



HUTCHINSON COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Transitioning to Online Classes during COVID-19

Hello students! Pause...breathe...and relax your shoulders...we're going to get through this change together! Take care of your wellbeing first. You may be facing a lot of changes and unknowns going on in your life right now. Try to give yourself some time to adapt and be patient with yourself, your classmates, and your instructors during this time. We **will** get through the rest of this semester successfully!

I am here to support you in any way that I can. You will also have access to your instructors, advisors, tutors, and anyone else you might need. To keep everyone safe, we have systems in place to work with you digitally through many different formats. We'll do our best to find a format that works for you!

Effective Monday, March 30, 2020 all of your face-to-face classes will be moved to DragonZone and provided in an online format. The exception to this is technical/AAS classes, e.g. welding, cosmetology, etc. so please check with your instructor if you are in one of those areas.

Making a plan of how you are going to transition to remote learning can help you feel a little more in control. I have worked with colleagues in higher education¹ to put together some tips to make the transition go smoother. My hope is that these suggestions will help reduce some of your fears and anxiety about this change and give you some resources to help you finish a successful spring semester!

In this guide, we'll talk about:

- Accommodations
- Staying organized
- Making the most of video lectures
- Avoiding multitasking
- Setting a schedule
- Creating your study space
- Staying connected to other people

¹ (Center for Academic Innovation University of Michigan, 2020)
(AHEAD Responds to Coronavirus, 2020)

1. Accommodations

- **If you signed a Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of this semester**, you will still have access to these accommodations in your online classes. Some of them might look a little bit different because of the format of the class, so please let me know if you encounter any problems.
- **Instructors have been working very hard to get all of their face-to-face classes switched** over to an online format, so it is important that you advocate for yourself and touch base with them about your accommodations. Email them to remind them that you need your test time extended. They have all been instructed on how to do this online.
- **Some of you have not signed a Letter of Accommodation** for this semester and perhaps did not need any accommodations in your face-to-face classes. As we transition to remote learning, you might realize that you do need to utilize your accommodations to have equal access in an online class format. Email me and we can discuss what accommodations you need.
- **If you left campus without your textbooks**, Redshelf, a provider of digital books is offering free digital textbooks to any college student displaced by COVID-19. They have most of the textbooks you need on their website and you can use them free through May. <https://studentresponse.redshelf.com/>

2. Staying organized

In online learning, organization and time management are two of the biggest areas that need to be considered for success. Here are some things you might want to keep track of for each class as we begin remote learning classes.

- **You should be online every day checking into each class!**
- **If you have never taken an online class before**, it's important that you get familiar with DragonZone and how it is laid out before classes start on Monday.
 - To login, your username is the first part of your HutchCC email address (for example, lrj1024@dragons.hutchcc.edu)
 - If you have forgotten your password, no problem. Click on Account help and fill out that information and IT will send you a new password that you can change later if you wish.
 - Once you get into DragonZone it will bring up Quick Links. Click on the one that says LearningZone, which will take you in to where your classes are located.
 - Your instructors are working on those classes right now, so keep checking back to see when they go "live" or are published, which means students can see them. They should all be ready by the weekend before classes start on March 30, if not before.

- Get in the class and start clicking on the different tabs within the class to see where different things are going to be. Look for lectures, modules, class assignments, calendars, etc. Become very familiar with all of the different areas.
- Many students that take online classes find it very helpful to print out the sheet that has all of the different assignments/tests and due dates so that you don't lose track of anything. If you don't have access to a printer, take a picture of it or better yet, take the time to put all the necessary dates on your phone calendar!
- **Each instructor is setting up their class, so there might be some different requirements.**
 - Will your instructor do their lecture live and expect you to be "in class" during that time or will the lectures be recorded for you to view anytime.
 - How long will the video be available for you to watch the lecture and take notes?
 - Are assignments changing?
 - Are there new due dates?
 - How will you be submitting your assignments?
 - Are quizzes/exams being offered virtually or proctored? If proctored, be sure and let your instructor know if you want to take your test over in Assessment Services testing center with accommodations, if that is one of your approved accommodations.
 - Be sure and remind your instructor that you need your time extended on your online tests/quizzes, if that is one of your approved accommodations.
- **What should you do if you need help in your class?**
 - Instructors will still have office hours and be available to you! Check with your course instructor to see if they are offering virtual office hours. Find out when and on what platform.
COMMUNICATION IS KEY!!
 - Is there an online forum for asking questions within the class?
 - Tutoring is still available through Rimmer, face-to-face and online.
<http://www1.hutchcc.edu/administration/rimmer-learning-resource-center/tutoring>
 - Make sure you have your instructors preferred contact information. If you are having difficulty connecting or getting your computer set up, the IT helpdesk contact information is 620-665-3524 or techsupport@hutchcc.edu. Online Learning contact is onlinelearning@hutchcc.edu, if you run into a problem of accessing part of the class or submitting information through LearningZone.

