



Published on *Accessibility Resources & Service* (<https://ars.unc.edu>)

[Home](#) > [Printer-friendly PDF](#) > [Resources and Strategies to Support Online Learning](#)

---

# Resources and Strategies to Support Online Learning

Do you need immediate help from ARS? You can reach us at by email at [ars@unc.edu](mailto:ars@unc.edu) <sup>[1]</sup> or leave us a voicemail at 919-962-8300, and we can email or call you back.

## Access to the Internet

Many telecoms providers are doing what they can to help students make the shift online by providing free high-speed access. The [Federal Communications Commission Agreement](#) <sup>[2]</sup> states providers will waive late fees, not cutoff service for lack of payment, and open hot-spots for increased accessibility to the internet. Please visit the following websites for the latest details on how to sign-up and leverage these services.

- [Cox Communications Response](#) <sup>[3]</sup>: Cox Communications offers a range of services and packages for the next 60 days (free access to over 650,000 Wi-Fi hot spots; residential customers in the company's Starter, StraightUp Internet and Connect2Compete packages will be automatically upgraded to speeds of 50 Mbps).
- [Comcast COVID-19 Response](#) <sup>[4]</sup>: Comcast offers free Wi-Fi for 2 months to low income families plus all Xfinity hot-spots are free to the public during this time.
- [Charter Free Internet offer for 2 months](#) <sup>[5]</sup>: Charter will offer free Spectrum broadband and Wi-Fi access for 60 days to households with K-12 and/or college students who do not already have a Spectrum broadband subscription and at any service level up to 100 Mbps. To enroll call **1-844-488-8395**. Installation fees will be waived for new student households.
- [AT&T COVID-19 Response](#) <sup>[6]</sup>: AT&T offers open hot-spots, unlimited data to existing customers, and \$10/month plans to low-income families.

- [Verizon COVID-19 Response](#) [7]: There are no special offers, Verizon is following the FCC agreement.
- [Sprint COVID-19 Response](#) [8]: Sprint is following the FCC agreement and will provide unlimited data to existing customers. Starting Tuesday, March 17, 2020, Sprint will allow all handsets to enable hot-spots for 60 days at no extra charge.
- [T-Mobile COVID-19 Response](#) [9]: T-Mobile is following the FCC agreement and providing unlimited data to existing customers. It will soon allow all handsets to enable hot-spots for 60 days at no extra charge.

## Maximizing Internet Access

You can also use the tips below to use your mobile phone as a hotspot to provide access to your laptop. There are also tips to maximize your bandwidth.

- Turn your [cell phone into a hotspot](#) [10] to provide access to your computer if you don't have High-Speed Internet (see resources above)
- If you do not have a great signal and video/access is breaking up, disconnect or turn off other devices using the internet such as TV's and Smart Home devices streaming content, disconnect your phone from WiFi if you are using your computer for access. Also, take turns using the internet with others in your household to limit the number of simultaneous connections.
- If you have older wireless technology, you may get better speeds by using a wired connection to connect to your cable router instead of using Wi-Fi.
- To make sure neighbors are not streaming from your service, make sure your connection is password protected and get into the habit of periodically changing your password on your router.

## Reducing Screen and Computer Use Fatigue

As we move towards an online environment, please consider how you are using your computer. A laptop was never intended to be a "full" time computer. If you have a docking station or desktop computer, monitor, keyboard, mouse available that will reduce stress on your body as you spend more time on the computer, please review these ergonomic setups and try to make your environment as ergo-friendly as possible.

- [Posturite's "ultimate guide to healthy laptop use"](#) [11]
- [How to optimize your workspace and productivity](#) [12]
- [Setting up an Ergonomic Computer Station](#) [13]
- [Create a Study Space](#) [14]
- Consider reducing the strain on your wrists/hands by using [Voice Recognition](#) [15] technology.
- Consider reducing your exposure to blue light in your monitor screen by adjusting [blue light filters on your devices](#).

- [16]
- Consider installing [ClaroRead](#) [17] to support your engagement with digital documents in multiple ways. This tool supports online reading, writing, note-taking, and research and has a range of useful tools including ScreenRuler, Claroldeas and ClaroView.
  - Consider planning and time management for your online courses. You may need more frequent breaks away from the computer.
  - Use the resources below to design a daily routine.
    - [Planning and Time Management Strategies](#) [18].
    - [Staying Ahead with Effective Time Management](#) [19]
    - Consider using an [Assignment Calculator](#) [20] to help you break assignments and projects into smaller tasks.
    - Try [Google Tasks](#) [21], [Homework Homie](#) [22], or [MyHomework](#) [23] to keep track of assignments due.

## Textbook Alternatives

Students may have lost access to resources available on campus as a result of COVID19 such as books on reserve in the Library. You may be able to find free access to digital versions of your textbooks using the links and instructions below.

