Creating a
Positive Workspace
...wherever that may be

NIPISSING UNIVERSITY
ATP: LAUNCH 2021

For a summary YouTube video of this information, click on this link.

The importance of **where** we learn

When the atmosphere encourages learning, the learning is inevitable. -Elizabeth Foss

Getting an education is more accessible than ever.

It can also be more complicated.

SAS can help you make the most of **where** you are.

After all…

Workspaces are as unique as the learners who use them!

The global pandemic forced the world to reconsider where and how people work and study.   In many ways, there is no going back as employers and educational institutions have seen how much more can be done, and done well, virtually.

Regardless of how you may choose to access your education now, creating a positive workspace will always be important.

This guide will provide you with information on creating your own workspace and practical tips to make the best of your learning environment. **Specifically, you will learn to:**

❑   See the **workspace** as more than a desk and chair

❑   Determine the benefits and challenges of different learning environments

❑   Understand ergonomics and how to best set up your space

❑   Prioritize creating a positive workspace

❑   Build a plan that works for you

It is your learning environment

Looking At Your Learning Options

In-person Learning

Synchronous and Asynchronous Online

Hybrid Learning

Moving to North Bay? Staying closer to home? In North Bay but studying off campus?

Nipissing University offers several learning options for students to choose.

Your choice of learning environments will determine your workspace but it also allows students to consider other life commitments such as family and employment.

In-person Learning is the traditional learning environment in post-secondary.

- Lectures, labs, and seminars are on campus.
- Class field trips are done in person.
- Clinical and work placements are generally local.

Synchronous and Asynchronous Online learning has virtual components.

- Synchronous-virtual classes/sessions are live and may include recordings or posted material.
- Asynchronous-courses are delivered entirely via recordings and posted material.

Hybrid Learning is the choice to do some courses on campus and others online.

- In certain programs, certain courses are on campus while others are only available online.

Each workspace has its benefits

In-person Learning provides students with a built-in schedule that requires a certain of engagement which makes it less flexible

Workspace:
a little simpler to arrange since there is less time spent there

Synchronous and Asynchronous Online is less restrictive for how a student attends class but requires more self-discipline to engage in the course.

Synchronous and asynchronous learning offer flexibility for accessing the course using most devices but asynchronous learning has more material to view and may require a work station.

Workspace:
plays a bigger role in the student's success.

Hybrid Learning gives students a mix of experiences.

Your Learning Environment Determines Your Workspace Options

Each comes pros and cons

Each workspace has its benefits

Online learning allows students to work comfortably.   **BIG POSITIVE**

To take full advantage and still foster a productive environment, it is recommended that you build in a few rules**.**

Examples	How to Adapt
Getting up/taking naps	Find a routine that works and be consistent.
Getting dressed	Make an effort; you will feel more productive.
Keeping hunger at bay	Snacks on hand reduce interruptions but meals should be eaten elsewhere.
Staying hydrated	Caffeine is great but your brain needs more. **Water!**
Being with others	Pets rule! Spend time with them and those around you. It will energize you like nothing else.
Taking care	Make the most of your workspace by **getting away from your workspace.** Breaks are underrated but are important to reaching your goals. Level up and make it outdoors.

Adapting to Online Learning

...and the creature comforts

About those breaks....

Gratitude Break

Gratitude is defined as *a feeling of thankfulness and appreciation*

https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/gratitude

Everyone struggles and not everyone's definition of "gratitude" is the same. However, shifting your mindset to a more positive state can help support you throughout your day.

As part of your day, take a moment and reflect on something that brings you joy. Acknowledging the simplest things in life, like a cup of tea or a dog at your feet, is a great way to get an emotional "breath of fresh air".

This takes practice but well worth the effort.

Creating your learning environment

Creating a Positive Workspace

The Basics

There are some established best practices for creating a positive workspace and developing good work habits.

In his article, Jayson DeMers shares a comprehensive list of tips make the most of your learning space. (*EmailAnalytics (51 Working from Home Tips Proven to Boost Your Productivity (emailanalytics.com)*).

