

What I Wish I Knew In First Year: *Quarantine Edition*



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This article uses primary sources that are specific to Wilfrid Laurier University. But, it includes relevant information to all new and returning university students that will be attending classes during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

The semester of Fall 2020 is going to be different from any university semester before it. You've heard the phrase 'during these unprecedented times' enough over the past months, so we will refrain but using it. But, regardless of the cliché that it has become, the Pandemic is bound to make the already-difficult school year even more so. Because of this, we have rung out all of our contacts and tracked down as much relevant information as we can in an effort to limit your stress come September.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

01	Introduction	
02	Residence Life in Quarantine	
03	Orientation Week	
06	Staying Safe at School	
07	Staying Connected This Year	
08	Working From Home	
	Daily planner page.....	09
	Monthly planner page.....	10
11	Advice From Professors	
12	How to Email Professors	
13	Sources	

“This is the first time any of us – students and profs alike – have ever attempted something like this. It’s a grand experiment, and there are going to be some things that work well and others that won’t. We’ll all figure it out together.”

-Dr. Robert McLeman

In the following pages, we have compiled interview-based research from Laurier professors, club leaders, Dons, fraternities and sororities, and returning students from various universities. Additionally, we have read up on how to succeed in online classes and how to stay connected from a distance.



Residence Life in Quarantine

Opening student residence buildings has become a highly controversial topic. While airing on the side of caution and keeping them closed for at least the fall semester seems like an easy enough solution to most of the obvious health concerns, it neglects others.

If all students came from happy and safe homes with a reliable internet connection and quiet workspaces, then maybe closing down residence buildings for the foreseeable future would be a viable option, but this isn't the case.

In speaking with incoming first-years, we found that quite a few students were concerned that they would be forced to stay at home where they have little privacy. And, with a lack of public spaces with Internet access, these students would be without a dependable environment to participate in online lectures and to complete assignments, tests, and exams.

Ultimately, there is no way to cover all of the obstacles that various students would face if confined to their homes during what is supposed to be their first year of freedom. With this in mind, let's talk about what residence life will look like in the fall.



Evidently, anything here is subject to change, but as we begin stage 3 of reopening in Ontario, residence buildings will be optional to students under restrictions to protect their health.

These restrictions involve one student per dorm-story room and two students per apartment style unit. Additionally, while operating under minimal occupancy, the shared washrooms in the dorm-style buildings will be less busy and cleaned more frequently. Another way that you can prevent the spread of germs within these shared spaces is by wearing a mask. As of right now, mask-wearing is not going to be enforced within the buildings. However, it is strongly encouraged because they greatly limit the spread of COVID-19 through droplets from your nose and mouth.

As for food, the dining hall, Wilf's, and other on-campus eating options will also be available, again following regulations that are deemed necessary.

If you are planning on living in residence in the fall and this information is putting a damper on the wild experience you envisioned, at least consider the positive: no bad roommates, and less people to share a toilet and shower with!

In terms of making friends while limiting contact with others, see our "Advice for Staying Connected" section!

Laurier's O-Week

By Meghan Mazzaferro

First year is really stressful. You might be moving away from home, or taking courses way harder than you're used to. It's likely that your teachers have been telling you for years that university is no joke, and your marks should drop at least 20% or some other insanely stressful amount. So obviously, it's not going to be the most exciting moment of your life to start first year (it should be, because it's the start of an amazing experience, but we all get nerves, and it would be weirder if you weren't at least a little nervous about this big life change). This year, more than ever, things are going to be confusing and complicated and tough to adjust to, what with everything being online.

In a regular year, O-Week is specifically designed to help you with the transition to university. The week is carefully curated to give first years the opportunity to make friends and get used to their university environment. But, how are you supposed to get used to your university environment, if you're not actually at the university?

Luckily, O-Team (the people who make O-Week happen), have been working our butts off since April to make sure that being online doesn't stop O-Week from being an amazing experience, and we've carefully designed the week(s!) to make sure you have as many opportunities as possible to make a connection.

As a member of O-Team, and with the help of Blaze Welling, another O-Team member, we've answered some questions that should hopefully convince you that even though an online O-Week is different than what you expected, it's still going to be worth it. (There's also just some general advice in there, not O-Week specific but still worth reading.) Let's jump in.