- [VitalSource](#) [24]
  - Go to [vitalsource.com](#) [25] and create an account if you don't already have one. Make sure to use your edu email address.
  - Login and click on "My Bookshelf" in top right corner.
  - Then click on Explore in the top left corner.
  - Search for the book you need and add it to your Bookshelf and start reading.
- [RedShelf](#) [26]
  - Go to [redshelf.com](#) [27] and create an account if you don't already have one. Make sure to use your edu email address.
  - Login and go to [www.about.redshelf.com/redshelfresponds](#) [26]
  - Scroll down a little and click on the button, "Access Free eBooks"
  - Search for the book you need and 'view details' and then 'Add to My Shelf'
- [National Emergency Library](#) [28]

## For Students with a Hearing Loss

As we move into online learning, please let the ARS or your Instructor know if you need captioning assistance.

- Free [RelayNC Services](#) [29] can be used to support talking over the phone or interacting in live meetings with NCSU Instructors or Staff.

- Consider using Google Meet for communicating with other students and instructors as [Automatic Live Captioning](#) [30] is available in Google Hangouts/Meet.
- [How to turn on subtitles and closed captions for iPad/iPhone](#) [31]
- [How to turn on captioning in Android Devices](#) [32]
- [Set up Visual Alerts in Windows 10](#) [33]
- [Set up Visual Alerts in Mac OS](#) [34]
- The National Deaf Center.org has a great tip sheet: [Take Control of Your Online Learning: Tips for Deaf College Students](#) [35]

## For Students with a Vision Loss

- Use text to speech support when available. Consider installing ClaroRead.
- All devices have tools to [help make your device easier to see](#) [36].
- If you are thinking about moving to a screen reader, check out the free screen reading software NVDA, which is being used by more people than JAWS.
  - Training ? [American Foundation for the Blind ? NVDA Training](#) [37] (Free)
  - Training ? [NVDA User Guide](#) [38] (Free)
- If you need assistance in reading math, try [Equatio](#) [39].
  - [EquatIO Tutorial](#) [40] (YouTube, Captioned)
  - [Official TextHelp EquatIO Training Videos](#) [41](YouTube Playlist, Captioned)
- [Introduction to using a screen reader in Microsoft Word](#) [42].

## For Visual Learners

**Note: Automatic transcription does not replace the need to have multimedia captioned for those with hearing loss**

- Live transcription can benefit students who may learn better by having visual focus when listening for periods, such as listening to a podcast.
- Live transcription can benefit those students who find it difficult to type or write for long periods of time, such as students with Rheumatoid Arthritis, Traumatic Brain Injuries, Repetitive Stress Injuries, or Autism.
- Live transcription can support ESL learners as they see and hear the processed language.
- Tools
  - [Webcaptioner](#) [43] is a browser-based tool that presents captioning of auditory content in a separate window. You can export the transcript as a document. (Free)
  - [Otter](#) [44] is a cloud-based tool that works on a mobile device or browser. It is an audio recording tool that has automatic transcription, also, it has a highlighting feature so you can highlight important statements. You can

embed pictures in the transcription, edit the transcript as well as share and export the transcript. The free version allows 600 minutes of recording, there is an educational discount of 50% off the normal pricing or about \$4.50 per month.

- [BeeLine Reader](#) [45] - BeeLine Reader makes reading on-screen easier, faster, and more enjoyable. It uses a simple cognitive trick, an eye-guiding color gradient to pull your eyes across a line of text and from one line to the next; this technique increases reading speed and enhances focus.

## Supporting Writing

- Use an [Assignment Calculator](#) [20] to break your writing assignment into manageable tasks.
- Use mind-mapping software to brainstorm organize your thoughts and ideas.
  - [Mindmeister](#) [46]
  - [Xmind](#) [47]
- Voice recognition, sometimes called speech recognition or speech to text exists in just about every device.  
This is a good tool for those that have limited dexterity for typing or for people that have difficulty with spelling.
  - [Dictation in Mac](#) [48]
  - [Dictation in Windows 10](#) [49]
  - [Dictation in Google Docs](#) [50]
- Use [Grammarly](#) [51] to check for grammar mistakes or simply to improve the quality of your writing.
- Use Text to Speech software to have your paper read back to you or to support your reading when undertaking course related readings.
  - [Text to Speech in Mac](#) [52]
  - [Text to Speech on iPhone, iPad](#) [53]
  - [Text to Speech on Android Device](#) [54]
  - ClaroRead is an comprehensive writing and reading support tool and available for download at
- Microsoft Learning Tools are free tools that implement proven techniques to improve reading and writing for learners regardless of their age or ability.
  - [Immersive Reader - overview](#) [55]
    - [Learning Tools in Word](#) [56]
    - [Learning Tools in OneNote](#) [57]
    - [Learning Tools in Edge](#) [58]
    - [Learning Tools in Outlook](#) [59]
    - [Learning Tools in Microsoft Edge](#) [60]
    - [Learning Tools in Flipgrid](#) [61]
    - [Independent Learning Math Tools in OneNote](#) [62]

