

LEARNING DIGITALLY GUIDE

SURVIVAL HANDBOOK FOR VET
STUDENTS IN ONLINE LEARNING



DIG MY VET!
DIGITAL STRATEGIES FOR VET CENTRES





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Introduction.

What do we mean by Learning Digitally?

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the ever-growing trend of online learning. The amount of online courses is growing day by day, and the main reason for that is its flexibility: the range of topics offered is vast, and you can take a selected course from almost anywhere in the world. More and more schools, including vocational education and training (VET) schools, resort to online learning, as it helps the learning process continue no matter what.

If you take an online course upon your own initiative, you can usually decide for yourself how much time a day you dedicate to it and how you organise your learning. If you are a VET student and your classes are moved completely into a virtual environment, online learning can be quite overwhelming.

If you take an online course or participate in online learning organised by your school, you have to make certain preparations to make the process as pleasant and effective as possible. This guide will provide you with some tips and recommendations on how to organise your online learning.

But first, what do we actually mean by learning digitally? It can take different forms:

- participating in lectures and practical sessions in a real-time mode,
- searching for and consuming information in an electronic form (for example, watching an instructional video, doing an online course or test, etc.)
- using various digital tools to complete your home assignment, write a paper, prepare a presentation, etc.

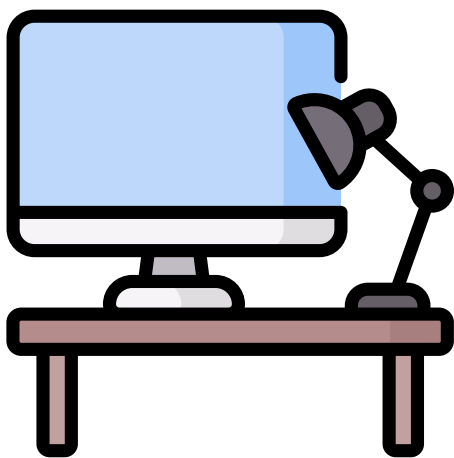
In many cases, digital tools may help you complete your tasks faster and easier. However, if there are too many, you might feel overwhelmed. To avoid that, you have to follow some basic rules, the first of which is **preparation**.

Preparing for online learning

In online learning, preparation is just as important as the actual process. Proper preparation can make it easier to learn – this includes creating your learning environment, making sure you have the right equipment, and setting a routine.

Before diving into online learning, consider the tips provided below (if you are already learning digitally, check how you can improve your environment and your routine to make your learning more effective):

Study environment



- Set up a specific place for your studies – separate it from your leisure spaces. It will help you get into the working mood faster. It should be a quiet place without distractions from TV, family or roommates.
 - Add variety: some people need a change of scenery to boost their productivity, so it wouldn't hurt if you move to a library or a corner booth in a local coffee shop (this doesn't mean, however, you can participate in an online session when lying on a sofa!).
-
- Make sure you have a comfortable temperature in your study room (not too warm, and not too cold).
 - Take care of ergonomics. Adjust the height of your chair, keyboard, and screen so that you are comfortable. Forearms and thighs should be level and parallel to the floor. Wrists should not be bent while typing.

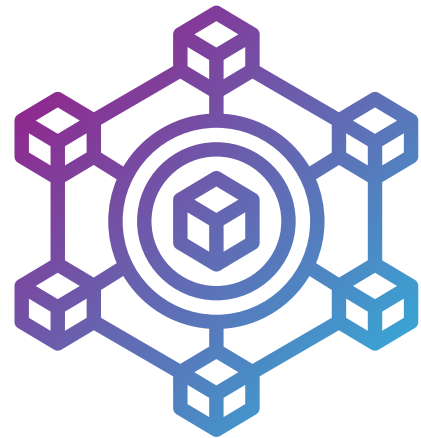


Source: <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/321863#sitting-at-a-computer>

- Protect your eyes. Adjust the brightness of your screen so that it is similar to the lighting around you. Sit about an arm's length away from the monitor, the top of the screen should be at or just below eye level.
- Adjust the lighting so that is suitable for both completing day-to-day tasks and participating in online sessions. It should be at least as bright as the computer screen to avoid eyestrain.
- If you are to take part in longer online sessions, it is a good idea to have a bottle of water or a thermos with tea at hand.
- Make sure you have all the needed materials nearby: books, printouts, templates, exercise books, etc.

Technical infrastructure

- Make sure you have all the necessary equipment to participate in online learning: a PC or laptop with the basic software, earphones (these will help eliminate external noises) and a camera. If you are missing something, check with your school: during the pandemic, many schools received additional funding to provide teachers and students with laptops and tablets for learning.



- Test your camera and earphones before the start of the online session.
- If your classes are taking place purely online, a good internet connection is a must: check if the internet speed is good enough for you to participate in online sessions.

There are various online tools that can help you check your Internet connection, one of them is <https://www.speedtest.net/>.

- Make sure you know how to use communication software properly (Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet or similar). If you do not feel secure, check the manual on the respective website or watch tutorials on YouTube, and test audio and video before the start of the online session.
- If your school is using a specific Learning Management System or cloud-based service, take some time to explore to make sure you are aware of its structure and functionalities. Do it before the start of the course or semester!

Organising work



- The best approach to online learning is to treat it like “normal” face-to-face learning with the same deadlines, tasks, and assignments to be handed in. This will ensure (almost) the same level of commitment and help you follow through.

- Try to maintain a schedule similar to the one when you are studying on site or in class. Choose your preferred tool (a paper weekly template or a digital calendar) and write down all important deadlines. A Google Calendar synchronised with your email account may come in handy.
- Review the syllabus for each of your courses at the beginning of the semester and make sure you understand all the requirements/expectations (if not, check with your teacher). Develop a long-term plan for completing your major assignments and break them into smaller steps to make them more manageable.
- Take account of prior commitments (family celebrations or holidays) – these might interfere with your learning schedule and prevent you from meeting the deadline.
- Set a weekly schedule that will include time for online sessions with teachers and/or group work, reading, watching lectures, and completing assignments. Check your progress weekly and enjoy ticking off completed tasks.
- Do not forget to plan time for sleep, meals, breaks and time for yourself. Try to spend as much time as possible outside, in the open air.
- Try to complete the most demanding tasks during your most productive hours. Be realistic about what you can manage in one day (usually we plan too much!).

