

Dear Students,

As we go through this transition together, I would like to provide you with some **guidance on how to set yourself up for success with online classes**. Some of you may have experience with online classes, but for most of us, this format is new. Either way, we will all need to lean into our self-directed learning skills - students and faculty alike. Luckily, many of the same habits that served you well for traditional classroom learning will also serve you well with online learning.

I encourage you to read the tips below and take advantage of the weekend to make any necessary adjustments before online classes begin on Monday, March 23. The points below assume that your online classes will follow the same schedule as if you were coming on campus. If you need academic support assistance, we are here to help. Please email Director of Academic Success Mr. Alex Ruskell at ruskell@law.sc.edu

You are still in school

This is more of a reminder for your friends and family than it is for you. For those that live with others, they may be tempted to expect more from you since you are not going to campus. Remind them that you are still in school and have the same academic commitments you previously had.

Keep a schedule

That you are not physically in a classroom does not change the amount of time it takes to do well in law school. You will still “attend” just as many class time hours and will still need to devote as many hours outside of class time (per ABA Standards, 2 hours outside of class for every hour in class). The only difference some of you may see is if you had a long commute. If that is the case, think back to all those times you thought to yourself, “If I only had more time I could get in more outlining and practice.” Now you do, so use it productively. Time management is still an important skill, whether the class is online or on-campus.

Minimize distractions

With online learning, potential distractions are everywhere – on your computer and even around you. Some of you have made the choice to not use a laptop during class time or may have been prohibited from doing so by your professor. This new format will require you to use a laptop or some other device to access class lecture. Using laptops comes with its own set of temptations. Then there is your personal space. After all, a pile of dirty dishes is never as tempting as when you have important work to complete. For internet distractions, you may want to consider installing [online tools for better attention and focus](#). Around your home, set up a space you will use for “attending” class. Keep it organized and to the extent you can, keep it separate from common areas in the home. Sitting with a wall directly behind you is less distracting for the other participants. Remember, professors and peers alike will be able to see what is behind you.

Stay focused and engaged during class lectures

This can be a bit more challenging because there is more distance between you and your professor. There is also a lack of eye contact. Minimizing distractions will help (see above), but you will need to

prepare yourself to follow along with the lecture. Taking breaks between classes to move around also helps. Use the opportunities presented by your professor to answer questions. Take class notes just as you would if you were sitting in a classroom. In other words, treat it as much as possible as if you were in class with the professor in front and surrounded by your classmates. Practicing active participation and holding yourself accountable for your own success during this time will help you stay on track.

Some tips for using synchronous (live interactive rather than pre-recorded) videoconferencing platforms

Here are some best practices for participating in a synchronous videoconference class:

- Consider using good on-line etiquette. Do not eat during class lecture and be mindful of your attire. In addition, everyone will be able to see your facial expressions, even those who ordinarily would be sitting behind you in class.
- Mute your mic when you are not talking. This will lead to a better audio experience for all participants.
- In case I have not emphasized this enough, everything the camera can capture will be on display for all participants to see. Make sure they are seeing what you want them to see, or more importantly, not seeing what you would not want anyone to see.
- In a traditional classroom setting, your professor can often tell if a student seems confused by material and will make an effort to reach out to the student. When utilizing distance education, it is difficult or impossible to pick up on these same non-verbal cues. Make sure you reach out to your professors for help if you need it.
- If you need technology support assistance, please email lawhelp@law.sc.edu.

I know that some of my suggestions may be easier said than done due to family and personal responsibilities and situations. We recognize that these are extraordinary times, but please know that we are here to support your academic success, no matter the format! Let us know how we can help.

Stay well,

Dean Nelson