

# The Handout



## In this edition:

- Getting Acclimated to the New WCSU
- What to Pack in Your Quarantine To-Go Bag
- Take a Nap: The Importance of Sleep
- *and more...*

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# The Handout

September, 2020

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# 1 | Getting Acclimated to the New WCSU

Sam Cross, Newbury ARM



Online classes, virtual programs, social distancing- what is going on?! Here at Western Connecticut State University things are looking different for the first few days of classes due to an increase of COVID-19 cases in the Danbury area. With move-in postponed, I figured here would be a good place to give some tips for our incoming students, whether you're a freshman, transfer student, or a returner.

First, it is important to discuss the nature of online classes. On BannerWeb you can see your class schedule. Each class is listed as on-ground, online SYNCH, online ASYNCH, Hybrid SYNCH, or Hybrid ASYNCH. Classes that are meeting on-ground are meeting in a classroom on campus and you will be required to wear a mask and practice social distancing wherever possible. Online Synchronous means that students will be meeting via video chat platform, such as WebEx or Microsoft Teams. Online Asynchronous means that classes will be online, but the work will have to be completed on the students' own terms. Hybrid classes are a mix of meeting on campus and online, so be sure to listen to your professor's

instructions.

Classes can seem overwhelming in an online environment, but getting organized and writing down due dates might help you to get ahead of your online studies. With the overwhelming environment that online can create for some of us, be sure to use Western's resources this semester! Counseling Services, the Women's Center, the Tutoring Resource Center, and the Math Lab are all offering online services this year. You can find more information about where to use these resources on the school's website ([www.wcsu.edu/](http://www.wcsu.edu/)). The Haas Library is another resource on campus that has moved to the virtual world. They are currently offering curbside pickup of books and have a chat feature on their webpage for students and faculty to submit questions to. The first floor of the library is the only floor that will be open this semester when we reopen on September 12<sup>th</sup> (Subject to change). Note that the Young Library on the Westside Campus will be closed for this semester.

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Keep a copy of your syllabus handy in case you need to go to a professor's office hours during the semester; each professor should have information about their office hours listed on the syllabus. Some professors might meet virtually via WebEx or email, or they might have office hours that you can call in to. Professors are here to help you learn- never feel awkward or scared to use their office hours!

The dining halls are also offering outdoor dining for those of you who enjoy the beautiful fall air while dining. There are multiple bottles of hand sanitizer around campus to keep your hands clean during this pandemic, as well as bottles of disinfectant spray in bathrooms and common areas. Please be kind and sanitize the bathroom and wash your hands for at least twenty seconds before you leave. Taking measures to protect yourself protects those around you.

[Click here for the link!](#)



ACADEMIC SUPPORT ONLINE

**HELP IS HERE!**

Tutoring & Academic Support Where You Need It



Life in our homes and at WestConn is changing rapidly with the new challenges presented by this virus. The whole WCSU staff is working to create a safe campus for us to return to. Face coverings are always required on campus to enter buildings, dining halls have one way dining lanes and markings on the floor that are six feet apart for social distancing purposes, common areas have limited capacity, and most events will be virtual this semester.



## 1

# How to Start a New Routine at the Start of a New Semester

Lizzie Hinds, Litchfield ARM



It's the start of a new semester, a new year, and a brand new chance to succeed. In order to get that grade, finish that project, or read that novel, having a daily routine is essential. We are learning in an online world where classes don't always meet at a scheduled time. So how do we make sure all our work gets done and we still have fun? We find that balance in routine. That doesn't mean only scheduling "work time", but a full daily schedule. Finding appropriate times to eat, getting enough sleep, blocking time strictly for school, and having time to do what you enjoy is vital. A well rounded and full day leads to enhanced academic performance, but more importantly, it leads to happiness.

Before you can start making your routine, it's important to know what kind of classes you're taking. With our current situation, most classes are held in virtual format. You've heard of synchronous, asynchronous, and many more labels for class types. Well, what do they mean? Let's define them.