- Think how you perceive and memorise information in the most effective way: if you are a visual type, print out the transcripts of videos, charts and tables. If you prefer listening, make some time to (re-)play audio-based contents.

If you don't know what your learning style is, take a test to find it out: <http://www.educationplanner.org/students/self-assessments/learning-styles-quiz.shtml> (note: it is only available in English).

- Find a study buddy who will support you when you are lacking motivation and will hold you accountable.

Sticking to a routine

- Keep your camera on if you participate in an online session – it will prevent you from falling asleep or getting distracted.
- When working on your assignments, try time-blocking using a timer: allocate a certain amount of time for a task, then take a break before going on with it or moving to another one. Google Chrome has an extension called Focus Timer that runs in “Pomodoro” sessions (i.e., in 25 minutes).
- Take restful breaks: go for a walk, make a cup of tea or take a nap. Make sure you have at least a 5-minute break every hour.
- Set intentional times to check your messages and social media. For the rest of the time, switch off notifications to avoid distractions.
- Find a reward for yourself for sticking to the schedule or completing a specific task – this is important to stay motivated.
- Check in with yourself regularly to see how you manage time: are you planning enough time for each task or do you tend to underestimate the scope of work, which leads to staying up late at night?
- If you are having difficulties with the course plan, tell your teachers and ask them for clarification or help. You can also arrange short online meetings with your groupmates to discuss your progress and support each other.
- Don't forget to get enough rest, nutrition, and exercise – this way you will stay healthy both physically and mentally. Spend time with your friends and family regularly.

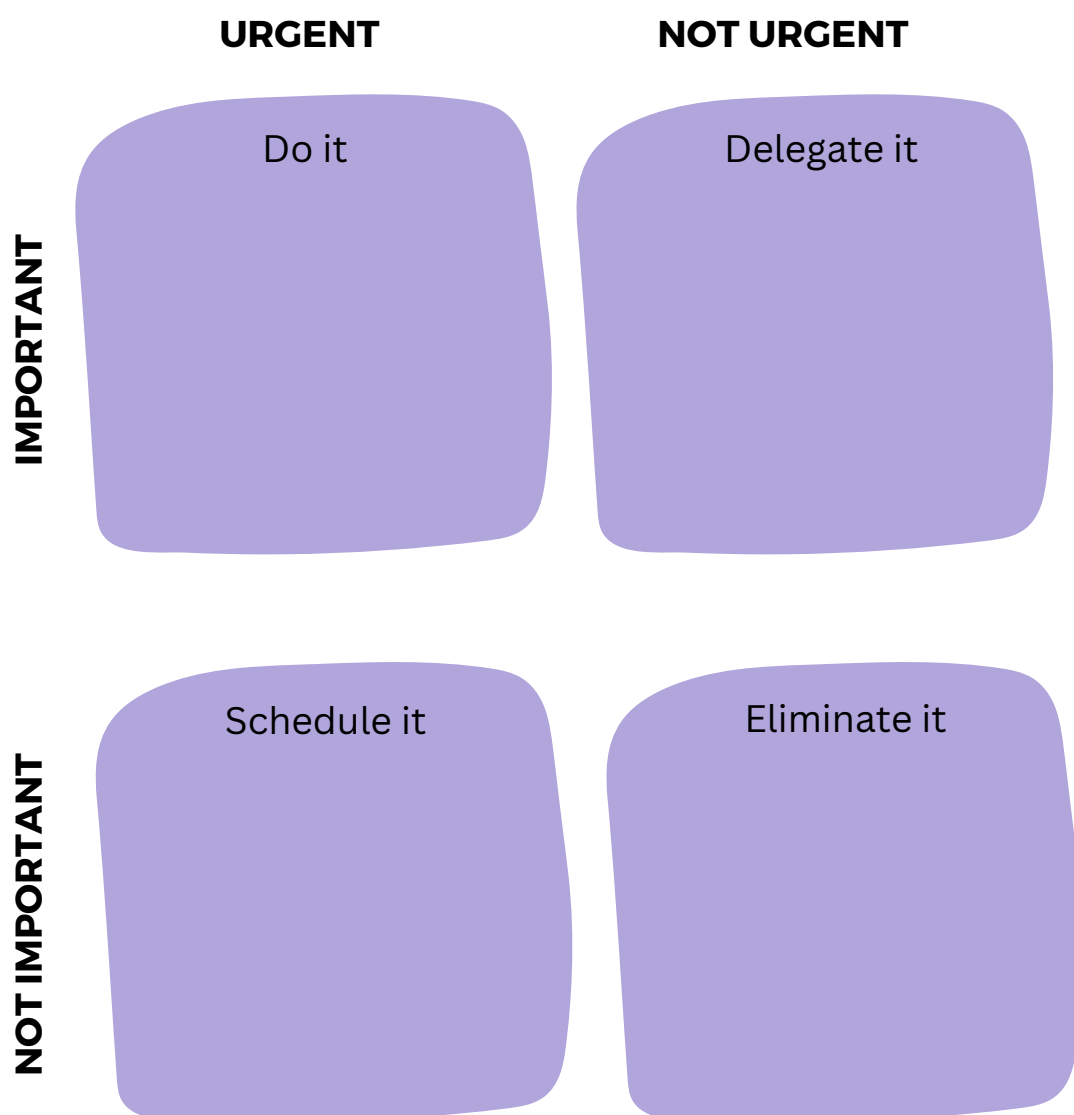
My Notes:

Managing your time when learning online

Time is basically the only source a human cannot add to: you can create time for something only by prioritising things (and turning some of them down), and planning for the short and long term.