Although the article was written in response to the shift to working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is an **excellent resource** for anyone who wants to enhance productivity.

The following infographic lists the author's 10 favourite tips to boost productivity.

It's a great way to get started!

Creating your learning environment

Creating a Positive Workspace

Proven Tips

(*EmailAnalytics (51 Working from Home Tips Proven to Boost Your Productivity (emailanalytics.com)*)

Challenges to creating your ideal space

Adapting to New Technology

...and Accessing Support

Being new to Nipissing University, this may be the first time you are introduced to the institution's platforms and tools.

Some examples of university-wide tools include:

Microsoft 365, Blackboard WebAdvisor, Respondus LockDown Browser

General Support:

Online Learning Partners are upper-year Nipissing students who provide peer-to-peer support related to online learning. They can be reached at olp@nipissingu.ca.

For technical support, the Nipissing University Service Desk can be reached by clicking this link or visiting https://helpdesk.nipissingu.ca Click on "Create a New Ticket Now".

Some examples of specific adaptive technology tools include:

Kurzweil/Read the Web, TextAid, Dragon Naturally Speaking, MS Word Dictation, NTE

For help on these or other disability-related technology, email sas@nipissingu.ca or our Adaptive Technician, Paul Courville, directly at paulc@nipissingu.ca.

Challenges to creating your ideal space

Distraction and Time Management

Distractions are everywhere. Sharing space with others is a fact of life (especially for online learning).

They key is to manage your time so you can manage your space.

A schedule helps you organize your tasks AND helps keep others informed on when you need some distraction-reduced time. Try to work out an arrangement.

When making a schedule ask yourself:

- **When are you most productive?**

- **Where are you most productive and when is that space available?**

- **Are some noises and activities helpful to you?**   If a noisy cafeteria would help you focus (while a quiet library would be more distracting), plan accordingly.

- **Do you work better with others?** Ask around. Whether it's a virtual study group or just having friends around, keep this in mind when managing your time.

Other useful tips:

View the "Time Management" workshop found on the ATP: Launch list of resources.

Use headphones! Go outdoors to work! Keep snacks and water nearby!

Access the resources on the Student Learning and Transitions (SLT) webpage or email
 slt@nipissingu.ca to discuss academic support, including time management and tutoring.

Challenges to creating your ideal space

Staying Motivated

...easier said than done

Setting goals and staying on track can be a struggle for anyone. This is true when attending in-person classes but <u>especially when the learning itself is delivered online or delivered entirely through recordings and course work.</u>

If you don't see your current space as a place to work (and succeed) you will find it difficult to even start.

While it may not always be possible to physically change your environment, there are ways to help get you motivated.

The right mindset is crucial to a positive workspace.

As we work together in this workshop, you will be given some tips and tools to create a workspace that supports you achieving your goals.

Along the way, we encourage you to make some notes about any concerns or questions we haven't addressed. **We want to know about it.**

The SAS team is always available to help you.

About those breaks....

Gratitude Break

Whether it's giving ourselves a compliment when we look at the mirror or patting ourselves on the back for a job well done, self-appreciation can instantly change the way we view our inner selves and, furthermore, conquer the world outside of us.

(Madel, "Self-Appreciation: What Is It and Why Is It Important?", October 23, 2020, Self-Appreciation: What Is It and Why Is It Important? (trackinghappiness.com)

When you look inward, do you do so with kindness?

While self-gratitude is often viewed as "gloating" or "showing off", it is simply a fundamental acceptance that **we have value, just as we are.**

Each day, take a moment to acknowledge something positive about yourself or what you have accomplished. Sometimes all we can say is that we "got out of bed". Well, because those are the days when nothing comes easily—just facing the day is cause for gratitude.

When you give yourself permission to be self-appreciative, you realize that you have what it takes to succeed.

