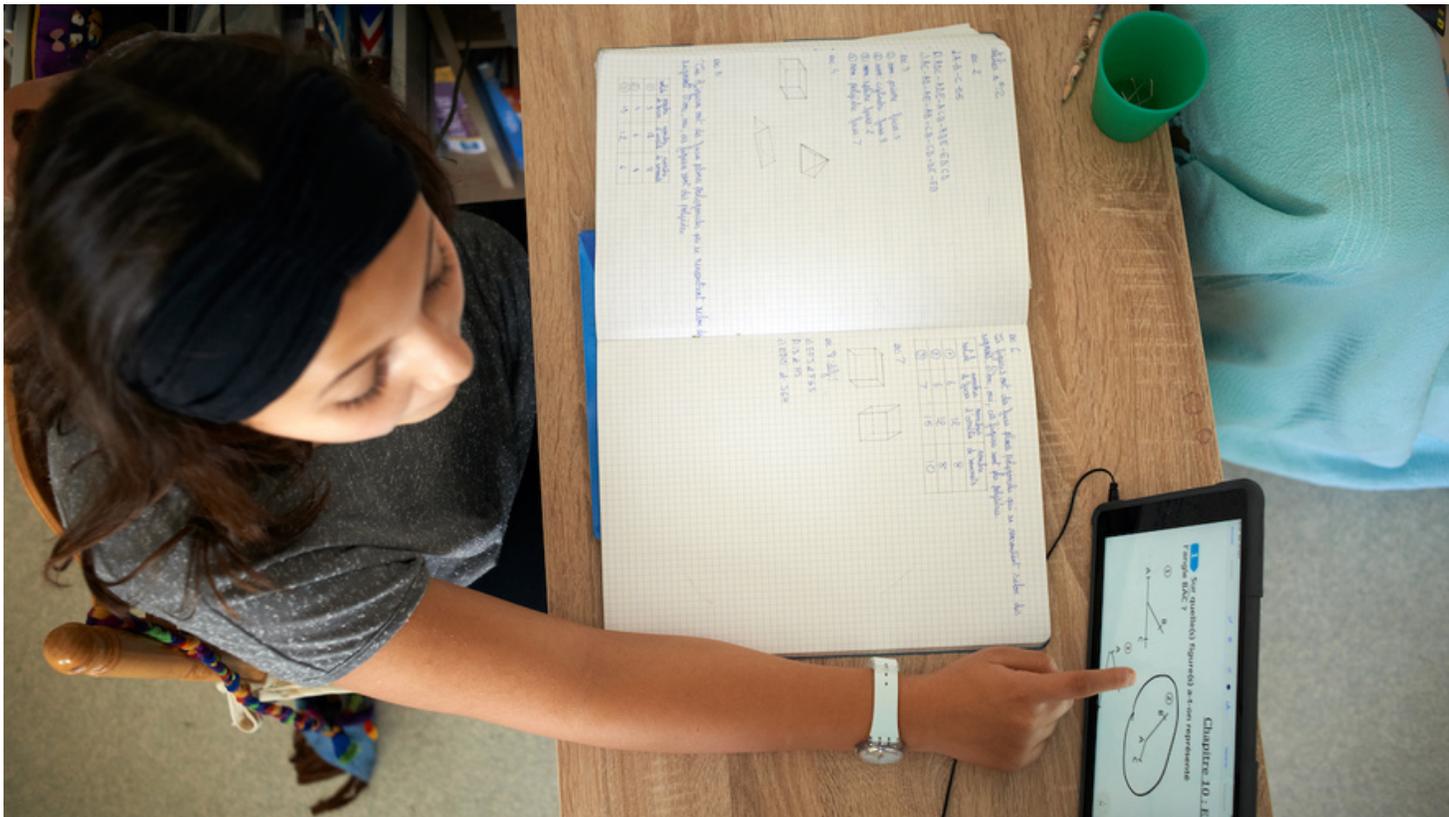


# Tips for students who are new to virtual learning

By Jacqueline Barba on 03.27.20

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A student in France does math work in a notebook and on a tablet during her school's closure due to coronavirus. Photo: NurPhoto, Getty Images

Teachers and students across the country are making the transition to distance learning in response to school closures for the coronavirus outbreak. For many students, this will be a first experience using video chat and conferencing as a tool for learning.

The rules of virtual learning etiquette are a little different than those we're used to following in a physical classroom. Here are a few tips to help students adjust to their new setup, engage fully in virtual class time and troubleshoot any related challenges.