**Synchronous:** These classes are held online and do meet at a scheduled time. Make sure you know what days and times these classes meet, and what online platform they use.

**Asynchronous:** Just like synchronous courses, these classes are held online, but they do not meet at a scheduled time. Be sure to stay updated on the class's Blackboard page to know when assignments, projects, and exams are due.

**Hybrid:** These classes meet both in-person and online. Be sure to know when and where they meet in-person, and what online obligations you have. Do they meet over WebEx when not in-person? Or is it up to you?

**In-Person:** These classes only meet in-person. You are required to go to the physical classroom in order to be counted for attendance. While some assignments will be submitted online, instruction will only happen in the classroom.

Now that we have defined these terms, you can identify what your schedule looks like. With this outline, you can more easily plan out how each day will be structured.

Classes here at WCSU usually meet twice a week and are typically one hour and fifteen minutes. Your synchronous classes will be scheduled the same way. Based on when your synchronous or hybrid classes meet, you can schedule the best times for your asynchronous work. It may be helpful to schedule two seventy-five minute windows each week for each of your asynchronous classes. This will allow you to maintain some sense of normalcy and routine through all your classes, regardless of what format they are. This will help keep your schedule looking similar each day, and will hopefully prevent any falling behind in asynchronous classes. To be safe, it would also be wise to schedule an extra thirty minutes to an hour of “study time” each day, in case the previous blocks aren’t enough time.

With your academic calendar scheduled, you can now find the best time to have meals. Keep in mind the building hours here on campus, but also consider what works best for you. It is highly beneficial to eat three balanced meals a day, and at appropriate times. You should schedule these meals to mix well with your classes to

ensure that your brain and body are as energized as possible. A hungry body leads to a tired brain, and a tired brain leads to decreased motivation and academic performance.

As is clear, there are so many aspects to a daily routine, far more than just classes. When assessing the impact of routine on college students, studies have found that students who are in comfortable living environments, are eating three healthy meals a day, and are sleeping enough are less likely to face any form of illness or ailment. The ideal student lives in a mutually comfortable double, has a balanced diet, and sleeps at least seven hours each night. With the housing and meal plans provided here at Western, this is achievable for all students, whether residential or commuter.



Turn the page for more!

However, there is a key aspect of college living that has yet to be discussed: social interaction. In a socially-distancing world, many college students are wondering how they are to maintain a happy and healthy social life. Engaging with peers is essential to a sturdy routine. In our virtual world, this can look like a FaceTime call to a friend, a socially distanced walk around campus, or even waving to a peer in your residence hall. Maintaining these interactions is just as important as keeping up with classwork and eating healthily, especially in our virtual setting.

Students who do not have a sleep schedule, change their meal times, and don't schedule specific time for schoolwork are more likely to experience fatigue, headaches, muscle soreness, and are more likely to lose their train of thought. To prevent these uncomfortable

ailments, and to have the best semester yet, implement your personal routine now while the semester is still young. Do you need help getting used to online classes? Reach out to your building's ARM, talk to your professors, and give yourself some time. Adjustments don't happen overnight. You can do it!

**Citation:**

O'Connell, Virginia Adams. "The Healthy College Student: The Impact of Daily Routines on Illness Burden - Virginia Adams O'Connell, 2014." *SAGE Journals*, 14 Aug. 2014, [journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2158244014547181](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2158244014547181)



There are plenty more hints and tips available to you on the ARM/Academic Success webpage on the housing website.

Click the photo to go there and check it out – and find out a little more about your ARM!



# 2 Tips to Tackle Online Learning

Tamia Scott, Grasso ARM



Online learning could spell many problems for many students. It's important that you remain calm and think rationally. I've put together this list of tips that I think can help.

## 1. **Treat an online course like a “real” course.**

When it comes to online classes, you need to have the discipline to sit down and say, “I am going to work on this,” as well as the dedication to actually follow through. Though you can be flexible as to when you choose to complete your work during the week, you can't put it off indefinitely. One of the easiest ways to ensure follow through is to remember that you are paying to take this online course, just as you would for a traditional, in-person class. You must “show up” if you're going to get real value out of your class. Treat your online classes the same way you would a face-to-face class and you'll be off to the right start.