Ergonomics and how to apply it

Your workspace is more than a desk and chair

Merriam-Webster dictionary defines ergonomics as:

an applied science concerned with designing and arranging things people use so that the people and things interact most efficiently and safely

Ergonomics and how to apply it

Because we spend so much time sitting at a desk, looking at a computer and completing tasks, we owe it to ourselves to set up a workstation that will keep us feeling good throughout the semester

The following content looks at how to create a space with a good ergonomic setup. You may need to get creative, if you don't have all the equipment that is mentioned but taking the time to set up properly will go a long way!
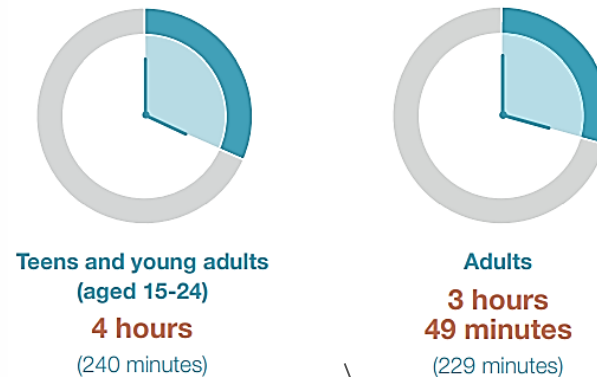
Our focus will be on:

- Use of handheld devices and laptops

- Eye strain

- The need for microbreaks and use of simple exercises

- Workstation setup

Making It YOUR workspace

...you will spend a lot of time there

Ergonomics and how to apply it

Handheld devices and tablets

Tech neck and how to avoid it!

Average time spent on devices per day

Teens and young adults (aged 15-24)
4 hours
(240 minutes)

Adults
3 hours 49 minutes
(229 minutes)

That add ups to **60** full days looking at a device for young adults and **58** for an adult. This takes a toll on our bodies

> For every inch of forward head posture, it can increase the weight of the head on the spine by an additional 10 pounds
> - *Kapandji, Physiology of Joints, Vol 3.*

Extended time on handheld devices can lead to:

- Upper back and shoulder pain
- Sharp, severe upper back muscle spasms
- Cervical nerve pinching pain
- Neurological symptoms radiating down arms and into hands

Reducing the risk of tech neck is about changing habits.

- Ban phone or tablet at certain times
- Bring device to eye height with an adjustable stand
- Make calls instead of texting
- Shorten time spent inputting
- Use a laptop/desktop computer for processing tasks

Data and images obtained from "Tech neck and how to avoid it", Posturite®

Reasons for eye strain (and some solutions)

Minimize eye fatigue

focus on different distances from time to time.

Apply the 20-20-20 rule:

every twenty minutes, look twenty feet away for twenty seconds

More tips→

Let your Accessibility Consultant know ASAP if you have disability-related factors that may contribute to eye strain.

Incorrect screen to eye distance The right distance for computer monitors and documents will depend on how clearly they can be read at a given distance, and the size and number of screens.	For most people arms distance to monitor screen seems to work. If your desk is not deep enough to place the monitor at an optimal viewing reach, you may want to consider a monitor arm.
Glare and reflections Glare and reflections at your workstation can cause eye discomfort and headaches.	Position the monitor to avoid awkward reflections or glare, but make sure you can still view it with good posture. Position desks at right angles to natural light sources. If this is not possible, you can close the window blinds to stop direct sunlight. For artificial light, try turning some of the lights down. As a last resort you may also find an antiglare screen filter solves the problem.
Incorrect computer screen display settings	Avoid poor character definition on your screen. Change your default font size and/or colour or consult your IT department if you are unable to do this. Try the palest green or blue as a background colour.
Poor vision	You may need glasses for reading and computer-based work without realizing. Consider getting your eyes tested.

Taken from: "Solutions for eye strain at work", Posturite

Helpful Hints for Workstation Setup

1. Screen distance should be an armlength away with the top of the screen at eye level

2. Place documents between the monitor and keyboard

3. Get a comfortable chair that is adjustable and has good lower back support. Use pillows if needed!

4. Keep your arms relaxed and parallel to the desk

5. Keep your wrists straight. Consider a wrist rest if needed.

6. Position your knees at or below hip level

7. Plant your feet firmly on the floor

105°- 120°

RECLINED SITTING
Leaning back slightly into your chair's backrest relaxes your back muscles and promotes blood circulation. Leaning back too far can result in awkward neck postures.