3. Making the most of video lectures

- **Stick to your instructor's schedule as much as you can.** This will help you feel more like you are continuing in your regular face-to-face class and prevent you from falling behind.
- **Find out how to ask questions.** Is there a chat feature? Is there a discussion forum? Is there a raise your hand feature?
- **Close distracting tabs and apps.** We are not as good at multitasking as we think! (see #3 below)
- **Be ready to take notes on lectures.** Even though instructors may have some of their lecture notes online, I have talked to many who have said that there will still be information in the lecture that students will need to take notes on for tests and assignments.
- **Video lectures** should be in a format so that you are able to refer back to them in case you missed anything when you were taking notes. Make sure you know how to access previously viewed lecture videos.

4. Avoid multitasking

When you are doing more class work on your own and your time is less structured, you might be tempted to multitask. Many of us think that we can do multiple things at once, but research shows that is not true for 98% of us. Even if you feel like you are good at multitasking, you probably are not and are losing valuable time and attention to the important parts of the class. So during your virtual class time, put everything away and just focus on the class material! It will actually help you to do better work and you will get done quicker by focusing on one thing at a time.

Downsides of multitasking

- **Assignments take longer.** Each time you come back to an assignment (from Instagram for example), you have to get familiar with it again, find your spot, remember what you were going to do next, etc.
- **You're more likely to make mistakes.** Distractions and switching between tasks tires out the brain.
- **You'll remember less.** When your brain is divided, it's harder for you to put what you are learning in your long-term memory.

What to do instead

When you need to study something important, do these things.

- Focus on one thing at a time.
- Take breaks between tasks
- Consider the "pomodoro method" to help you focus for 25- or 50-minute periods and then reward yourself with 5- or 10-minute breaks.
- Use a timer to make sure you get back on task so those 10-minute breaks don't turn into 60-minute breaks! There are many timer apps for your phone and online.

5. Setting a schedule

As the situation with COVID-19 continues to change, you will have fewer social-commitments, group meetings, or work hours. Please STAY HOME as much as you possibly can! Setting a schedule for yourself can help to provide structure and consistency in your life to keep you motivated. If you don't already keep a weekly or daily calendar, this would be a great time to start to keep track of everything. There are many schedule templates in your apps on your phone as well as online. Find one that works for you.

6. Creating your study space

Your routines may have to adjust during this time. Look for ways to adapt your usual habits or form new ones.

For example:

- **If you usually study in a coffee shop, the library or Rimmer**, think about what made those places your preferred study sites. See if you can recreate that at home. Maybe it's studying in a certain type of chair, rather than on your bed or couch. Maybe going outside with the fresh air will help you stay alert. Maybe it helps you to refocus if you move to a new spot when you change classes or tasks.
- **If you need background noise**, consider a white noise app, outside noises or music at a low volume. To keep focused, it is more effective to listen to the music or other white noise without headphones.
- **If you prefer to study with friends**, try a virtual or even phone-based study session with your friends/classmates. Google hangouts, Zoom, face-time are just a few of the many options available. Find one that works for your group.
- **If you think you do best with tight timelines, but now have a more open schedule**, think about how working with others or setting up a schedule can recreate that for you. When that gets hard, see if you can even do fifteen minutes at a time. Again use a timer and reward your focus time with a short break. Procrastination is a big reason why students do not do well in online classes!

6. Staying Connected to people

This is so very important during this time of social distancing. Even though we are limiting how much face-to-face time we spend with others on campus, connecting with family and friends might be more important than ever. Stay in touch with your instructors! They want you to be successful and are there to help you. Stay in touch with your advisor to let them know how things are going this semester and in life in general. They will also be available to help you enroll in any late starting classes still available this semester, summer classes and Fall 2020 classes. We want to help you stay on track towards your goals, so just email or call us!

And please contact me, if you need any help with your accommodations, start experiencing some new struggles that you haven't had before, start feeling overwhelmed and just need to talk, or need someone to walk through your class with you. I'm here for you!

Here are a few ideas to stay connected:

- Schedule video calls with friends and family. Talking with loved ones is often really helpful when you're stressed or nervous about something. Taking a break to have a laugh is also important.
- Most of the staff and faculty at HutchCC will be using Zoom to communicate. This is a very user friendly program that is a free download for your computer and phone. <https://zoom.us/>
- Attend virtual office hours or study groups so that you can stay up on your coursework.

Please remember, this will pass. If COVID-19 has ruined your spring break, ended an activity you were excited about, made you leave your friends suddenly and earlier than you expected, or for any reason feels like it came at the worst possible time, remember that this is temporary. You will find your way when it settles down. You will get back on track, and things will get back to your normal. We don't know when, but it will happen. And if we all do our part, it will be sooner than later.

So...take a deep breath, do your best, get some rest, and wash your hands.

You've got this!!

Additional Resources

<https://www.hutchcc.edu/covid-19>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/prevention.html>

HutchCC Accessibility Services, Counseling and General Advising: <https://www.hutchcc.edu/student-success-center>

Online Education/Tech Support: <https://www.hutchcc.edu/support>

Rimmer Learning Center – Tutoring: <http://www1.hutchcc.edu/administration/rimmer-learning-resource-center/tutoring>

Time Management Strategies²:

<https://extension.uga.edu/publications/detail.html?number=C1042&title=Time%20Management:%2010%20Strategies%20for%20Better%20Time%20Management#title0>

² (Time Management: 10 strategies for Better Time Management, 2014)

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