THE McGRAW CENTER
for TEACHING & LEARNING

328 Frist Campus Center
Princeton University, Princeton, NJ

Technology Tips:
Studying in the 21st Century

You can find scholarly resources from your dorm room, communicate instantly with friends in California, and get an immediate answer to a factual question using Google. Yet the technology that facilitates so many activities for you can also be a source of distraction and even inefficiency. How can you make technology work for you?

Limit Distractions from Technology

- **Set out a certain time** of day that you will devote toward "fun with technology"—browsing the Internet, playing games, chatting with friends, or checking email. If you allocate time for this, you will not be tempted to let these activities interrupt your schedule.

- When you need to concentrate on your studies, **find quiet spaces**, and leave your cell phone, laptop, and other electronic devices at home.

- **Check email only a few times per day**, and only handle it once: respond, archive, and/or delete.

- **Limit the number of listservs** you are on so that you can control the amount of 'junk mail' you receive and must sort through.

- **To limit your time IM-ing**, use occasional emails to keep in touch with friends from other schools.

- If all else fails, unplug the Ethernet cord, turn off the wireless connection, or work in an area without wireless. You might also **make a habit of turning off the computer** when not in use.

- **Assess what technology is truly needed** when you study, and proceed from there. Often all you need is the relevant books and papers to outline your paper, start a problem set, or practice conjugations. Don't discount the value of a clear, well-written textbook with loads of examples or diagrams to follow.

Use Technology to Your Advantage

- When looking for scholarly articles and resources, **go to the library homepage** rather than Googling. From there you can narrow your search, find legitimate peer-reviewed articles and accomplish quite a bit of research in a short amount of time.

- **Search the web with clear goals** in mind. What information do you need? What information do you already have? It is very easy to get thrown off course on the information super highway, so the more specific the question you ask, the better off you will be.

- **Put a cap** on how much time you spend looking up things online. If you have searched three to five sites and are getting nowhere, you are probably better off talking to a TA or professor about your question.

- **Use your computer to monitor** your computer. Several different and free programs (e.g. Slife Web and Personal Task Manager) can track your computer usage and generate reports revealing how much time you spend on your computer and what you're doing. It can be quite revealing.

- **Consider the source** of online information. A web page created by a professor is likely to be more valuable than one created by a high school class. The better pages often contain more information, are more detailed, and make more sense.

- If you are studying a foreign language, you can **use the Internet to read foreign language newspapers**. This is an excellent way to practice the language, and learn more about the culture.

- Your professors place slides, articles, and other needed resources on the class Blackboard site. **Save time by printing out several weeks of class materials** at a time rather than printing several times a week.