Here are some tips and techniques that will take your planning and time management skills a notch:

Eisenhower Matrix (aka Eisenhower Box)



This is not just a time-management technique, but it helps you sort out your priorities and make the right decisions. It is named after Dwight D. Eisenhower, 34th President of the United States, who was known for his incredible productivity.

The Eisenhower Matrix, or Box, helps you assess all the tasks against their *importance* and *urgency* and categorise them along four areas:

- Urgent and important (these should be *done* immediately),
- Important, but not urgent (these should be *scheduled* properly),
- Urgent, but not important (these should be *delegated* to someone else),
- Neither urgent, not important (these can be *eliminated* fully).

With this technique, you might not be able to complete all the tasks, which will help you overcome perfectionism. Also, it's important to understand the difference between urgent and important tasks. Urgent tasks are time-sensitive and require your attention – but not all of them are important. Important tasks may not require your immediate attention, but contribute to achieving your long-term goals. If you put off important tasks for too long, they can also become urgent.

Finally, the great thing about this tool is that it can be used both for long-term goals and for daily to-do plans.

ALPEN Technique

“Alpen” is the German word for “Alps”, but it is also an abbreviation for a time-management technique for daily planning that should help you increase performance and reduce stress. It was developed by a time management expert, Prof. Lothar J. Seiwert.

This technique suggests that you take a few minutes in the morning to plan your activities for the day according to the following scheme:

A – listing *Activities* or *Assignments* for the day (“Aufgaben” in German): write down all the tasks that you have to complete (including standard ones – like reading and answering emails).

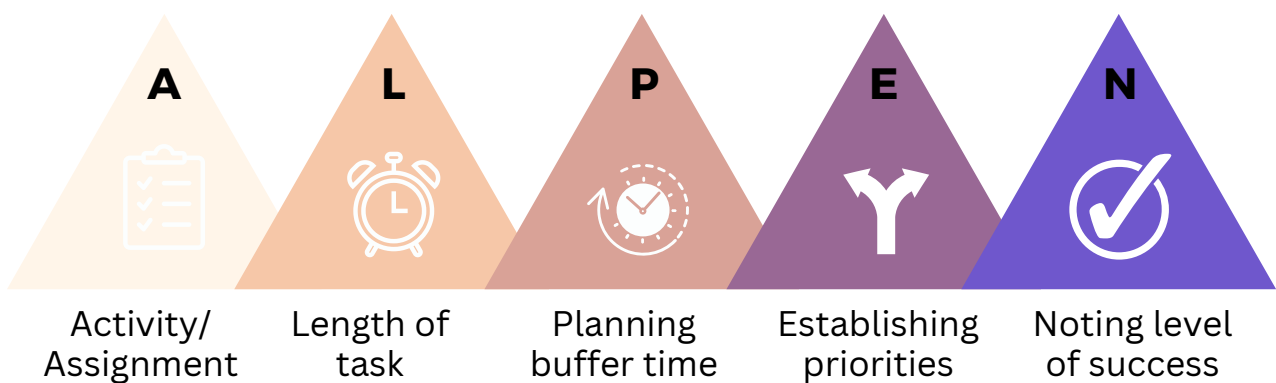
L – estimating *Length of each task* (“Länge”): estimate how much time each task requires. Be realistic, but keep time a little tighter (the more time you plan, the more time you will probably use).

P – *Planning buffer time* (“Pufferzeiten”): this step is closely related to the previous one. Plan small buffer periods between separate tasks to address unforeseen tasks. Practice shows it is advisable to plan 30 to 40% of the time as a buffer.

E – *Establishing prioritised decisions* (“Entscheidungen”): it is time to prioritise. Choose the most important and urgent tasks and try to complete them first while you are still full of energy; large-scale tasks should be divided into smaller chunks. Tip: if you feel low after lunch, use this time for tasks with lower priority. Finally, admit that not all the tasks can be finalised in one day.

N – *Noting down level of success*, or follow-up check (“Nachkontrolle”): this is a task for the evening. Have a look at your plan and analyse how well it worked, whether your time estimate was adequate and how it should be changed.

Try to be flexible about it: even if you plan realistically and have enough buffers, there is still a chance you won’t complete all the tasks.



POMODORO Technique



This relatively simple time management technique was suggested by Francesco Cirillo – he named it after a tomato-shaped timer he used in college to keep track of time. The idea is to increase your productivity by staying focused in limited time spans followed by short breaks. Here is how it works:

1. Have a list of tasks to be completed ready (you should decide beforehand which of them are most important).
2. Set a timer for 25 minutes and start working on the first task.
3. If a distraction occurs while you are working, note it down and keep on working – you will get back to it later.
4. When the timer rings, take a five-minute break.
5. After the break, continue with the task if you have not completed it yet or start another one.
6. After you have completed four *pomodori*, take a 20- to 30-minute break.
7. Repeat the cycle until your working time is over.

Note! This can only work if you are working on your assignments; if you are participating in an online session, you will have to stick to the proposed schedule.

A **study diary** might help you organise your time and keep track of all the tasks – you can keep it either in printed or electronic form. Click [here](#) to find an example of a study diary that you might use: it contains a yearly overview, as well as templates for monthly, weekly and daily planning. You do not necessarily have to use all of them – choose the ones that you find most useful (you can also create your own using Microsoft Excel, Canva, or Edit.org).

If you are a fan of note taking, you can create your own study diary by using a **bullet journal** that has been gaining popularity in recent years. Being a tool to organise your to-dos in the short- and long-term, a bullet journal consists of several sections:

- an index, or a “table of contents”
- a future log, or six-month overview of the tasks
- a monthly log with a calendar and a task list for the month
- a daily log with tasks, events and notes
- collections of topics.