## **Find a quiet place to set up.**

A quiet environment is key when you're setting up space for virtual class time. Choose a spot where there will be minimal distractions, ideally away from the flow of family "traffic." If you can, set up your device at a desk, table or countertop so that your hands are free to take notes and flip through class materials.

## **Prepare for class.**

Just like ordinary class time, you'll want to have your materials at the ready when your virtual class or lecture begins. Gather any books, notes, printouts and binders that you may need to reference during the session. Make sure you have a pen and paper handy! Finally, let your family members know you're about to enter class time. This way, they can be mindful of their volume and avoid distracting you.

## **Set a goal for yourself.**

Beginning virtual learning time with a deliberate intention lends extra purpose to your session and helps you focus on the content at hand. Challenge yourself to learn one new thing from a classmate, ask one question or share one piece of positive feedback.

## **Check: Are you muted?**

After you log on, and before lesson time starts, make sure to mute yourself! Background noises such as typing, chewing or barking/meowing/chirping pets may not sound like much on your side, but those noises can amplify across your teacher's and classmates' speakers. Most audio/mute buttons look like a little microphone. You'll know you're muted when you see an X or slash over the button.



## **Double-check: Are you really muted?**

Just making sure!

## **Practice active listening.**

It can be easy to get distracted when you're sitting alone in front of a device. Active listening strategies will help you maintain focus. To show that you're paying attention to the speaker, keep your eyes on the screen, rather than looking around the room. Nod, smile and react to what you're hearing, just the way you would in the classroom. Use a pen and paper to jot down the main points and ideas of the lesson in bulleted notes. This will push you to listen closely. Finally, resist the urge to browse! Expand your virtual learning window to full-size, and don't open other windows or apps on your device during class time.

## **Follow your teacher's instructions.**

Unlike in an ordinary classroom setting, your teacher won't always be able to see if you are raising your hand to speak or share. Follow the teacher's instructions on how to indicate that you'd like to ask or answer a question. This may involve using a virtual hand-raise feature in the platform, or typing a message into a chat box. Practice patience during the question-and-answer parts of lessons. There may be a bit of a delay between the person speaking and those listening. Pause for a moment before you respond. And if you're speaking out loud, make sure to unmute your microphone first! (Then, of course, mute yourself again when you return to listening mode.)

## **Stay engaged through chat.**

As long as your teacher gives the OK, you can use the chat feature in your platform to ask questions, highlight interesting ideas or agree with what your classmates are sharing. It's not quite the same as being in a room together, but it can help you stay connected to your classmates while you're apart.

### **Keep calm and troubleshoot.**

Has something gone wrong during your session? Screen froze? Bumped from the class? App crashed? Don't panic! Technical glitches are bound to happen. Try logging back on. If that doesn't work, take steps to figure out if the problem was on your side. Check your WiFi — is it still connected? Restart your computer if you need to. You can also check your email for communications from your teacher, in case the problem occurred on their side. If all else fails, keep calm — and try logging on again!

## Quiz

- 1 Which sentence from the article would be MOST important to include in a summary of the article?
- (A) Teachers and students across the country are making the transition to distance learning in response to school closures for the coronavirus outbreak.
  - (B) If you can, set up your device at a desk, table or countertop so that your hands are free to take notes and flip through class materials.
  - (C) Use a pen and paper to jot down the main points and ideas of the lesson in bulleted notes.
  - (D) Expand your virtual learning window to full-size, and don't open other windows or apps on your device during class time.

- 2 Read the following sentences from the article.

1. *Try logging back on.*
2. *Check your WiFi — is it still connected?*
3. *Restart your computer if you need to.*
4. *You can also check your email for communications from your teacher, in case the problem occurred on their side.*

What CENTRAL idea do these details support?

- (A) Students want to stay connected with their classmates.
  - (B) Students should follow all of their teacher's instructions.
  - (C) Students might panic if they have problems with their session.
  - (D) Students can take steps to fix some technical glitches.
- 3 How does the section "Prepare for class" relate to the section "Find a quiet place to set up"?
- (A) Both sections explain things to do before a virtual learning class starts.
  - (B) Both sections explain how students can actively listen in their virtual learning classes.
  - (C) Both sections highlight the differences between ordinary classes and virtual learning classes.
  - (D) Both sections highlight the reasons why virtual learning classes are fun for students.

- 4 Read the section "Check: Are you muted?"

What does this section show that other sections do NOT?

- (A) why students should take their microphones off mute
- (B) how students can tell if their microphones are muted
- (C) when students should put their microphones on mute
- (D) what students should do after they mute their microphones