Q

What is your role on O-Team, and how does it contribute to O-Week and the Laurier experience in general?

Meghan Mazzaferro: I'm one of the Head Ice Breakers for the Blue Mystics team. My job as a Head Ice Breaker is to ensure that my team of breakers are doing their jobs: making sure the first years are having a great time! I try to foster a feeling of community on my team, which extends beyond my breakers and includes all the first years assigned to my colour team (and honestly, I'm more than happy to help anyone on any team). As an O-Team member, it's also part of my job to help facilitate events and make sure the week is running smoothly.



Blaze Welling: I'm the Activities Team (A-Team) Coordinator. Activities Team is a Waterloo campus-based committee that organizes fun and engaging programming during O-Week and throughout the year. Our goal is to bring together Laurier students in fun ways and to alleviate the stress that being in a university setting can bring. My personal role is to coordinate my team of amazing executives and keep us on track to have a fantastic year and make the most of 2020-2021.

Q

How will online impact the O-Week we're used to?

First of all, we're going to be having two weeks of O-Week instead of just one! Obviously, events are going to be a bit different, since this year is going to be entirely online. Some of the O-Week staples, like Cheer Off, won't be happening this fall unfortunately, but we do have plans in the works to see if there is anything we can do once we're back in person. That being said, don't be sad, we're still going to be having some pretty great stuff! Splitting the week into two means that you'll have more time to get to know your (virtual) floor and participate in fun and informative events, all while avoiding technology fatigue (we don't want to make you have to stay on the computer for ten hours a day!)



It specifically impacts my personal role because a lot of what A-Team typically does during O-Week is hands on and reliant on in-person events. I think online will generally impact the way students interact with Orientation Week; however, I'm very optimistic that because quarantine has been so long students will be excited about whatever amazing programming we schedule.

Q

What are your / your team's main goals for ensuring O-Week stays fun despite the regulations?

The Head Ices, and by extension the entire Ice Breaking team, is super focused on the first-year experience. Our job is to guide first years through the week, and this year more than ever we are taking that role very seriously. I can say with confidence that every single breaker is working hard to find ways to engage with their floors online: they are all really focused on making their first years feel a sense of community and connection in spite of the physical distance between everyone.



Laurier's O-Week Continued



My team's main goals are staying virtually connected through socials and extending that goal to the student population. Despite regulations, we are trying to show that we are resilient no matter what we face. A-Team also has a super fun event planned during O-Week to hopefully engage students and let them have some fun!



What are some of the biggest obstacles you've faced / your team has faced in preparing for this year, and how did you overcome them?

Being an Ice Breaker is a really physical job (that sounds weird, but it's true). In all my previous years, my job has been to be there in person, to bring a certain energy, to take up a lot of space in a room and be as loud and outgoing as possible. I'm literally supposed to be so obnoxiously over the top that students can bond over making fun of me. I think the hardest thing for me, and by extension for all the Ice Breakers, is to come to terms with the fact that our roles are going to be super different this year. Every expectation we have about being a breaker is being challenged this year, and we've all just needed to take time to come to terms with that. Honestly, we're going to have to figure out the best way to do online breaking as we go, there isn't really any way to prepare to how online is going to change the way we engage with students.



The biggest obstacle I've faced is coming to terms with the fact that my last year of my undergraduate degree is online and in the midst of a global pandemic. I'm gonna be completely honest, I haven't really gotten over this yet, but with the help of my team and the support that I have in the Laurier community it feels like I'm going to be okay.



What will O-Week look like this year?

O-Week will be very different from previous years but don't assume it'll be worse! Students Union volunteers and the Orientation Team have worked so tirelessly to build a schedule for incoming students to enjoy their first weeks as Golden Hawks. It will be two full weeks of awesome programming with equal aspects of educational and entertaining events and sessions. I'm very optimistic that this year's O-Week will be fun and engaging, and teach Laurier students that it really is great to be a Laurier Golden Hawk.



I think Blaze says it perfectly: it's going to be different, but it's going to be a really unique and fantastic experience that will utilize our online platforms to the fullest to create an engaging and community-building experience for the first years (and the volunteers)!



