With the number of COVID-19 cases growing exponentially and many countries in a state of lockdown, most of us are entering the second or third week of working from home. As the world fights a relentless battle against the pandemic, each of us is faced with our own daily struggles. With the line between professional and personal spaces blurring, many of us are finding it increasingly difficult to juggle deadlines with homeschooling, online lectures with household chores, and writing papers with attending to pets.

Having no physical office space to go to, no face-to-face meetings, no coffee breaks with the team, no animated discussions about a new project, the typical work day looks rather bleak, and for many, productivity is dropping to an all-time low. For researchers, the lockdowns also mean no lab work, conferences getting cancelled, clinical trials suspended, and face-to-face interviews postponed indefinitely. Naturally, you may not be able to make adequate progress on your current project. But this does not mean you cannot use your time productively.

Here are some tips on how you can be productive even if you cannot work on your research project at the moment due to lockdowns:

**1. Keep yourself updated:**Remember all those articles you’ve bookmarked but never read? Or those abstracts which you read hurriedly, meaning to get back to reading the full text when you have more time? Now is the time to revisit your bookmarks or your reference manager, and get some serious reading done. Give yourself a break from reading COVID-19 news and create a window of time to keep yourself updated on literature from your field. Now would also be the best time to keep track of the goings-on in the scholarly world by staying up to date with industry news and trends.

**2. Attend virtual events:**It is often difficult for researchers to accommodate any events in their busy schedule. But now you have the opportunity to attend virtual events such as webinars and workshops that several organizations and universities are conducting. You can attend these events from the comfort of your home without having to worry about travel grants or logistical aspects such as making arrangements for your travel or worrying about leaving your children behind. In addition to webinars directly related to your field, think of exploring some around self-care, mental health, career development, and other topics that will equip you with life skills to give yourself a refreshing change for work.

**3. Revisit that shelved project:** Take out that unfinished project, dig up the long-forgotten data you had collected, and put your thinking cap on and try to figure out if you can work on it. A fresh perspective might actually help you come up with new ideas. You can check for newer published studies on the topic you were working on to see if there is a possibility for your data to build on them. Sometimes a slight change in focus is all it may take to revive an old project.

**4. Learn a new skill:**Always had doubts about effective ways to conduct a literature review? Want to enhance your project management skills? Have reviewers often been critical of how you write your methods section? Now that you are saving on the commuting time, you can invest it in improving these skills so that you are better equipped to make progress with your project once the world is back to normal. Online course platforms like Coursera, edX, Udacity, Udemy, etc. offer a plethora of courses that you can choose from. Some of these courses are affiliated to universities. Thus, these might be certified courses that you can include in your CV. What is more, some online course platforms are offering free or discounted courses during the pandemic. So, [explore them now](https://www.editage.com/insights/courses-and-guides/catalog?utm_source=website&utm_medium=internal_related_reading&utm_campaign=article)!

**5. Focus on writing:**When you are in your lab or taking classes at the university, it is difficult to find time for focused writing. If you’re a PhD student, this is a good time to dedicate a few hours to writing every week. For those who are past the PhD hurdle, this could be a good time to draft a new proposal or complete your manuscript. Block larger chunks of time during early mornings or late evenings when the rest of the house is sleeping or busy watching television.If you’re the kind who gets easily distracted while writing, there are [a bunch of bootcamps, productivity apps, and online meet up groups](https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-00917-5) that will help you focus and see your writing tasks to completion.

**6. Build connections:**With social distancing, people are spending more time on social media. Take advantage of this opportunity to network. Take advantage of this opportunity to network. Try to make your social media presence stronger. Everybody is now talking about COVID-19 and sharing the challenges they’re facing, so it’s really quite easy to join the conversations right now and make yourself known. You can also reach out to potential collaborators on social media or even email. Since everybody's working from home and likely missing having people around, they would be more open to engaging in conversations.

All said and done, don’t feel pressured to be productive.As Fay Lin, a mental health advocate, said in a recent tweet: “[It is ok to struggle with productivity, mourn the experiences that were cancelled due to social distancing, and feel anxious of the uncertainty](https://twitter.com/xiaofei_lin/status/1242494551144558592).” Use this time to take a break and hit the reset button on your life. Long hours, late nights, failed experiments, missed deadlines, working weekends, little time for family and friends: your life has probably revolved around these since the time you started your career. Now that you have the time, why not take it easy for a bit? Take rest, take time out for yourself, consciously practice self-care, enjoy a candlelight dinner with your spouse or play time with the kids, have video calls with your friends, and use this time to recharge and rejuvenate yourself.