## 2. **Hold yourself accountable**

Set goals at the beginning of the semester, and check in with yourself weekly. In a traditional classroom setting, you'll often

receive verbal or visual reminders of an assignment's upcoming due date. But without a professor actively reminding you, it's up to you to make sure you've allotted enough time to complete the work so you're not starting an assignment the day before it's due.

## 3. **Practice time management .**

The flexibility to create your own schedule is often one of the biggest appeals of taking online classes but that freedom can also be detrimental if you do not have solid time management skills. Without them, you might easily find yourself cramming before classes or handing in subpar assignments.

- Look at the syllabus at the start of the semester and **make note of major assignments**. Mark them on a calendar you check regularly so you know what workload is coming in the weeks ahead. Don't forget to **factor in prior commitments** that may interfere with your regular study schedule so you can give yourself enough extra time to complete assignments.

- **Create a weekly schedule that you follow** , designating certain hours each week to reading, watching lectures, completing assignments, studying, and participating in forums. Commit to making your online coursework part of your weekly routine, and **set reminders for yourself** to complete these tasks.

When working on your assignments, **try time-blocking** , allotting yourself a certain amount of time for each task before moving on to the next one and setting a timer to keep you accountable.

- **Check in periodically throughout the term** , and look at how you're spending your time. Ask yourself:



*How much time am I dedicating to course reading and assignments? Am I regularly underestimating the time it's taking me to get things done, forcing me to cram the nights before the exams? A little self-reflection and adjustment can go a long way.*

#### 4. **Create a regular study space and stay organized.**

Set up a dedicated learning environment for studying. By completing your work there repeatedly, you'll begin to establish a routine.

Whether your workspace is your kitchen table, a library, or the corner booth in a local coffee shop, it's important to determine what type of environment will work best for you. Experiment to discover which type of setting boosts your productivity. Wherever you choose, make sure there's high-speed internet access so you're not trying to take an online course over a lagging connection.

#### 5. **Eliminate distractions**

From Netflix to social media to dishes piling up in the sink, you'll be faced with many distractions that can easily derail your studies.

The best online students know how to lessen these distractions and set aside time to focus. Exactly how much of a challenge these distractions will

prove to be will depend on your own unique personality and situation. Some might find that they can tune out a noisy home by listening to music. Others might choose to work from a local coffee shop or library to eliminate their urge to multitask at home. Ultimately, you will need to find a strategy that works best for you.

#### 6. **Figure Out How You Learn Best**

Once you've established where you'll learn, think about when and how you accomplish your best work. If you're a morning person, make time to study first thing. More of a night owl? Set aside an hour or two after dinner to cozy up to



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If you're a morning person, make time to study first thing. More of a night owl? Set aside an hour or two after dinner to cozy up to your computer.

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your computer. Not everyone learns the same way, so think about what types of information help you best grasp new concepts and employ relevant study strategies. If you're a visual learner, for example, print out transcripts of the video lectures to review. Learn best by listening? Make sure to build time into your schedule to play and replay all audio- and video-based course content.

### 7. **Actively participate**

Participate in the course's online forum to help you better understand course materials and engage with fellow classmates. This might involve commenting on a classmate's paper on a discussion board or posting a question about a project you're working on. Read what other students and your professor are saying, and if you have a question, ask for clarification.

Make sure you are checking in as often as you can, too. The flexibility of online learning means that if you have 30 minutes before dinner plans, you could squeeze in a discussion response around your schedule. Set a goal to check in on the class discussion threads every day and if you do feel yourself falling behind, speak up. Don't wait until an assignment is almost due to ask questions or report issues. Email your professor and be proactive in asking for help.

### 8. **Take time to relax**

It's important to take time for yourself. Make sure that you're taking care of yourself. Practice Makes Perfect! Online classes are an excellent option to help you earn that degree you need to fulfill your goals. Though they come with their own unique challenges, following the advice above can help you be successful even in the most chaotic of times.