## Limiting Your Internet Access to Stay Focused

- There are a range of apps and extensions that will help you stay more productive at work by temporarily blocking social and other time-wasting websites including:
  - [Strict Workflow](#) [63]
  - [Stay Focused](#) [64]
  - [My Study Life](#) [65]
  - [Cold Turkey](#) [66]
  - [LeechBlock](#) [67]

## Masking Environmental Noise to Stay Focused

- Sound Masking using white noise / other generic background noise This would do the job of blocking out any external background noise. Here are a few websites and apps that can provide an endless stream of white noise and/or other ambient noises for study purposes?
  - [Noisli](#) [68]
  - [Relaxio](#) [69]
  - [A soft murmur](#) [70] - ambient sounds available include rain, thunder, waves, wind, fire, birds, crickets, coffee shop, singing bowl and white noise
  - [Rainymood](#) [71] - rain, can be mixed with music e.g. classical piano music
  - [Soundrown](#) [72]- coffee shop, rain, waves, fire, birds, night, train, fountain, white noise, playground

## Supporting Math

- [Independent Learning Math Tools in OneNote](#) [62]
- [Microsoft Math Solver](#) [73] will help you solve and graph problems.
- [EquatIO](#) [74] will allow you to write math easier and have it read aloud to you.

## Supporting Mental Health

- Define a new routine using time management strategies:
  - [Planning and Time Management Strategies](#) [18].
  - [Staying Ahead with Effective Time Management](#) [19]
- Psycom highlights the best mental health apps for 2020 and experts weigh in about just how effective they are as an alternative treatment
  - [25 of the Best Apps to Support Mental Health](#) [75]
- [Mental Health Apps curated by the UK's NHS](#) [76]

# Staying Social

Although we are encouraged to physically distance from one another to contain virus infections, we can still connect using technology for studying and socializing. Use the following tools to connect with other classmates, friends, family through apps like Skype, Facetime, Google Meet, Zoom.

- [Getting Started with Google Meet](#) [77]
- [All about Zoom Meetings](#) [78]
- [Skype](#) [79]
- [FaceTime](#) [80]

---

**Source URL:** <https://ars.unc.edu/students/resources-and-strategies-support-online-learning>

## Links

- [1] <mailto:ars@unc.edu>
- [2] <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-363033A1.pdf>
- [3] <https://www.cox.com/residential/internet/learn/cox-hotspots.html>
- [4] <https://corporate.comcast.com/covid-19>
- [5] <https://corporate.charter.com/newsroom/charter-to-offer-free-access-to-spectrum-broadband-and-wifi-for-60-days-for-new-K12-and-college-student-households-and-more>
- [6] <https://about.att.com/pages/COVID-19.html>
- [7] <https://www.verizon.com/about/news/our-response-coronavirus>
- [8] <https://newsroom.sprint.com/covid-19-updates-sprint-responds.htm>
- [9] <https://www.t-mobile.com/news/t-mobile-update-on-covid-19-response>
- [10] <https://www.pcmag.com/how-to/how-to-turn-your-phone-into-a-wi-fi-hotspot>
- [11] [https://www.posturite.co.uk/media/pdf-downloads/Guide-to-Healthy-Laptop-Use\\_2018.pdf](https://www.posturite.co.uk/media/pdf-downloads/Guide-to-Healthy-Laptop-Use_2018.pdf)
- [12] <https://lifehacker.com/how-to-ergonomically-optimize-your-workspace-30833302>
- [13] <https://www.thoughtco.com/setting-up-ergonomic-computer-station-1206666>
- [14] <https://www.thoughtco.com/create-a-study-space-1857109>
- [15] <https://dro.dasa.ncsu.edu/voice-recognition/>
- [16] <https://dro.dasa.ncsu.edu/blue-light-filters/>
- [17] <https://software.sites.unc.edu/software/claroread/>
- [18] [https://www.ldadvisory.com/college\\_students/](https://www.ldadvisory.com/college_students/)
- [19] [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ViJMXN9bQsEmUMGoIXikBh\\_vtHJPPSVr/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ViJMXN9bQsEmUMGoIXikBh_vtHJPPSVr/view?usp=sharing)
- [20] <https://ctl.utsc.utoronto.ca/assignmentcal/>
- [21] <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/google-tasks>
- [22] <https://www.homeworkhomie.com/>
- [23] <https://myhomeworkapp.com/>
- [24] <https://get.vitalsource.com/vitalsource-helps>
- [25] <http://www.vitalsource.com/>
- [26] <https://www.about.redshelf.com/redshelfresponds>
- [27] <http://www.redshelf.com/>
- [28] <https://archive.org/details/nationalemergencylibrary>
- [29] <http://www.relaync.com/>