What are some ways in which O-Week will allow first years to get to know each other, in spite of the online environment?

We have a lot of group-based activities that will encourage students to engage with their fellow first years! Students' Union has also hired more Ice Breakers and support volunteer positions to help facilitate these connections as well as keeping students hype and excited!



When talking specifically about how students are going to get to engage with their virtual floors, Zoom has a lot of awesome tools that will allow us to break floors, or large groups of people on Zoom calls, into breakout rooms, which will give students the chance to talk to smaller groups of people. Breakers are also being encouraged to arrange meetings with their students outside of O-Week programming to create those floor bonding moments that normally happen while sitting in the lounge.



What's one piece of advice you would give your first-year self?

GET INVOLVED! I felt like I needed to focus on my academics, and that was great, but I had a really hard time when it came to the social aspect of Laurier. I was dealing with some mental health stuff at the same time, but I had a hard time connecting with people and making friends, and I know now that if I had gotten involved with clubs and gotten to know people who shared my interests, I might have been less lonely and gotten to meet my people sooner.



Laurier's O-Week Continued



Trust yourself. I think this is something that I've had a super hard time with my entire university career. Some part of me makes me believe that I'm wrong or I'm navigating my life in the wrong direction, but I've learned that this is normal!! Being nervous and scared about decisions that can affect your future can be terrifying but you really need to trust yourself. You got yourself here, you make the decisions, this is your life and you need to trust that you know how to live it.



What's one piece of advice you would give incoming first years about doing classes online?

Have a schedule, and find a balance (that's two pieces of advice, but I'm writing this article so I can bend the rules if I want to!). It's so easy, when you're feeling overwhelmed, to procrastinate and lose track of time. Having a schedule, and sticking to it, is so important to keeping track of the work you need to do, and meeting your deadlines. Finding a balance between school and life will help keep you from burning out and getting overwhelmed. Online, it can be hard to feel connected to other people, but there are lots of clubs that are going to be doing online meetings. Find one that interests you!



Just because you're not attending a physical lecture doesn't mean that the class isn't there. Be cognizant of your time management and prioritize your classes in a way that helps you!



What's one thing you're looking forward to doing when things open back up?

Studying in the library! I'm a nerd, but I honestly can't wait to grab one of those cubbies on the third floor next to the window, getting natural light while I procrastinate doing my school work, and going downstairs to get a pesto caprese sandwich from Second Cup when I get tired of pretending to study.



Concerts!! Obviously, this relates to my position as A-Team Coordinator, because we are known for hosting concerts on the Waterloo campus; however, part of me is such a sucker for a concert! As soon as things are safe and open back up, I will be front row at my favourite concert, mark my words!

A closing note:

And there you have it; advice and information straight from the source! As an outsider looking in, it's easy to say that these women have provided excellent tips that you should absolutely follow in this academic year. But, as an introvert who has experienced O-Week, I also know how difficult it can be to open up in a new environment while surrounded by new people.

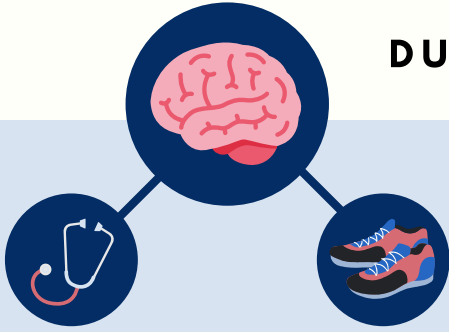
Just remember that your Ice Breakers are excited to be here for you and the Dupuis Editing team backs you all the way!

Have a fun and safe orientation and welcome to Laurier, Golden Hawk!

- Lexi Dupuis-Bissonnette

Staying Safe in School

DURING A GLOBAL PANDEMIC



STAYING HEALTHY - MEDICALLY

Students in residence are already prone to common colds and the flu because of the shared living environment, and usually, aside from the risk of missing a deadline or a lecture, the stakes if you contract these are fairly low.