# 4

# What to Pack in Your Quarantine To-Go Bag

Sara Slaiby, Centennial ARM



COVID has kept us on our toes and left lots to the uncertainty, which is why we have to be proactive and prepare. In the event that you become exposed to COVID-19, you should prepare a bag full of necessities that you can grab, so you can quickly leave your location and begin your quarantine. Below I have provided a list of different items that I recommend you add to your To-Go bag.

**A change of basic clothes** that you would feel comfortable wearing, and later throwing away if need be.

Shirt, shorts/pants (depending on weather), under garments, sweatshirt, socks.

**An extra pair of shoes.**

Preferably slip on shoes or plastic shoes that can be rinsed/cleaned. However, if you have older shoes that you would not mind throwing away at the end of your quarantine, it might be a good idea to bring those.

**Hygiene products.**

Toothbrush, toothpaste, deodorant, body wash/soap, shampoo, & conditioner, Preferably travel-sized

**Refillable water bottle.**

**School supplies.**

Laptop, laptop charger, notebook, pens and pencils, books.

**Masks.**

Bringing disposable masks in a plastic bag would be best. This way, you can throw away the masks as they get old/used, and have a fresh mask that you can wear and later throw away.

**Medicine.**

Cough drops, Tylenol or Ibuprofen for body aches or fever. Any prescription medications that you take regularly should be added the day you use your bag.

**A Thermometer.**

It is important to monitor your temperature while in quarantine, to track whether you have a fever, and for how long.



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### **Bedding.**

Depending on where you are quarantining, it might be a good idea to bring a blanket, pillow, sheets that you can throw on, then dispose of once your quarantine is over.

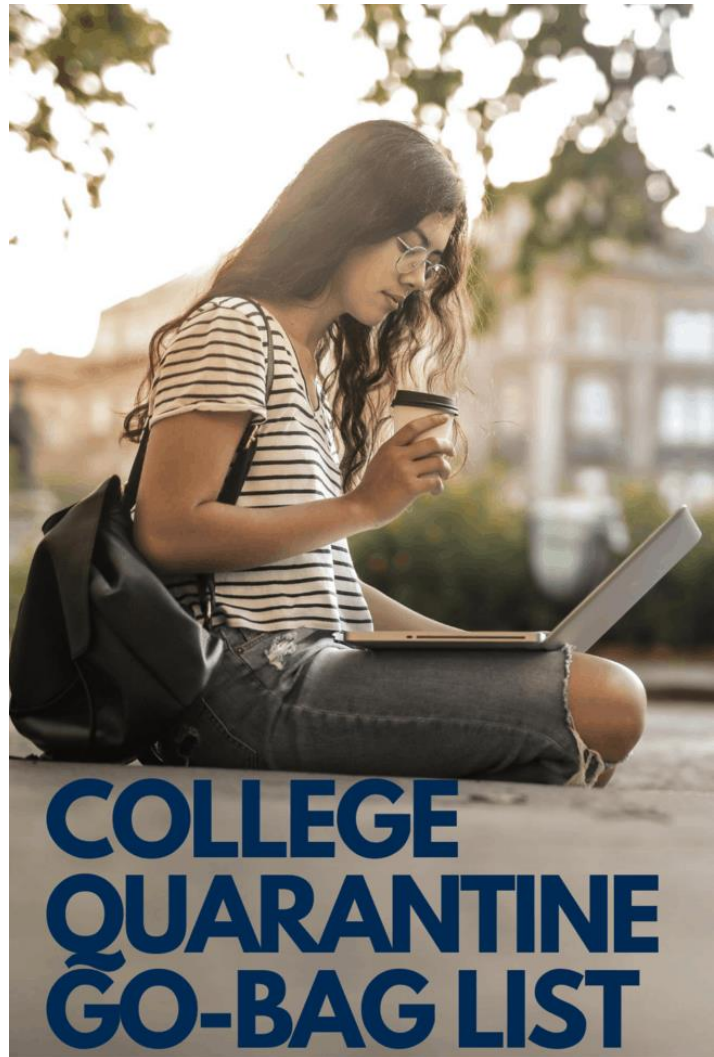
### **Any identification cards & insurance cards.**

When leaving your personal space to quarantine, it is important you bring along any identification cards and insurance cards to ensure that in the case of emergency, you are covered. If you would prefer to keep your insurance cards in your wallet, you can always take a picture of your cards and store it in your phone. This way, you will have a copy if ever need be.