[30]

<https://support.google.com/meet/answer/9300310?co=GENIE.Platform%3DDesktop&hl=en>

[31] <https://support.apple.com/guide/iphone/subtitles-captioning-iph3e2e23d1/ios>

[32] <https://support.google.com/accessibility/android/answer/6006554?hl=en>

[33] <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/help/10571/windows-use-text-visual-alternative-sounds>

[34] <https://www.apple.com/accessibility/mac/hearing/>

[35] <https://www.nationaldeafcenter.org/take-control-your-online-learning-tips-deaf-college-students>

[36] <https://dro.dasa.ncsu.edu/magnification/>

[37] <https://www.afb.org/blindness-and-low-vision/using-technology/assistive-technology-videos/learn-nvda>

[38] <https://www.nvaccess.org/files/nvda/documentation/userGuide.html?>

[39] <https://equatio.texthelp.com/>

[40] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kxhmRI4fZiA>

[41] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BWmPQ7mcKrM&list=PLvSZbmGbKpCRz3o-FmU9AkEpURs9-Z0nH>

[42] <https://support.office.com/en-us/article/introduction-to-using-a-screen-reader-in-word-303eb71a-6bd8-474c-ba06-923e93347224?ui=en-US&rs=en-US&ad=US>

[43] <http://www.webcaptioner.com/>

[44] <http://www.otter.ai/>

[45] <https://www.beelineader.com/>

[46] <http://www.mindmeister.com/>

[47] <https://www.xmind.net/>

[48] <https://www.howtogeek.com/178636/use-voice-dictation-to-speak-to-your-mac/>

[49] <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/help/4042244/windows-10-use-dictation>

[50] <https://www.pcworld.com/article/3038200/how-to-use-voice-dictation-in-google-docs.html>

[51] <http://www.grammarly.com/>

[52] <https://support.apple.com/guide/mac-help/have-your-mac-speak-text-thats-on-the-screen-mh27448/mac>

[53] <https://support.apple.com/guide/iphone/spoken-content-iph96b214f0/ios>

[54] <https://support.google.com/accessibility/android/answer/6006983?hl=en>

[55] <https://youtu.be/wHJJCLV-DNg>

[56] <https://support.office.com/en-us/article/Learning-Tools-in-Word-a857949f-c91e-4c97-977c-a4efcaf9b3c1>

[57] <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/use-immersive-reader-for-onenote-10712138-b4ed-4513-958d-d9a1b3038170?redirectsourcepath=%252fen-us%252farticle%252fonenote-for-windows-10-46e4ffa9-5d40-45ec-a76d-eba10eb4b03a&ui=en-us&rs=en-us&ad=us>

[58] <https://support.office.com/en-us/article/use-learning-tools-in-the-edge-browser-78a7a17d-52e1-47ee-b0ac-eff8539015e1?ui=en-US&rs=en-US&ad=US>

[59] <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/open-immersive-reader-for-outlook-9249595c-4b9d-4f27-9f59-bc590a6152da?ui=en-us&rs=en-us&ad=us>

[60]

<https://nam04.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fsupport.office.com%2Fen-us%2Farticle%2Fuse-learning-tools-in-the-edge-browser-78a7a17d-52e1-47ee-b0ac-eff8539015e1&data=02%7C01%7Cshawks%40forsythtech.edu%7C550bf8a935ff405491e408d75d3af996%7>

[61] <http://blog.flipgrid.com/news/immersivereader>

[62] <https://education.microsoft.com/en-us/course/c04cb8b0/0>

[63] <https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/strict-workflow/cgmnfnmlficgeijcalkgnnkigkefbhd?hl=en>

[64]

<https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/stayfocusd/laankejkbhbdhmipfmgcngdelahlfoji?hl=en>  
[65] <https://www.mystudylife.com/>  
[66] <https://getcoldturkey.com/>  
[67] <https://www.proginosko.com/leechblock/>  
[68] <https://www.noisli.com/>  
[69] <http://www.relaxio.net>  
[70] <http://asoftmurmur.com>  
[71] <https://rainymood.com>  
[72] <http://soundrown.com/>  
[73] <https://math.microsoft.com/en/>  
[74] <https://dro.dasa.ncsu.edu/equatio-voiced-math/>  
[75] <https://www.psycom.net/25-best-mental-health-apps>  
[76] <https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/category/mental-health/>  
[77] <https://support.google.com/a/users/answer/9282720?hl=en>  
[78] <https://wp.math.ncsu.edu/it/zoom-virtual-meetings/>  
[79] <https://www.skype.com/en/>  
[80] <https://support.apple.com/en-us/HT204380>