If you want to learn more about bullet journalling, check out this [video](#).

My Notes:

Keeping in touch with teachers and peers

We often tend to underestimate the importance of communication: each person is a member of a bigger “tribe”, and our wellbeing largely depends on our interaction with other people. Communication is also exceedingly important in learning: by maintaining connection with others (be it fellow students or teachers) we can deepen our knowledge of the subject, draw inspiration from others and receive necessary support and motivation.

The following pieces of advice will help you stay in touch with teachers and peers when learning online.

Communication with school/teachers



- Be strategic about your communication and limit the number of tools you use for communication on learning-related matters. Using too many tools can make you feel overwhelmed.
- If your school offers a specific learning management system and you agree with your teachers to use it as the main working tool, explore its functionalities and use it mainly to report on your progress, ask questions (if you can), etc.
- Even if your classes are taking place in a virtual environment, try to be active as much as possible: keep your camera turned on and participate in online discussions and group work. This will give you a greater sense of purpose and achievement.
- Communicate with teachers within regular working hours. If your request is not urgent, you can send an email, but take into account it might take a while before you get an answer.

- If you sense you might be falling behind the schedule or are not coping with the workload, reach out to your teachers beforehand: ask a teacher to arrange an individual session (via a phone call or online meeting), or take advantage of the counselling sessions your teacher might be offering.
- Follow the basic rules of online communication. Do not disclose other people's private data, and keep your own safe.

Communication with peers

- If you need peer support, you could set up a group chat with classmates on WhatsApp or in another messenger. A tip: it is advisable to use a desktop version to avoid the distractions that a smartphone creates. Also, agree from the beginning that you will use this chat to discuss learning-related matters exclusively (otherwise you may get stuck in endless discussions).
- If you have a learning buddy, set a date for a phone call or an online meeting when you will be discussing your progress. Make sure to keep each other accountable, and support each other with issues.
- Modern online communication tools do help you maintain connections, but they can't replace face-to-face communication. Set regular meetings (e.g., once a month) with your groupmates to share your progress, discuss challenges and get or provide mutual support.



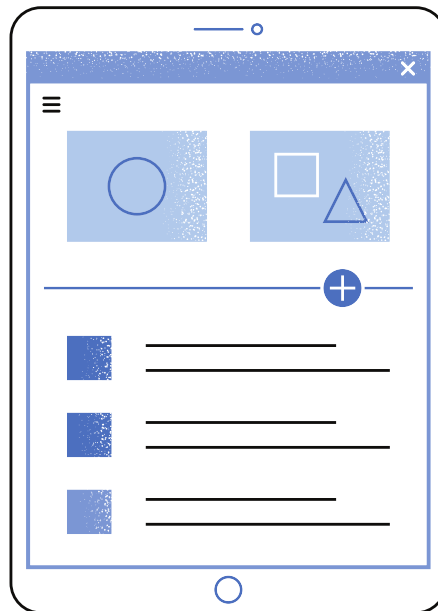
My Notes:

Online tools to use for distance learning

The internet offers an array of programmes and tools that can facilitate the learning process and make your learning journey more diverse. These can be used for various purposes: planning your studies and managing time, communication, home assignments, and brainstorming.

In this section, you will find examples of digital tools and programme*** that may come in handy when learning online, for example: to stay in contact with teachers and fellow students, complete group assignments, prepare presentations, etc.

The list is not exhaustive, of course – you can do further research to find a tool that would meet your specific needs.



*** The members of DigMyVET project consortium are not affiliated to the companies and brands mentioned in this section, nor have they received money to advertise those. The tools described are only provided as an example.

Day-to-day communication (e.g., messaging)

Skype

Skype is an application used for video calls, videoconferencing, instant messaging and voice calls. It is available for various devices: phone, PC, tablet, Xbox, etc.

What are the functionalities of the tool?

- Instant messaging
- Audio and HD video calling
- Call recording and live subtitles
- Screen sharing
- Call phones (to mobiles and landlines)
- Private conversations
- File sharing

Requirements concerning the tool

Skype is available for Windows, Linux, Mac, iPhone, iPad, Android, Xbox, Alexa or in your browser.

Most functions are free to use – sending messages as well as audio and video calls up to 100 persons. If you want to send SMS or call a mobile phone or landline, you should pay a fee.

Language of the tool:

Skype is available in more than 40 languages, including the languages of the European Union.

WhatsApp Desktop App

WhatsApp Desktop App is a desktop version of a popular messaging service that enables texting, voice message, sharing of files and other functions.

- Instant messaging (one-to-one and in groups – more than 200 persons)
- Voice messages
- Sharing files (photos, videos, documents up to 100 Mb)
- Synchronisation with the app on your mobile phone
- Voice and video calls

WhatsApp Desktop App is available both for Windows and Mac. Alternatively, you can use WhatsApp Web in your browser.

The app is available in 56 languages.

Day-to-day communication (e.g., messaging)

Google Chat

Google Chat is a communication service that replaced Google Hangouts (alongside with Google Meet). It consists of two parts, chat and spaces, that enable pair and group conversations, as well as assigning tasks and sharing files.

Messenger Desktop App

Messenger is an instant messaging service developed by Meta (originally Facebook) and available both on mobile devices and as a desktop version (both for Windows and macOS). It can be used for texting, voice and videocalling, exchange of files, etc.

What are the functionalities of the tool?

- Chatting/direct messaging
- Assigning tasks
- Sharing files
- Search in the Spaces
- Creating events in the calendar
- Video conferencing

- Direct messaging and community chats
- Audio and video calls
- Exchanging photos, audios, videos
- Reacting/responding to other people's messages, using stickers
- Voice and videoconferencing (incl. Messenger Rooms for chatting with up to 50 persons at a time)
- Secret conversations
- Interacting with bots
- Location sharing

Requirements concerning the tool

Google Chat can be used through its own website, a desktop app, mobile app for iOS and Android, and in Gmail account.