### **Credit Card and/or debit card.**

Every To-Go bag will contain personalized items that you value, and should be added as appropriate. It is important to remember that creating a quarantine to-go bag is not only the best idea for you, but also those around you. By being prepared, it allows you to minimize the time spent packing/unpacking your room when the time comes, and removes you from your daily setting to prevent any further exposure.

Unfortunately, this is a stressful time for everyone. However, staying safe and maintaining social distance, as well as wearing a mask, can be our overall solution. If we all work together to maintain safety, together we can significantly decrease the number of cases, and make WCSU a safer place.



## 5

# Academic First Aid: Quarantine Edition

Audrey Redpath, Pinney Hall ARM

President Clark announced just days ago that our campus will be closed for an additional week, now through September 12. That puts 100% of our courses this semester online for at least 18 days. Some students have never taken an online course before and, among those who have, many struggle with the format. It's easy to fall behind without the structure of online classes, so let's talk about how you can address a problem when it happens.

Last year in my article on Academic First Aid, I talked about the stages of addressing a disruption or failure when they happen in my academic life: **Failure, Honesty, Repair, Reflection (and trying something new).**

## Failure

In the original Academic First Aid, we talked about failure in terms of minor mistakes that stack and combine to become major, debilitating setbacks in academic progress. But there is a different kind of failure that is incredibly important to consider this and last semester - small and big failures forced on us or exacerbated by circumstance. We are in a pandemic, and the impact of that is hard to list - it's possible that any of us could have our lives derailed by its effects. You might get sick, like I did last semester, or you might have to work full time, your family's situation changed by the economic crisis.

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It's difficult to recognize when you need help, but you can build an academic support network using the resources here at WCSU.

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A family member might die, or you might end up negotiating the finer points of a hospital stay, or need to babysit for the children of family who are displaced by isolation. Or you might even just feel overwhelmed, isolated, or depressed, and that mental context can wear you down until you fall behind.

### **Honesty**

Once you make a mistake, or end up in a bad academic situation, the most important step you can take is to be honest with yourself and the persons impacted. In most cases, that will be your professor. With most of us home right now, it might take addressing things like bad time management, or struggling to check every online asynch class on Blackboard each day and falling behind.

In unique situations influenced by the pandemic or in ones that are out of your control, honesty still plays an important part. It's difficult to recognize when you need help, but you can build an academic support network using the resources here at WCSU. The first step in any of these situations is to reach out to your professor (via email or setting up an appointment) and telling them that you're struggling. If you don't know how to approach this conversation, you can speak first to an ARM or an Advisor for tips. Not every professor will be empathetic, but acknowledging an issue sets the groundwork for fixing it.

### **Repair**

The repair stage is where that fixing happens. At WCSU, academic repair can range from minor solutions developed with a professor (an extension, a makeup quiz,

or a plan for improving future scores or approaching deadlines), accommodations through AccessAbility Services (AAS), and larger calls like Incomplete grades for unusual circumstances allowing for late delivery of work and grading after the Final Grade deadline, and in exceptional cases, the repeating of a failed class or a Fresh Start readmission. These options can be discussed with professors, department heads, and academic advisors, but no matter the size of time lost or shame felt about an academic failure, you always have options.

Academic repair does not always fix past grades or replace missed opportunities (for example, accommodations for temporary disabilities are not retroactive), but it can establish a plan and changes to your approach for future graded opportunities.

