article, my goal is to give you advices on how to get the most out of online education so that you do not regret later on.

### **1. Eliminating distractions**

The biggest reason for not being able to concentrate on the ongoing lesson is to be constantly checking out mobile phones. The lesson is continuing, and you find yourself replying to

WhatsApp messages and browsing Instagram or Twitter at the same time. However, the fact that the instructor is not able to see us does not make checking your mobile phone acceptable in any way, since the reason why it is forbidden at schools is due to students' concentration capacity. The solution for this type of distraction is actually very simple: put your phone in airplane mode and put it in another room. Even keep it in your wardrobe if possible. During the lesson, you will find that you really have little motivation to pick up your phone if it is in another room or in the wardrobe as you do not want to get up. Set it to airplane mode so that notifications do not distract you, and so that a call in the middle of a class does not motivate you to go to the other room and look at your phone. Another benefit of switching to airplane mode is that you will not be able to open WhatsApp Web during the lesson because your phone does not have internet. If it was not in airplane mode, you would still have a chance to reach WhatsApp without going to the other room, which would cause you to go to the messages the first moment you got bored in the lesson.

Of course, phones are not the only screens around us during online lessons. Trying to listen to a lecture in the same room with a TV can also be incredibly distracting. For this, it is necessary to set the hours when the television will be on or off. Listening to a lecture in a room where there is no television brings the most efficient result. Tablets or other computers can also be a distraction. For them, the solution is no different: take it and put it in another room until the lesson is over.

My brother keeps playing Fortnite or PUBG on his desktop computer while he puts the laptop where his courses are going on next to him. Although he claims that he is listening or learning the lesson while playing these games, what he does is not learning, but listening to what the teacher said at that moment. When I ask him what they did and what he learned afterwards, he has a very hard time even answering this. For this, it is really important that there is no screen around you other than the computer you are attending the lesson from.

So how do you keep yourself from other activities that you can do on the computer in which you are listening to the lecture? By introducing an internal control mechanism, you should not rigorously open Instagram, Twitter, Photoshop, or video games during your class. You should not open other applications with that internal control mechanism that you are bringing to yourself. If your lectures are conducted live, turning on a camera can be a good solution, since when the teacher and other people can see you, it means you can not do something else without getting their attention.

Where we listen to the lesson is also very important. For example, listening to a lecture in bed is problematic. Your bed has been coded as an ideal place to sleep and relax for your brain for years. It is not possible to provide the concentration required for the lesson in that comfort. If possible, sit at a table with nothing but a computer and a notebook on it.

It is also very important that the table is free of non-electronic items as well. For example, I found myself sewing in the middle of class, reading random passages from books, painting, or solving the Rubik's cube. Once I started dealing with them and missed what the teacher said, I could not understand the rest of the lesson. It is very important that you do not have such distractions that you can easily reach around during class, keep your work environment organized.

## **2. Making a weekly program or attending the class live**

"I will watch the recorded videos sometime, dear." It is one of the most dangerous things you can do, because you will probably never watch them. Most schools either have live lectures on Zoom and record them or expect you to watch the already made lecture recordings on a system. There are some schools that have never gotten into the trouble of uploading any kind of videos, but I think the vast majority of them will have to change that this term. Now we will examine these three different situations separately in terms of planning.

When the lessons are held live on Zoom, it is absolutely necessary to attend the class on time. The thought of watching the recordings afterwards only leads to an 35-hour course recording that you need to watch in 24 hours, because you will have zero motivation of watching a recording when you could watch something on Netflix instead. It is also a futile effort to try to learn by not attending the class and only reading from the book or notes: The teacher gives the main idea in a much shorter and understandable way in a place where you can ask questions. It is very difficult and tiring to keep in mind the tasks, assignments, and repetitions for all these live lessons, so it is really important to plan properly with an agenda. In face-to-face education, when we go to the lesson it becomes easier to remember our assignments as they are constantly repeated in a place where we are physically present. It is essential to plan all these by taking notes at home since we are not constantly reminded by our friends about where we need to be and what we need to do, it is very easy to just forget about an assignment.

In the system where the lessons are recorded and loaded, make a course schedule for yourself as if you were at school. Be certain and specific about when you will listen to which course, create yourself an artificial schedule and follow it. Integrate your study hours and assignments into this artificial schedule. If you do not follow this schedule, remember that you will have 60 hours of videos to watch over the last week before the exams.

Lessons without any videos are a problem, you should definitely sit down and read the book. I think that even if there were schools that could not have a video distance education system last term, this will change. Still, if it does not change, it becomes very important to come up with a work plan for yourself and follow it. When making this program, focus on which subject you will study in which week, where you will read from, and what kind of extra work you can do. Make sure you know which lesson you will study on which day at what time. It is much easier to create a gradual program and follow this program without extra effort, rather than encountering too much accumulated reading that you cannot handle.