However, with COVID-19 as a constant looming threat, the stakes increase dramatically and everyone's major concern is staying healthy. Luckily, there are some great ways to protect yourself this year:

- 1. Physical distancing:** You've seen this advertised in lots of public spaces, but it will be equally important to maintain this distance while in your residence buildings and while in the classroom (if you have some in-person classes). Health professionals are recommending 6 ft of distance to protect from the most dramatic forms of droplet transmission (like sneezing and coughing).
- 2. Wear a mask:** It is important to remember that mask wearing is not for your safety, but for the safety of others. The mask functions as a way to catch droplets leaving your nose and mouth (so make sure that you cover both) and stop them from reaching the nose/mouth of the people around you. Mask wearing isn't effective unless *everyone* is doing it. So don't be the weak link; wear your mask.
- 3. Don't touch your face:** If everyone physically distances and wears a mask, there's no way for COVID-19 to enter your mouth or nose, unless you touch your face. If you touch a surface that has COVID-19 on it and then rub your eyes, itch your nose, put something in your mouth, you risk transmitting the virus into your airways. The best way to avoid this is to practice keeping your hands away from your face until you're safely in your home with your hands washed.
- 4. Wash you hands:** This is another basic tip, but we are going to include it just in case. Before you eat, drink, or touch your personal belongings in public, wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds. Then, when you're back home, wash your hands again. If you're going to be out and about, carry hand sanitizer with you to avoid public washrooms as much as possible.
- 5. Take vitamin c daily:** Doctors are prescribing large doses of vitamin c to COVID-19 patients to lessen the complications of pneumonia (COVID-19 attacks the respiratory system and pneumonia is the respiratory disease that is the most problematic for its hosts). As a preventative measure, you can take one tablets of vitamin c every morning to prepare your immune system should you contract COVID-19.
- 6. Stay out of busy public spaces:** While things start to open up and the school year begins, large group gatherings and public spaces will be tempting, but remember that the Pandemic persists nonetheless. However, do not be scared of public spaces. As long as you wear a mask, wash your hands, and physically distance from people outside of your circle, there is no reason to avoid the outside world.

STAYING HEALTHY - MENTALLY

It is very probable that this school year will result in a spike of mental illnesses, seasonal depression, and side effects from social isolation. Usually, even during exam seasons, students can get social relief by studying in public, working with their friends, going to their jobs, having a fun weekend out, or even attending in-person classes.

However, the fall semester will challenge all of those outlets, and you should do whatever you can to prepare for the mental toll this will take on you.

If you have a mental illness:

- 1. Proactively get in touch with university-offered mental health care workers:** Knowing what your options are prior to this year will be paramount to ensuring that you receive help as quickly as possible. Laurier has services like the Student Wellness Centre and the Delton Glebe Counselling Centre that can provide you with mental health resources during your time as a student. Getting comfortable with these centres at your university *before* you need them will make reaching out when you do easier.
- 2. Choose an outlet:** Having an outlet will be extremely important for everyone this year. An outlet can be a friend who has confirmed that they are ready to be there for you or a hobby that relaxes you.

For everyone:

- 1. Lessen your expectations:** There are going to be countless obstacles this year that no one has had to deal with thus far. So, be mentally prepared to hit a few ruts and adjust your usual expectations.
- 2. Stay social:** Maintaining social connections even when we're out of practice can be intimidating or exhausting. But, like a muscle, socializing gets easier with consistent practice and will improve your mental health. Call with friends, socialize with roommates, plan distancing activities.

STAYING HEALTHY - PHYSICALLY

One thing that has gone viral over the course of the Pandemic (aside from COVID-19) has been quarantine fitness routines or quarantine before and afters. Before entering this school year, let those expectations go. University students, especially first years, experience extreme fluctuation in their physical appearances and capabilities. This is normal today and this was normal pre-pandemic.

But, while it isn't encouraged that you're hard on yourself for allowing your body to change during this semester (or any semester for that matter), it is important that you get yourself moving.

Online classes will make sitting in front of your computer all day feel necessary. But, in fact, breaking that screen time up with some light exercise can be extremely beneficial to your productivity levels, and your physical and mental health.

