

# 7 Tips for Coping with Zoom Fatigue

Being a college student in the time of a pandemic means having to adjust to many uncomfortable realities. One of the biggest changes that all Skidmore students have come to know well is Zoom video conferencing which has become the default standard for many classes, meetings, and appointments. Most students find themselves using Zoom multiple times a week and sometimes multiple times a day. While Zoom makes it easy to maintain safe social distancing, it comes with a myriad of drawbacks. Many students find Zoom to feel more impersonal, lacking the warmth and responsiveness of a traditional face-to-face class. Some find that frequent use of the software leaves them with headaches, eye pain, back and neck discomfort, increased stress, difficulty concentrating, social anxiety, and a sense of disconnectedness and disengagement. Some have begun referring to these experiences as Zoom fatigue.

So what can we do about it? If, for the time being, Zoom must be a part of our daily lives, here are some suggestions for reducing fatigue and coping with the resulting stress.

## 1 Get out of your chair

Part of the problem comes as the result of sitting in the same position staring at a fixed point. This has been a common concern for those who work on a computer all day, but for college students this used to be broken up with periods of having to move from classroom to classroom. Now that many of these classes can be attended in the same room and even from the same chair, we need to create our own opportunities to move around. Get up in-between meetings, stretch your back, your legs. Move about the room. Perhaps try a couple of push-ups or crunches. This will get the blood flowing and reduce that “stale” feeling at the end of the day.

## 2 Give your eyes a break

Eye strain is another major piece of the Zoom fatigue puzzle. Give your eyes a break by taking them off the screen every once in a while. This can be most easily done in-between meetings, of course. However, even during a class, it’s possible to discretely shift focus just to the side of the screen. This gives your eyes another object to focus on and will reduce the strain and possibly even help avoid long-term vision loss. When it comes to protecting your eyes between meetings, looking out of a window may be the best way to go, as you will have multiple focal points at different distances to give your eyes a nice workout.

## 3 Take mini screen vacations

This may be the most ambitious of all these tips for a college student, but it is possible to make time during our days and weeks which screens are not a part of. This may be most beneficial to do at night, as research finds that avoiding screen use 30 minutes before bed improves sleep quality. On those rare weekends when you are caught up on your homework, you may even be able to go an entire Saturday or Sunday without using phones or laptops. Of course, this is not something most of us could practice often, but even a few hours here and there can help to lessen that feeling that we are becoming more digital than real.

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## **Communicate your needs**

Many students already routinely take these breaks between and during their Zoom meetings, usually turning off video in the process. This sometimes leaves professors feeling like they are teaching to an empty classroom. There is nothing wrong with occasionally taking these breaks. However, if you do, be open about it. Shoot your professors an email before your next class letting them know you've been struggling with Zoom fatigue and may sometimes need to turn off your video to rest your eyes or stretch. Once you let them know, don't abuse this privilege. Keep these breaks brief, about 5 minutes or so, and turn your video back on so that the rest of the class knows you're still engaged.

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## **Tune in, not out**

Most of these tips so far fall in the category of "tuning out," which is okay if done briefly with the goal of reengaging immediately after taking a break. However, one approach that may be just as effective as taking a break is leaning into the conversation. Try participating more during your next Zoom class. Raise your hand, ask questions, offer your opinions. This may sound like a lateral move at first, but talking to a screen does feel a lot different than passively staring at one.

**6**

## **Hide self view**

In a typical in-person conversation, we don't find ourselves staring at a mirror image of our own face as we do on Zoom. This can lead to increased anxiety and feelings of insecurity. By hiding the view of our own video, we may have an easier time engaging in the conversation rather than worrying about how we look to others.

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## **Avoid multi-tasking**

Zoom makes it easy for us to browse the web, check email, and even start on homework while we're still in the middle of class. However, research shows that multitasking increases stress and contributes to fatigue. Before signing into the next Zoom meeting, close other browser tabs and turn off distracting notifications that can entice you to multitask.



## **Additional Information**

### **Neuropsychological Exploration of Zoom Fatigue**

<https://www.psychiatrictimes.com/view/psychological-exploration-zoom-fatigue>

### **How To Combat Zoom Fatigue**

<https://hbr.org/2020/04/how-to-combat-zoom-fatigue>

### **20 Scientific Tips To Beat Zoom Fatigue**

<https://www.scienceofpeople.com/zoom-fatigue/>

### **12 Tips That Actually Work To Help With Zoom Fatigue**

<https://www.vidyard.com/blog/zoom-fatigue-tips/>