Messenger is available for Android, iOS, Windows and or Mac (as a desktop app). It is free of charge for common users (unless you use the features meant for Business).

Language of the tool:

Google services are available in almost 50 languages, including those of the European Union.

The app is available in more than 30 languages.

Online calls/meetings

Google Meet

Google Meet is the successor of Google Hangouts (alongside with Google Chat). It is a video-communication service available to all people who possess a Google Account.

Microsoft Teams

Microsoft Teams is a communication platform that is a part of Microsoft 365 family of products. It offers chatting, videoconferencing and file storage options.

What are the functionalities of the tool?

- Audio and video calls
- Accompanying chat
- Integration with Google services – e.g. YouTube for live sharing, Google Calendar and Google Contacts
- Screen sharing
- Video filters, effects
- Ability to raise hand

The free version of the app offers the following options:

- Instant messaging, chatting
- One-to-one or group calls (100 participants up to 60 minutes)
- Planning tasks and polling
- Cloud storage (up to 5 GB)

Requirements concerning the tool

Google Meet supports three latest versions of the following operational systems: macOS, Windows, Chrome, Ubuntu. Users need a Google account to use Google Meet. It can be used via a mobile Meet App, a mobile Gmail App or a supported browser (Google Chrome, Mozilla, Microsoft Edge, Apple Safari). Free calls can have one host and up to 100 participants; calls with one other participant can last up to 24 hours, with three and more participants – up to 60 minutes.

Microsoft Teams works on Windows, macOS, iOS, and Android.

Language of the tool:

Google services are available in almost 50 languages, including those of the European countries.

The app is available in 23 languages.

Online calls/meetings

GLIDE

Glide is an instant video messaging platform for iOS, Android, and Windows mobile devices. The app enables a user to livestream brief video clips, in a similar way as sending text messages. Glide communicates through WiFi, 3G, 4G, and LTE.

Webex

Webex by Cisco is a web- and videoconferencing service. It offers both a free-of-charge version with limited functionality, as well as paid subscriptions for corporate users.

What are the functionalities of the tool?

- Sending video messages
- Streaming live videos
- Photo sharing
- A range of filters

The free-of-charge version offers the following options:

- Videoconferencing (100 persons up to 40 minutes)
- Recording with local storage
- Screen sharing
- Breakout rooms
- Chat, notes, raising hand and polling
- Interactive whiteboard
- File sharing
- Search messages, files, and users
- Calling persons with Webex account

Requirements concerning the tool

The Glide app is available for Android, iOS and macOS.

To use Webex, last two major releases of these browsers are recommended: Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, Apple Safari, and Microsoft Edge.

Language of the tool:

The app is available in more than 10 languages, incl. German, Italian, Spanish and others.

The Webex app is available in around 30 languages.

Making up to-do lists, organising thoughts

Todoist

Todoist positions itself as a productivity app to organise work and life. It is an organisation and task management platform that allows creating to-do lists, prioritising and assigning tasks, etc.

What are the functionalities of the tool?

- Creating task lists (also with recurring deadlines),
- Adding sections and subtasks
Prioritising and delegating tasks
- Creating boards with Kanban-style cards
- Adding tasks via emails
- Commenting and uploading files
- Productivity visualisation

A free-of-charge version has some limitations: only 5 projects with 5 members in each.

Requirements concerning the tool

Todoist is available as a browser extension (Chrome, Firefox, Microsoft Edge, Safari), mobile app (both on Android and iOS), as well as a desktop version (on macOS, Windows 10/11, Linux).

There are three types of subscription: Free, Pro and Business.

Language of the tool:

The tool is available in 19 languages, incl. German, Czech, Italian, French and others.

EVERNOTE

Evernote is an application for note taking and task management. It allows for creating notes with embedded photos, audio and web content that can be annotated, tagged, edited and exported.

The free-of-charge version offers the following functions:

- Creating to-do lists
- Setting deadlines and reminders
- Clipping web pages, articles and pdf files
- Searching and tagging
- Synching up to 2 devices,
- 60 MB monthly uploads, maximum note size – 25 MB

Evernote is available on macOS, Windows, iOS, and Android. The free-of-charge version has certain limitations, whereas paid subscriptions offer broader functionalities.

The app is available in 26 languages.

Making up to-do lists, organising thoughts

Post-it

Post-it app is an electronic equivalent of the famous sticker brand that allows capturing notes instantly and sharing those.

Notion

Notion is a collaboration platform for note taking, knowledge and task management, file sharing etc. that integrates various tools (boards, tasks, wikis and databases).

What are the functionalities of the tool?

- Creating and editing digital notes
- Capturing notes using a camera
- Sharing a board in real time
- Creating colourful calendars
- Sharing across various platforms (Dropbox, Trello, Miro, PowerPoint)
- Synchronisation across devices

- Creating unlimited pages and blocks (to-dos, images, embedded files)
- Ready-made templates: notes, minutes, roadmaps, wiki
- Creating tables, lists, calendar, Kanban boards, galleries, timelines
- 1 member can share pages with 5 guests
- Real time collaboration
- Link sharing for viewing, commenting and editing
- Synchronisation across devices
- Export of files

Requirements concerning the tool

Post-it app works with iOS, macOS, Android and Chromebooks that support Android apps. A desktop version is also available for Macs and Chromebooks supporting Android apps.

It is available through the webpage, but can also be downloaded as an app on Mac or Windows. The mobile version is available for both iOS and Android. Notion has a four-level subscription model: Free, Personal, Team and Enterprise.

Language of the tool:

The tool is available in more than 20 languages.

English, Korean, Japanese and French

Sharing and collaboration on joint files

SLACK

Slack is primarily an instant messaging platform that enables users to communicate through voice and video calls, text messaging, share media and files in private chats or as part of communities called "workspaces".