Some low maintenance fitness ideas:

- Go on a walk with a friend (this will help you socially too)
- Find an outdoor space to do your readings
- Cook a homemade meal
- Walk to the store when you have smaller trips to do
- Go skating in the winter
- Stand up from your seat whenever possible

HOW TO STAY CONNECTED

DURING A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

By Megan Heck

Making new friends and building new relationships is a huge part of the first-year of university. Being introduced to so many new people offers an amazing chance to expand your social network and connect with your peers. It can be a bit nerve-wracking at first, especially if you aren't always comfortable in social situations, but try to remember that everyone else is in the same situation. Everyone wants to meet new people and make their university experience more fun too. The best thing you can do is introduce yourself and offer up a way to hangout (whatever that may look like nowadays). With COVID-19 changing the way people interact, there are going to be some adjustments made when socializing and meeting others. However, that doesn't mean it isn't possible, just that you may have to go about it differently. Fortunately, there are so many ways to meet others in a university-setting.

ACADEMIC CONNECTIONS

One of the easiest places to meet new people is at school in the classes you are taking, as you instantly have something in common and you're required to be in the same place at the same time each week. This can be as simple as reaching out, either individually or in a group, to study together. Studying can either be done via a group video call or in-person with necessary safety measures, depending on levels of comfortability and possibility. Having a familiar face in one or more of your classes can relieve stress, provide you with a study buddy, and help motivate you in your academics.

JOINING EXTRACURRICULARS

Extracurriculars are a huge part of university life, and each university has a multitude of different clubs or groups that cater to different interests, passions, and hobbies. These groups are filled with enthusiastic, like-minded individuals, as they attract the individuals that are interested in that particular subject. For example, if you are passionate about writing, join a Creative Writing Club, and you will have the chance to meet others who also like writing creatively. With COVID-19 limiting in-person interaction, many extracurriculars are finding creative ways to transition to virtual activities. From Netflix parties to online interactive games, there are so many ways to get involved and stay connected to others through extracurriculars.

While many athletic activities are not currently running, many gyms and outdoor fitness areas are open for use. Finding a gym buddy or going for a walk with a friend is a great way to take a short break from academics and get to know someone better. This buddy can be someone from your dorm, a previous school, or even someone you meet while you are already at the gym. Also, many in-person fitness activities have transitioned online, so that you can workout, learn a dance routine, or do some yoga in the comfort of your own home. It is as easy as moving furniture to the side of the room or cleaning the clothes off your floor to join in on a virtual workout. A great way to make a virtual workout a social situation is to invite people over to do the virtual workout together! Whether you are an active person or not, the endorphins that are released during physical activity can offer you the mental break that is needed when learning all day. Daily physical activity is a great way to refresh your body, refocus your mind, and stretch out your muscles after looking at a screen or a book for an extended period of time. Even something as simple as going for a walk around the block with a friend can do wonders for you!

SOCIAL MEDIA

While social media is not a new concept, there may be new ways to use it to your benefit. The "mainstream" social platforms, like Instagram or Tik Tok, don't offer the same rewards that the oldy-but-a-goody platforms do, like Facebook. Many universities create "Accepted" pages for incoming university students. These Facebook pages are meant to bring first-year students together and provide a way to reach out to one another. For example, posting about your class schedule and asking if others are in the same classes is one way to find individuals with commonalities and make friends. Social media can be a great way to access new friends, but keep in mind that anything said or shared on social media, especially with individuals that you may not know well yet, is an impression of yourself. Be responsible for your thoughts and actions, and you'll find lots of new people to interact with.

REMINDER

While socializing and meeting new people is a fun part of university-life, remember that your number one priority should be your studies. There is always something social happening at university, but there is only one due date, so make sure that you are staying on top of your assignments either by using a calendar or daily planner.

Working From Home

WAYS TO SUCCEED THIS YEAR

SCHEDULE

While this year's set up may encourage a less structured day, determining a manageable and personalized schedule for yourself will be a great way to remain consistently productive every day.

Consider breaking your day up into one-hour increments that will keep your brain stimulated by switching activities regularly.

You can map a schedule out on your computer, with sticky notes on the wall by your desk, or through the calendar app on your phone.

We have also created a great schedule that you can screenshot and fill in yourself.

BUILD A WORKSPACE

Now that shared study spaces on campus are non-existent or limited, it is important to create a workspace at home that will promote productivity.