### **Reflection (and trying something new)**

After you navigate repairing a grade or a course approach or a "lost" semester, it's time to think about the factors that led to your academic distress. Every reflection should have you asking yourself: **what did I do right, what did I do wrong, and what can I do differently now?**

If your failure was the result of a series of small mistakes, this is the time to inventory your habits and think on how they helped or hurt you during this process. Once you identify a bad habit, you can work something new into your routine to build something that serves you.

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When it comes to environmental factors, which can be as minor (but carrying a major impact) as not having a consistent, quiet space to work at home, or having to take care of siblings while you study, or having to attend Webex classes during breaks from work, this reflection phase should have you noting which elements of your life are causing problems, and imagining a new context for yourself as you progress. If you can change these factors

yourself, it's time to do it! If you need help, then it's time to reach out to your resources at WCSU and at home to discuss ways you can make your studying and classes more accessible, and how your support network can help you succeed moving forward.

It's going to be a tough semester, so I hope this framework will you tackle academic setbacks as they hit you.

# 6 | Note-Taking Techniques

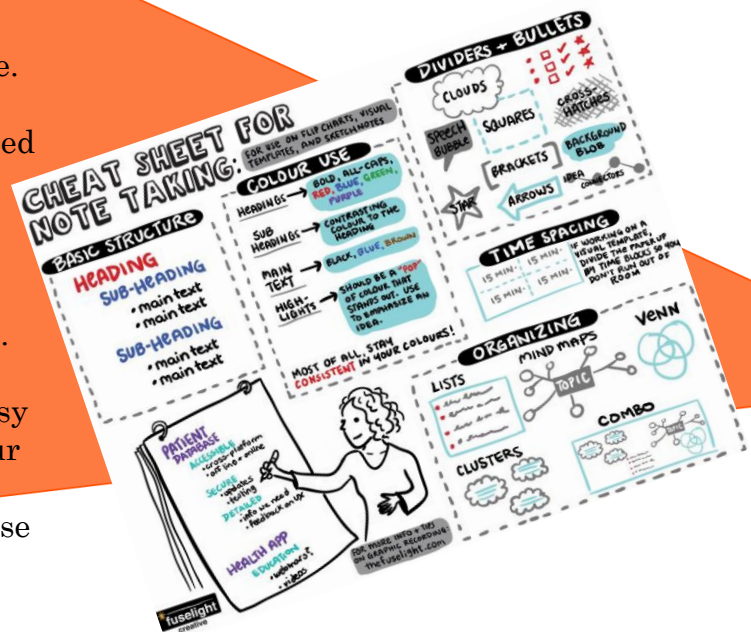
Caitlyn Archambault, Centennial ARM

There are five note taking methods for lectures and when you are studying. Each method has its own pros and cons. This article has outlined what each individual method is and its proper use. All of these methods are suggested for college students and each should be used when necessary.

## The Outline Method

The outline method is the note taking method many of us have come to know. Start with headings, list subheadings and notes to follow. This method is easy to follow and keeps you engaged in your lectures. This method is not always suitable for math and chemistry because these subjects include charts and formulas. It is also not suitable for

lectures that do not follow a specific structure.





## The Cornell Method

The Cornell method is arguably the most ideal methods of notetaking. It can be used in any lecture or meeting. The only downside to this method is that your pages have to be set up beforehand. To set up your pages you will want to mark off a section on the top and bottom of your pages; these are your title and summary sections. On the left-hand side of the paper you want to draw a line that is about a fourth of the way into the page; this section of your notes is for questions, concerns, or hints about the notes. The main body of the page is where you would place your notes. After your lecture or meeting you want to take time to go back and summarize each page of notes. Taking this time after helps you to recall all the information you learned and aids in committing it to your memory.

## The Boxing Method

The boxing method is best for taking notes on a tablet. The perk to this method is that notes can be grouped by topic and relation, making them easy to study from. They are easy for tablets because the boxes can be resized, zoomed in, and reorganized. The downfall to this method is that they are not ideal for lectures, this method is more for after lecture. If you want to use this method, take your notes as normal

and then group them as a lecture review.