ClickUp

ClickUp is a project management platform that can be adapted to the needs of a specific team. The platform offers a variety of services: to-do lists, commenting, assigning tasks and reminders, synchronisation with Google Calendar and others.

What are the functionalities of the tool?

- Unlimited private and public channels (conversations)
- File sharing from computer or compatible software and apps (e.g., Google Drive, Canva, Dropbox, etc.)
- One-to-one audio and video conversations with screen sharing and clip recording
- 90-day access to message history
- Integration with Google Drive, Office 365 and others (up to 10 apps)
- Personalised notifications

The free version offers the following functionalities:

- Creating unlimited tasks and 5 spaces
- Creating whiteboards and kanban boards
- Collaboration on documents
- Real-time chatting
- Unlimited free plan members
- Uploading up to 100 MB files as attachments
- Time tracking

Requirements concerning the tool

There are four types of subscription: Free, Pro, Business, and Enterprise Grid. It is available through web browsers (Google Chrome, Firefox, Safari, MS Edge); mobile (iOS, Android) and desktop apps (MacOS, Windows, Ubuntu, Linux).

Apart from the free subscription, there are four paid options: Unlimited, Business, Business Plus and Enterprise. ClickUp is available through the browser, as well as a desktop app for Mac, Windows and Linux.

Language of the tool:

The platform is available in different languages including English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Russian, etc.

The platform currently supports English, French, Spanish and Brazilian Portuguese.

Sharing and collaboration on joint files

Insert Learning

Insert Learning is a tool that was originally developed by two high-school for other teachers so that they could create a richer learning experience for students. It can also be used by students to conduct cross-checks for each other or discuss the study material.

What are the functionalities of the tool?

- Adding questions and media to the text available online
- Embedding discussions
- Annotating web pages

Flock

Flock is an online platform dedicated to creating rooms among peers based on relevant tasks as well as offering a space for communication.

- Organising conversations in channels
- Voice and video calling
- Screen sharing
- File sharing
- Sharing notes, to-dos and reminders

A free version has certain limitations: unlimited direct messages and channels, 10 public channels, one-to-one video calls, 5 GB total file storage and some others.

Requirements concerning the tool

You need Google Chrome (latest versions) to use this tool.

There are three types of subscription: Free (only 2 lessons are available), Individual Teacher (with unlimited number of lessons), School (also unlimited number of lessons).

Flock is available on the web through browsers Chrome, Firefox and Safari. It also comes as a desktop app (Windows, macOS and Linux) and a mobile app (Android and iOS).

There are three subscription plans: Starter for team up to 20 persons (free), PRO (20-100 members) and Enterprise (100+ users).

Language of the tool:

The tool is available in English.

The tool is available in English.

Preparing presentations, home assignments

Genially

Genially is an online platform for creation of interactive and animated contents: presentations, infographics, quizzes, games and images. It can be used for education purposes, in business and design.

What are the functionalities of the tool?

- Unlimited creation of presentations, infographics, interactive images, slideshows and gamification elements using ready-made templates
- Unlimited views of creations by visitors
- Viewing creations on the corporate page of Genially through a social link
- Collaborative work on creations
- SEO optimization
- Access to Genially Academy
- Email support

Please note: the free version does not allow for the download of creations.

Requirements concerning the tool

The platform can be used for free, but you can't download your creations (you can only provide a link for viewing on the Genially page). To avoid that, you can get one of the subscriptions: Student, Edu Pro or Master. No special technical requirements are foreseen; you should have an up-to-date hard- and software.

Language of the tool:

English, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Italian, and German

Canva

Canva is a graphic design platform that provides ready-made templates to create various information materials: presentations, infographics, CVs, timetables, posters, flyers, videos and even Instagram stories.

The free-of-charge version of the tools offers the following functions:

- More than 250,000 templates for various purposes
- A collection of free photos and graphics
- Drag-and-drop editor for customization
- Inviting others to collaborate on a file
- 5GB of cloud storage

The free version offers multiple opportunities, but if you want more, you can upgrade to Canva Pro or Canva for Enterprise. It is available both on Windows and Mac. You can use it in the browser, or as a desktop or mobile app. The programme is available in the browsers Google Chrome, Mozilla , Safari, Microsoft Edge, Opera.

Canva is available in more than 100 languages.

Preparing presentations, home assignments

Google Slides

Google Slides is part of a broader Google package of services. It allows creating presentations in real-time mode, adding various elements (texts, photos, videos, charts etc.), and working collaboratively on it.

What are the functionalities of the tool?

- Creating presentations or importing existing ones
- Choosing a theme or layout
- Adding and editing content (images, text, videos, shapes, charts, animations)
- Adding speaker notes
- Autosaving and cloud storage
- Sharing files for viewing and/or editing
- Exporting presentations in various formats (PPTX, PDF, JPG, etc.)

To use Google Slides, you need a Google Account. No special software is needed, you can use it via the browser (two most recent versions are required); cookies and Java Script should be enabled.

Language of the tool:

Google services are available in almost 50 languages, including those of the European Union.

Padlet

Padlet is a cloud-based real-time collaborative platform where users can create virtual boards, or “padlets”, by uploading, organising and sharing contents. Padlets can take different forms: a wall, canvas, shelf, grid, or timeline.

- Selecting various layouts, themes, wallpapers and typography
- Posting images, documents, videos, music and files
- Uploading files from computer, taking photos or videos from phone, sharing links
- Embedding content from YouTube, Instagram, Twitter and 400 other apps
- Simple link sharing for collaboration (unlimited number of contributors)
- Changes autosave
- Different levels of access
- Exporting as PDF, CSV, Image or Excel

There are four subscriptions: Personal (incl. free Neon), Team, Business and School.

Padlet is available in the browser (Google Chrome, Safari, Firefox, Edge, Apple Safari for iOS, Samsung Internet), and as a mobile app.

It is available in more than 40 languages.

Creating videos

Animaker

Animaker is a cloud-based video and animation software that allows for creation of videos using pre-built templates and characters.