### **3. Taking notes**

Perhaps taking notes is the most important piece of advice on this list. The guarantee of seriously only paying attention to the lecture during the lesson is taking a notebook and keeping notes of what the teacher says. When you take notes, you make an extra effort not to miss what the teacher said, the likelihood of your mind drifting into other things or finding yourself watching out the window is significantly reduced.

Taking notes can seem like a tiring or distracting factor for some of us. "While trying to decide what to write and what not to write, I focus on the notes rather than listening to the lecture. I try to make my notes look aesthetic." I can hear you say that. For this reason, it is very important to develop a unique, personalized system while taking notes. I think we all know those people who fill the notebooks with their set of Stabilo pens. When you take notes, there is no reason or obligation for you to be like them. Write in the format you can understand and feel the most comfortable with. For example, I never waste time using colored pens, I take out arrows instead of whole sentences and take notes in the form of mind maps. Stick with the notes that you can easily understand rather than the ones looking good, this makes the note-taking process much more efficient.

In my opinion, the best way to avoid dealing with other things during class is to develop the habit of taking notes that will actively engage your hands, mind, and eyes. "I didn't take notes in high school or middle school, will I start now?" Do not fall into such an idea, we have to change even the things we are most used to in order to get maximum efficiency from this process.

### **4. Reading the book or notes**

Reading the textbook after listening to the lectures is a really efficient solution because it is not possible for the teacher to convey everything in a limited time. While reading a book, you get the chance to lean over to the parts you do not understand and learn at your own pace. The only thing you need to be careful about is to be away from the distractions I explained in the first point (WhatsApp, Instagram, TV etc.) while working on something from the book. My

advice here should not be perceived as "do not go to classes, you can learn a lot from the book."

If only you put serious mental capacity, effort, and time into a subject, you can actually learn it. The fact that you can apply the knowledge you learn practically beyond memorizing, means that you internalize the subject. You will forget everything that you did not internalize after passing the exam. It is not possible for this internalization process to occur only in the time spent with the teacher, a subject that you spend only 4 hours a week is not so important for you. The solution to this is to allocate more time to that lesson, and the most efficient way to use that time is to read the textbook again. You can even refer to other resources for lessons you really like, and an answer will come to the question about how to use the time in this quarantine process while you are at home. If you do not wish to remember only 30% of what the teacher said after the lesson, take notes, read the book, and work without being lazy.

## **5.Improving sleeping patterns**

This advice may seem irrelevant to some of us, but getting proper sleep is one of the most important factors in determining how much your mind is open to learning in a lesson. I am also aware of how enjoyable it is to stand up until 3 or 4 a.m., playing games, chatting, or watching movies. Knowing that you will not physically go anywhere the next day, there is not much guilt in doing this. But doing this is something that almost zeroes the motivation of waking up for the 9 a.m. class the next morning. I think we have examined how easy it is to go to the lessons and learn the lesson in terms of time and efficiency. It takes all of the lesson to wake up and fully understand what the teacher is telling when you do not have a reasonable sleeping pattern. As the teacher continues to explain, we try to follow the lesson with a headache and a desire for sleeping, and at the end, we give up and go back to sleep. It is very important to have a proper sleep pattern so that you do not sleep during the lesson, the teacher's voice does not sound like a lullaby, and that you can find motivation for extra work afterwards. For me, I try to go to bed at 12 at the latest, but I am also aware that sleep is a thing that will vary greatly from person to

person. So put your hand on your conscience and ask yourself: What time of going to bed will mean that I will be able to listen properly to the teacher, instead of sleeping during the lesson? The answer to this question and you applying it is really essential for your efficiency. Do not pay attention to the pressure of your friends or them saying "chicken", nobody has the right to say anything to you while you are considering your health and your lessons.

**Bonus advice:**

Be aware of what you are learning for. In fact, our motivation for learning is determined by our answer to the question "Why am I trying to learn this?" What is the reason we are studying, trying to learn something? Are they just exams, or is there more for it? My goal here is not to lead you to an utopic idealism like "try to learn for the mere value of knowledge", but to make you realize that you have to learn even if there are no exams. Even if there is no exam, even if you can cheat in the exam, you still have to learn, even if it does not affect your GPA(Grade Point Average). You have to learn those both for your exams and to be able to do your job properly in the future. Without exams, we can not answer the question of why we study, which makes us make less of an effort to learn. Of course, it is a very difficult situation for us to start learning with a brand new motivation, as we have been used to learning for exam success for years, and this is the basis of inefficiency. We need to turn our motivation to learning into the awareness that we will use that information in the future rather than success in exams. If you really want to learn the lessons, getting efficiency in online education is not a difficult thing with a few arrangements I have explained.