## The Charting Method

The charting method is best used when you have to memorize a lot of information. It works best for science and math classes. Still, this method is another that is not ideal for a lecture setting but more for a study setting. This method compares and organizes the facts and thoughts of a lecture. This method is time-consuming but will aid in studying and memorizing because it charts all of your information and makes it clear and easy to understand.

## The Mapping Method

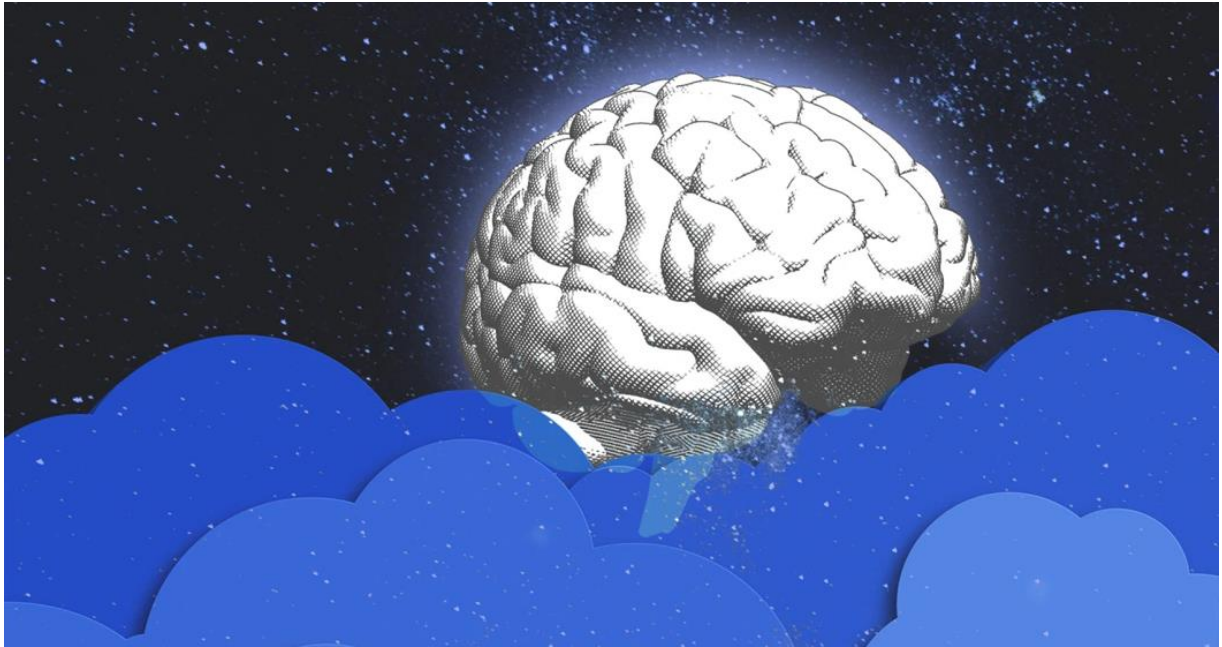
The mapping method is similar to the outline method but is set up differently. Instead of just working your way down the page, you want to put your topic at the top and use as much of your space to write subtopics and notes. With this method you can connect subtopics to other subtopics via arrows or side comments. This method is ideal for lectures that are content heavy and need concise and organized notes. The downside to these notes is running out of space and having to connect notes on different pages.

Source: <https://medium.goodnotes.com/the-best-note-taking-methods-for-college-students-451f412e264e>



# 7 | Take A Nap: The Importance of Sleep for the Brain

Gabby Christofor, Centennial ARM



There are a million things we have on our mind during the average day in college. We are constantly worried about exams, projects, homework, our jobs, social life, and so much more. Our minds and bodies are constantly working overtime, but when we break it down, what gives us the energy and ability to accomplish all these things during the day? Sleep.