This space should be away from your bed (in another room if possible) and at a desk. If you can, move your desk so that it isn't facing a wall. This will make working there feel more appealing.

Keep this space clean and organized. Messy environments breed messy inhabitants.

Meaning that if your workspace is cluttered, your brain can also feel cluttered.

MAKE A PLAYLIST

If you find that music helps you get into your zone, create a playlist that you can use to drown out auditory distractions.

If music doesn't help you, consider finding some white noise sounds, like nature playlists, that will work in a similar fashion without distracting lyrics.

TAKE BREAKS

Forcing yourself to work uninterrupted for hours on end isn't productive; it also sets an unrealistic expectation for yourself that can be damaging to your self-esteem when you don't meet it.

So, scheduling in breaks in addition to regular meals will actually encourage productivity during the times when you are working.

ENFORCE A SLEEP SCHEDULE

While summer in quarantine has given way to sleep schedules some of us never thought possible, it will be important to correct them in time for classes.

Without social stimuli to exhaust us each day, falling asleep at night is less tempting than ever before. But, if you can train your body to wake up in the early-ish morning, then it will be more likely to shut off before the early hours of the following day.

Being well-rested will improve your attention span and your mood, allowing you to take on all of the challenges that this year will bring.

CREATE STUDY GROUPS

Just because you aren't supposed to see people this year doesn't mean that you can't socialize. Getting your peers together to create online study groups is a great way to remain productive, informed, and social.

You can use MyLearningSpace to send out a mass email in each class to see if anyone is interested. Or, you can look for Facebook groups for your classes and ask there.

Daily Planner

FILL IN TO STAY PRODUCTIVE

Day of the Week:

8:00

9:00

10:00

11:00

12:00

1:00

2:00

3:00

4:00

5:00

6:00

7:00

8:00

9:00

10:00

11:00

12:00

1:00

(Go get some rest!)

Advice from Professors

ON HOW TO SUCCEED AND REMAIN CALM

We contacted multiple professors from Wilfrid Laurier University who will be working with students in the fall. These professors range across departments and provided lots of material on how to succeed in online classes.

Our intention when contacting them was to collect information that will give students peace of mind heading into a foreign online learning environment. We have compiled the answers into summaries that cover each professor's answers. These are highly generalized and mostly apply to humanities courses.

Q1: How do you foresee a regular day looking for your students in regards to your classes?

Different professors are taking different approaches to fit the needs of their specific courses. Zoom will be used as the method to deliver most lectures, as professors see it as a way to provide students with beneficial structure.

Some professors are opting for short Zoom meetings (around 20 minutes) to connect with their students and answer questions, and then plan to communicate their lectures via pre-recorded videos or narrated presentation slides.

The additional material posted on MyLearningSpace will be a great tool for students to supplement these other methods of teaching and professors will be relying on them heavily in the forms of additional readings, videos, extra slides, and external resources.

Ultimately, there will be a combination of synchronous (real time lectures/tutorials) and asynchronous (material to peruse on your own time) teaching that is intended to appeal to different learning styles.

Q2: How will you be providing office hours?

Office hours will run in a similar fashion as they normally do, wherein students can sign into a Zoom meeting during office hours to talk with their professor. Students can also schedule office hours outside of these pre-determined times to have uninterrupted one-on-one's with their instructors.

Q3: How do you intend to connect with your students without face-to-face interactions?

In addition to connecting over Zoom lectures and office hours, professors are planning on taking phone appointments to discuss course material with students.

Some professors and departments are providing extra-curricular options, like course-themed movie nights, to promote both peer and student-professor interactions. Do not shy away from options like this (I can see myself as a first year doing exactly that, but now I know I will be taking every available opportunity to connect with my peers and enjoy the strange experience of learning during a global pandemic).

Additionally, one professor is going to organize structured group study sessions where students can discuss course material. If your professor is not offering this, but you would like to see that in your course, send them the idea via email; most professors will find that easy enough to arrange and it will be highly beneficial to your experience and course-comprehension.

Q4: What are some things that you would like students to know going into this year?

The most important thing to note that professors and students alike will face challenges this semester; neither group views remote learning as a superior alternative, but maintaining a positive and flexible mindset will be the best way to navigate this foreign terrain.