What are the functionalities of the tool?

A free version offers the following functions:

- Creation of videos, GIFs, real film videos using ready-made templates (with watermark)
- 5 video downloads and 10 GIF downloads per month
- HD quality
- Video editor
- Upload size limit – 2 GB

Flexclip

Flexclip is a simple video maker and editor that helps create videos for personal, educational and business purposes.

- Creating videos, slideshows, GIFs, memes using ready-made templates
- Screen recording
- Converting, compressing, merging and trimming videos
- Adding music, text and watermarks

The free version has certain limitations:

- Maximum number of saved projects – 12 with a maximum length of 1 min
- Video export quality – 480P
- 1 stock video and 1 audio per project
- Unlimited number of exports
- Auto subtitles – 5 minutes per month

Requirements concerning the tool

The provider does not list any specific technical requirements that have to be met to use Animaker. There is also an Animaker iOS App available.

The free version has quite a limited capacity, so there are four types of paid subscription: Basic, Starter, Pro, and Enterprise.

FlexClip is available both for Windows and MacOS. It supports the following formats:

- Image: PNG, JPG, WEBP, SVG, GIF, BMP, ICO.
- Audio: AAC, MP3, M4A, FLAC, OGG, WAV.
- Video: MP4 (H264), MOV, WEBM, M4V.

If you want to enjoy full functionality, there are three options: Basic, Plus or Business.

Language of the tool:

The programme is available in 12 languages.

Flexclip is available in 9 languages, incl. English, German, French and Italian.

Creating videos

Flip

Flip is a free video app where people can build communities, start discussions and learn from each other. It allows creating short videos with various effects and sharing them with teachers, peers and family.

What are the functionalities of the tool?

- Creating study groups to discuss a specific topic
- Video moderation and privacy features
- Using interactive lenses, custom backdrops and blur
- Adding stickers, emojis, drawings, music and other staff
- Creating videos and inserting them in files (eg. resume)

Flip is free to use. It offers unlimited groups, topics and student videos from 15 seconds to 10 minutes.

You can use Flip on most browsers: Microsoft Edge, Google Chrome, Firefox and Safari (two latest versions). It is also available on mobile devices (iOS and Android). If your computer does not have a camera, you can connect an external webcam.

Language of the tool:

The tool is only available in English.

Easy Video Maker

Easy Video Maker is user-friendly video editing software that allows creating and editing 2D and 3D videos with special effects from different formats of video clips, images, audios, lyrics, texts, etc.

The free version of the tool offers the following functions:

- Creating and editing 2D videos
- Editing audio and pictures
- Converting videos between formats
- Adding text, lyrics and subtitles
- Recording/capturing screen videos or those from cameras
- Adding special effects
- Making batches of videos
- Supporting various file formats

Using 32Bit Windows (WinXP/Vista (32bit)/7 (32bit)/8 (32bit)/10 (32bit)) is recommended.

When downloading the .exe version, some computers require Microsoft Visual C++ 2010 – If your computer doesn't have it, the program will auto install it.

My Notes:

How to stay motivated



When you go to school regularly, it is easier to stay “fit” and keep up with the schedule. If you have to engage in online learning day by day, you might lose track of time and a sense of purpose. That is why you have to make sure you stay motivated throughout the course – the following hints might help you with that:

Take control of your learning

If we make our own decisions, we act upon them better than when instructions are imposed upon us “from above”. Set your own tasks and deadlines and keep track of their completion – this way you will feel more in control of your learning. To do so, you can use the planning and time management techniques described above. A study plan will also help you keep an eye on upcoming tasks and commitments.

Find a study buddy or create a community of like-minded people

Having someone with whom you can share your progress or concerns is a game changer. Consider finding a study buddy or even creating a study group if your fellow students are ready to join. Agree on collaboration rules from the outset: which channels of communication you are going to use for everyday communication, how you can track/report your progress or emerging difficulties, how often you want to meet online, etc. Use the power of the collective mind!

Use social media for a good cause

You most probably use social networks anyway – so why not take advantage of them and start sharing your learning journey in your account (both successes and failures)? You will definitely find many peers who are going through the same situations, so you can get both encouragement and advice from them. This way you will also have more accountability: if you promise something to a broad audience, eventually someone will ask about your progress.

Make sure you do it not on your active learning time – otherwise you might find yourself doom-scrolling for hours.

Make a move

Sitting for hours in front of a monitor can make you feel numb both physically and mentally. Make sure you get enough movement: you can simply do some stretching or take a walk around the apartment, but it would be better if you could leave the room and go for a short walk. A change of scenery will open up new perspectives, and the oxygen running through your veins will increase your brain's performance.

Reward yourself

Any achievement, big or small, deserves a reward – this will help you stay motivated and keep up with the selected tempo. Develop a system of rewards for minor and larger-scale achievements and stick to it. You have completed a task? Drink a cup of coffee, cook (or order) your favourite dish. You have handed in a paper or got another credit? This is an occasion for going out with your friends.

Take a break for reflection

Take a break from your classes and have a look at your learning from a distance: are you keeping up with the schedule? What could you do different to improve your learning? Do need external help? In the section below, you will find some tips how to reflect on your learning journey and assess your progress.

My Notes:

Assessing your progress

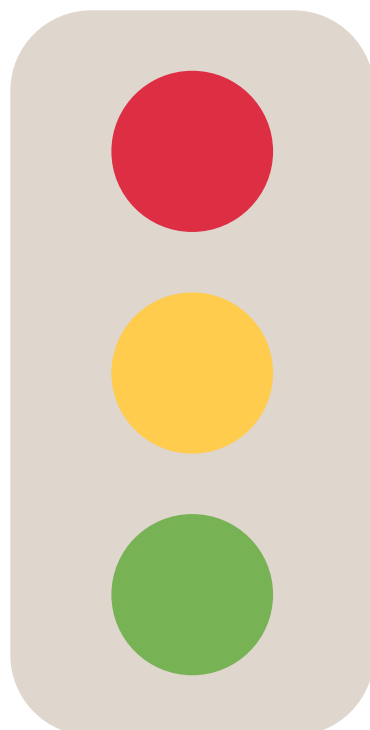
Online learning is much more challenging than face-to-face classes because it requires a greater level of autonomy and self-accountability. You will still have to make written tests and hand in papers, but it is largely your responsibility to arrange your learning journey so that you don't have to do everything in the last minute. To be able to do so, you have to assess your progress regularly and reflect on your learning practices and approaches.