Sleep is the most underrated and neglected part of the college experience. On average, most college students only get about 6 hours of sleep per night. Adults are supposed to get at least 8 hours of sleep per day. Sleep not only restores our energy, but it also helps to “fight off illness by strengthening our immune system” (GSU Health Clinic) which is more important than ever during a

pandemic. Sleep deprivation makes the body more susceptible to upper respiratory infections, heart disease, worsening lung function, and high blood pressure.

Not only does lack of sleep negatively impact health, it affects our memory and academic performance. When we first fall asleep, overall brain activity decreases. About an hour and a half into our sleep, neurons light up and our brain waves look like they do when we are awake. While in REM sleep, the emotional part of the brain is turned on, and logic is turned off. Therefore, we are able to make breakthroughs that never would happen while awake. New ideas and solutions come to us unconsciously without judgement.

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During REM sleep, “complex and emotionally charged” (Harvard Medical School) memories are processed. During slow-wave sleep, “newly acquired information” is processed. We need both to move memories from the short-term part of the brain to the long-term. Once information is moved to the hippocampus, that information is encoded into a long-term memory (Reichelt).

Now, what happens if you don’t get enough sleep? Research has found that sleep-deprived students have lower GPAs and less memory of new material. Dr. Epstein, the medical director of Sleep Healthcenter in Massachusetts stated, “after two weeks of sleeping six hours or less a night, students feel as bad and perform as poorly as someone who has gone without sleep for 48 hours.” These same students performed worse on memory tasks than those with adequate sleep. Lack of sleep can lead to memory or learning impairment (AASM) and decreased attention. Without sleep, we cannot retain information. Without the ability to learn anything new, we cannot get good grades. Sleep may seem like it should fall last on your to-do list, but without a nap or good night's sleep, all the hard work you put in throughout the day might go to waste.

So how do we get more of the thing we all long for? Here are some tips on how to increase the quantity and quality of your sleep:

**Set a sleep schedule.** Try to get up and go to bed around the same time every day. Your body will adjust to your new routine and thank you for it. Try to keep this schedule up on the weekends. If you missed a couple of hours of sleep during the week, the weekend is the time to make up for it, but don’t make drastic changes to your sleep schedule every weekend.

**If you don’t feel sleepy when you know you should be in bed, do something to**

**calm your mind**, such as meditation. Get up out of bed and do peaceful activities until your body is ready to go to sleep. Also, avoid drinking caffeine or eating before bed. You will get a sudden burst of energy and not be able to ease your mind/body.

**Change the atmosphere in your room at bedtime.** If you have a nightlight or LED lights, try setting them to a certain color or brightness when you’re beginning to get ready to sleep. Your mind will remember the difference. While sunlight will boost alertness, the low-lights at night will increase likelihood of relaxation. Also, if you need sound to go to sleep, instead of watching TV, try listening to a sleep playlist on Spotify, Apple Music, or Youtube. A sleep playlist for each platform is listed here:

Spotify-

<https://open.spotify.com/album/2hstKFT7GOo34ZyFbMTXWN>

Apple Music- <https://music.apple.com/us/album/playlist-to-sleep-to/905274576>

Youtube-

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X3rJY63t5C8>

Here’s to the start of prioritizing sleep during college! Now, go take a nap.

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# About THE HANDOUT

**The Handout** is a product of the Department of Housing & Residence Life at Western Connecticut State University. There are 6 editions each year, 3 in the fall semester and 3 in the spring semester.

The ideas for and execution of the articles are the work of the Academic Resource Mentors, or ARMs, who provide academic coaching and resource referral to all members of the WCSU residence community.



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Just a reminder that the  
**Housing & Residence  
Life Offices have  
relocated!**

We're now in Pinney Hall, suites C21 and C24. Our phone numbers are the same, but you'll need to come to the Westside to see us!

**YOUR VOTE  
IS  
YOUR VOICE**

**It's too important to leave to others.  
Be sure to register AND vote this  
November.**



Want to know more about campus resources and other advice to improve your academic life? You can check it all out on Gab & GROW, a weekly podcast you can find here:

[www.wcsu.edu/housing/gab-grow/](http://www.wcsu.edu/housing/gab-grow/)

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