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Academic Success Advice

for High School and Elementary Students

Self - Learning during a Pandemic Shutdown



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Studying and keeping up with classes is difficult enough under normal circumstance. However, the recent pandemic shutdown has shifted the shared responsibility of learning almost entirely onto the students. As students, you must now actively participate in self-directed learning to keep on top of your curriculum. Self-directed learning is comprised of two parts : (1.) knowing how to learn effectively and (2.) developing habits that allow you to enforce these skills and take responsibility over our own learning.

How to Learn Effectively

For effective learning to take place, students need to do three things: **Understand – Summarize – Practice**. **Understanding** is not to be confused with passive memorization. It means that you must actively engage with the material. It can include asking questions like “why is this important?” or “how does this work?” and generally going the extra mile in comprehending the material fully. Being able to explain concepts to someone else (a family member or a friend) is generally a good sign that you have some understanding of the topic.

After understanding the topic you must be able to **summarize** it and rephrase concepts in your own words. This distinguishes whether you understood the topic or simply memorized it. You can take this opportunity to use diagram or flow chart to map out how concepts are related to one another as opposed to concise notes.

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Being able to take complex concepts and accurately rewording them in simpler terms is a great indicator that you're on the right track!

Finally, **practice** is an essential habit in learning of any kind. Exposure to different scenarios (whether it be math problems or biology questions) allows you to familiarize yourself with the subject more intimately and secure your understanding.

Creating systems to self-direct

Knowing HOW to learn effectively is not enough unless you have systems in place to make yourself do the actual work. Here are a few methods to create a solid system for self-learning.

Build a solid sense of routine. This could mean emulating school routine and waking up early to do your work or setting a particular time to study everyday. This helps create a sense of regularity in your day (important when you are stuck at home!) and make studying feel like a more natural part within it.

Create a distinct working environment. This is a very important step as many people cannot do serious work in the same area that they relax in.

Carve out a space for yourself (an office or a different corner in your room) that is designated JUST for studying.

Create realistic expectations and timelines. Create a schedule and decide beforehand how much work you are planning to do today. Create a timeline for yourself that is manageable based on your expectations and stick to it!

Hold yourself accountable. If you aren't able to complete your study objectives on a given day, that's OK. However, you must hold yourself accountable and actively work out how you plan to get back on track. Take responsibility over your schedule.

During this unprecedented time the pressure is on the students to take their education into their own hands. Maintaining effective learning habits combined with solid systems of self-direction will be the key for student learning during the pandemic shutdown.

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