Setting yourself up for success!

Let’s think about how remote learning can work even better in your home.

A little bit of preparation can streamline and simplify your work, setting you up for a better experience. Everyone needs to learn and practice ways of managing attention, especially now that our learning environments have changed.

Two lessons from Simplify - the first S in SYNAPSE – offer more inspiration!

First, designate a study space

- This spot should be comfortable (but not TOO comfortable).
- It does not have to be fancy. Basic is better!

Consider potential spaces where you are most likely to get things done, and find yourself a comfortable chair. Don’t overthink this one. Anything upright and sturdy will do!

And I’m just going to let this one fly...

DO NOT STUDY IN YOUR BED!

Seriously, just don’t.
Second, remove distractions from your study space.

- Sweep your learning environment, moving other assignments out of sight.
- Put your phone in another room and switch to Do Not Disturb mode.
- Close apps on your computer and archive tabs so they're no longer visible.
- Turn off all music.

“Why are distractions so, well, distracting??!”

As long as our immediate environment isn't dangerous, our attention naturally gravitates towards things that are unusual or new to us. Interest in novelty has helped our species navigate the world successfully, discovering new sources of food or shelter. When we're faced with difficult or unclear situations, however, our attention shifts its subconscious preference for things that are most recognizable or easy to navigate.

How does this impact our learning?

Through no fault of our own, we naturally require more deliberate attentional control when learning concepts that are difficult to understand. In these moments, students often feel as though they’re swimming upstream, and in a sense, they are. They’re working to resist an innate inclination to shift their focus to more familiar aspects of their environment such as friends, music, or the buzzing of incoming texts. It takes more attentional resources to actively ignore distractions, cutting into a student's limited amount of brain power, slowing them down and wearing them out more quickly!

With this knowledge in hand, you can “hack” your brain & decrease your own distractibility.

Modified from Dr. M’s blog post on 3/16/20 (www.laboratoryforlearning.org)