Ergonomics and how to apply it-Stretching

Taking Care of Your Body

...a few minutes of stretching goes a long way

Neck stretch exercise

- Sit or stand upright. Without lifting chin, glide head straight back until a stretch is felt
- Hold for slow count of 10
- Repeat 3 – 5 times

Neck exercise

- Drop head slowly to one side, taking ear towards shoulder until stretch is felt
- Hold for slow count of 10
- Repeat 3 – 5 times

Shoulder stretch exercise

- Raise shoulders towards ears until slight tension felt across tops of shoulders
- Hold for slow count of 10
- Repeat 3 – 5 times
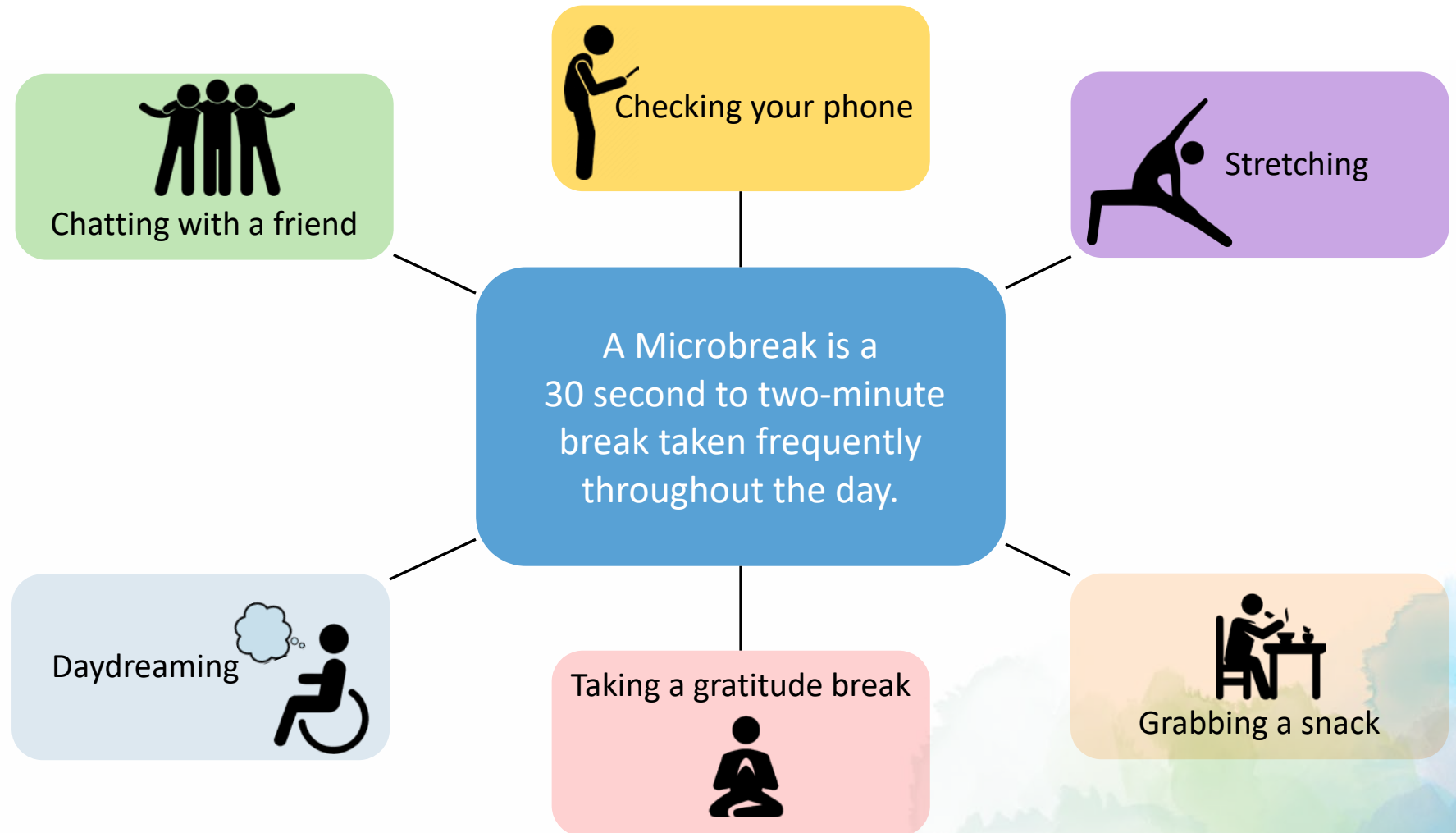
Shoulder roll exercise