Here are some of the tools and techniques that you might use:

Do on-the-spot checks

If you want to check what you have learned during the day, there are quite simple techniques that might help you:

- The easiest is called **Traffic Light**. You have three lights: *red* (you don't understand and need further explanation), *yellow* (you have a basic understanding of the topic but need a little extra support), *green* (you understand the material and can apply it independently). Write your ideas next to each light and think how you can overcome difficulties.



I don't get it!
I need some help
understanding


I think I
understand but I
need a little
support

I understand and
can try this on my
own

- A little more sophisticated tool is called **Exit Cards** (similar to **Tickets Out the Door**). These are cards with a set of questions you have to answer or statements you have to complete. These should also help you record the topics you have learnt, and identify existing gaps. Here is an example:


Exit Ticket

Today I learned...




Exit Ticket

I'm still having trouble with...




Exit Ticket

My favourite part of the story was...



Exit Ticket

I don't quite understand...



- A **KWL Chart** basically serves the same purpose: it is a table where you have to fill in three columns: *What I already know*, *What I want to know*, *What I learned*.

K-W-L Chart		
Topic: _____		
What I K now	What I W ant to Know	What I L earned

Source: whysospecial.com

whysospecial.com

Just pick the tool that you like better!

Use to-do lists and checklists

Assessment may take different forms. To keep track of the materials you have studied with, you can use to-do lists or checklists: you can develop these at the beginning of the course and simply tick off the completed tasks or topics covered.

If you want to go even deeper, you can create a list of *learning objectives* (what you should *know* and be able to *do* at the end of the course) and indicators (how you will *prove* that you know or are able to do something).

You may consider creating a **portfolio** of your best works (home assignments) – this will help you keep track of your progress. If your portfolio is directly related to your future profession, you might even use it as an attachment to your resume.

Peer evaluation

If you have a learning buddy or a study group, agree on the ways you are going to monitor each other's level of achievement. You can even develop tests and quizzes for each other using flashcards or other materials.

Reflection

Do you know what metacognition is? It is often described as “*thinking about thinking*”. In a learning context, it means reflecting on how you learn and memorise information and how you use it as a basis for further action. Metacognition should help you make the learning process more effective.

Self-reflection isn't easy and needs some practice, so we suggest that you start with considering the following questions:

- What did I learn today/this week?
- What do I know now?
- What can I do now (using my existing knowledge)?
- How did I get this knowledge (which tools/methods did I use for that – e.g., reading a book, watching a video, listening to the teacher's lecture, taking notes, drawing a mindmap, etc.)
- Which tool/method worked best for me?
- What was I most successful at? Where did I fail?
- What can I do differently next time?
- How can I improve my learning?

After practising for some time, you will notice that you have more control over your learning.

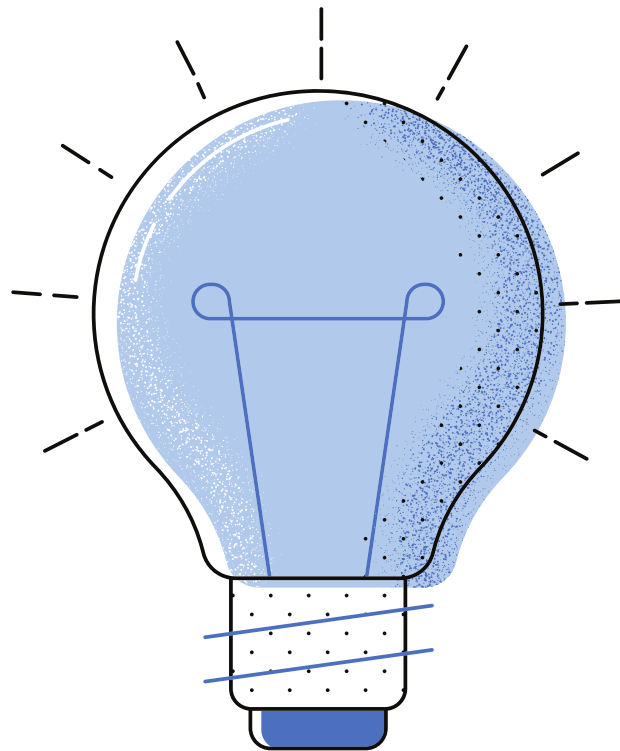
My Notes:

Conclusion

Congratulations! You have now reached the end of this Guide! We hope that the tips and recommendations that we shared will help you not only survive online learning, but also thrive in it.

There is quite a lot of information, but don't be scared: you can choose the tips and tools that you find most useful and adapt them to your own needs.

Good luck!



Final notes:

Final notes:

Final notes:

STUDY DIARY

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February

March

April

May

June

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Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

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Saturday

Sunday

Date: _____

Task	Duration	Buffer time	Priority	Progress / Follow-up

Notes: _____

The “Learning Digitally” Guide was developed within the project DigMyVET (Digital Strategies for VET Centres). DigMyVET aims to provide innovative tools to support sustainable digital integration in VET to help teachers and learners to the changes in VET learning.

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Aspire-Igen, UK



Euroface Consulting,
Czech Republic



Innovation Frontiers,
Greece



Pixel, Italy

Volkshochschule im Landkreis Cham e.V.,
Greece

If you want to learn more about the project, please visit:
<https://digmyvet.com/>



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