In terms of student discipline, professors foresee students (especially those prone to procrastination) to find staying on schedule difficult. So, making a plan and staying on track from the start will be the best way to succeed. Determine what will help you achieve this, be it a calendar/planner, participating in a regular study group, working in the common area of your living space to feel motivated. Additionally, students will need to be prepared to fail and be overwhelmed as they adjust to this new environment. However, this should not be seen as discouraging; rather, use your failures as stepping stones to improve for the next assignment/lecture/course. It will also be important to identify what strategies work well for you personally.

Students will need to be prepared to self-advocate within their living spaces and co-ordinate with their roommates/families to ensure that they have allotted quiet time as necessary.

Invest in a printer! Reading hard copies will lessen the possibility of eye-strain from reading electronic documents. It has also been proven that there are cognitive benefits to reading hard copies over digital copies.

Lastly, pay attention to how you're doing mentally. Without significant face time with friends, you're more likely to let your mental health slip. Take time out of your day to evaluate your mental health and to help it.

Q5: It is obvious that because there is no classroom environment to ensure that students have access to equally safe/quiet/private learning areas with reliable wifi access that some students will have a harder time keeping up. Do you have any ideas about how you will address this issue for your students???

One way that classrooms benefit students is through leveling the playing field. They offer all students a quiet and similar environment to learn in, and the Pandemic takes this benefit away.

Professors acknowledge this difficulty and will be open to hearing what accommodations can be made. Additionally, they will be constantly striving to achieve a balance of firmness and fairness within their 'classroom.'

The key to success this year will be self-advocating. If you have unreliable internet, are in a different time zone, or do not have a private space for lectures, contact your professors at the very beginning of classes to inform them of these obstacles and make a plan with them. Professors and TA's are here to help you, but they cannot help if they don't realize that something is wrong. So, address issues the moment they come up to avoid falling behind.

If unreliable internet or devices are your biggest concerns, you can contact the Dean of Students directly to discuss options/grants/support to resolve this issue.

If a quiet environment is your biggest concern, professors will allow you to mute your audio during lectures. So you do not need to worry about disturbing others (as long as you're capable of working in said space).

How to Email Professors

A SIMPLE TEMPLATE



REASONS TO PUT EFFORT INTO YOUR EMAILS

When you're emailing professors, you're indirectly telling the person who determines your grades things about yourself. For example, if you send emails full of spelling errors, it will give your professors the impression that you're sloppy, and this bias can work its way into their quality of interaction with you.

THIS YEAR IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT

Because you will have limited face time with your instructors, it's really important to use every opportunity that you can to make a great first impression. Professional emails is a great way to build this foundation.

HOW FORMAL TO BE IN THE EMAILS

Professors vary in their levels of acceptance when it comes to casual emails from their students. Some, even after knowing the student, want concise and formal emails only. Others will slip into more informal formatting and language once they know who you are. The trick is gauging where each of your professors fall on this spectrum. The best way to do this is by observing how they email.

However, the first email that you send should always follow the same template/formality. This first email rule extends to the first email of every new email chain that you start (not just the first time that you interact with the professor).

EMAIL TEMPLATE

New Message

To: [your professor's email]

Subject: [course code] and [assignment]

Hello Professor [professor's last name],

I am in your [time of lecture] [course name or course code] and I am writing to you about [assignment name + reason for emailing. Be brief].

Have a great day,

[your first and last name]
[your student number]

SEND

AND THAT'S IT

After you send this first email, you can mirror the way that the professor responds if you are required to send a follow up.

SOURCES

Residence Life in Quarantine

Image Wilfrid Laurier University - Student Residence Study by Hanbury

Image Wilfrid Laurier University - Apartment Style VR

Don Contact Anonymous

Staying Healthy

Medical Information: World Health Organization (WHO)

Mental Health Information: Wilfrid Laurier Student Wellness Centre and the Delton Glebe Counselling Centre

Mental Health Information: WHO

Physical Health Information: WHO

Advice From Professors

Dr. C. Nighman (History & Medieval Studies)

Dr. M. DiCenzo (Literature & Theater & Feminism)

Dr. R. McLeman (Environmental Science & Geography)