- Sitting with back supported, slowly roll shoulders up and backwards in circular motion
- Repeat 10 times

Data and images obtained from "Tech neck and how to avoid it", Posturite®

Microbreaks

It's Easier Than You Think

Here are some ideas

Chatting with a friend

Checking your phone

Stretching

A Microbreak is a 30 second to two-minute break taken frequently throughout the day.

Daydreaming

Taking a gratitude break

Grabbing a snack

Microbreaks-Infographic_A4.pdf (posturite.co.uk)

The benefits of taking a Microbreak

The "Pomodoro Method" is discussed in the Time Management workshop. In short, this technique promotes breaking down work into intervals and taking short breaks in between.

Microbreaks offer many physical and cognitive benefits including:

- Giving your brain a rest

- Avoiding mental and physical fatigue

- Increasing oxygen and blood circulation

- Allowing time to process memories

- Increasing accuracy

- Improving engagement

- Boosting feelings of positivity

- Disrupting poor postures

- Lowering risk of aches and pains

Taking a Break
IS Productive

Microbreaks-Infographic_A4.pdf (posturite.co.uk)

Gratitude Break

Laughter can trigger the activation of neurotransmitters such as dopamine and serotonin, both of which are considered mood-boosting hormones.

Daniel Sgroi explains that laughter "fast tracks networks in the brain to help you concentrate and focus," working as the equivalent of a productivity boost. *(Sgroi, Daniel in "Why laughter can make you more productive at work", July 8, 2021, Why laughter can make you more productive at work (cnbc.com))*

What makes you laugh? Videos, jokes, music or hanging with funny people--whatever it is **make time for it.**

Question: What did the buffalo say when his son left for college?

Answer: Bi-son!

(that never gets old)

The power of positive starts now
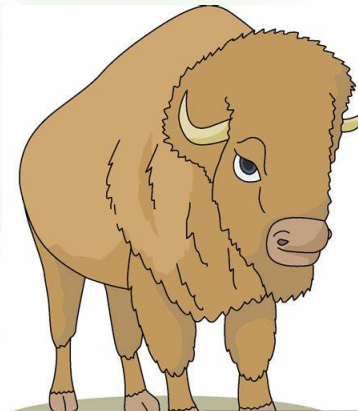
Some General Hints To Keep You On Track

Get connected.

- Ensure your technology is working your internet is reliable
- Install all the required applications in advance of the term.

Be clever with your surroundings.

- Keep a clean workspace
- Set yourself up with the resources you need before starting.
- Create a personal space. Include plants, flowers or even persona

Deal with distractions ASAP.

- If you are struggling with your concentration consider noise cancelling headsets or background music.

Take care of your well-being and seek some school-life balance.

Develop healthy habits

- Make sleep health a priority
- Eat well and drink a lot of water.
- Boost your activity level by moving to the best of your abilities.
- Get fresh air.

Productivity and success relies a lot on staying positive and focused during study and work time. Regardless of whether you will be learning online, in-person or a combination of both, **where** you learn and how you **prepare yourself** to learn, will play crucial role in the coming years.

There are exciting and challenging times ahead and we hope we have given you a sense of confidence about your ability to create a positive and productive workspace.

YOU GOT THIS!

Best of luck this semester!