



BLAIR ACADEMY

DISTANCE LEARNING
GUIDEBOOK

SPRING 2020

From the Academic Office

Distance learning? What is it?

In some ways, distance learning is no different than classroom learning: your teacher will set the targets, provide the resources you need to learn and direct you to show that you've done that learning in a variety of ways.

In other ways, distance learning will feel really different from being in the classroom with your teacher and peers; in order to help you through this transition, your teachers are going to try to make your responsibilities a little easier by approaching their work with you in a unified way; as one example of this, we will use Google Classroom across the board. Each week, every class will have four learning units to complete. A learning unit has three parts:

- 1) A set of learning outcomes you are supposed to achieve;
- 2) Resources to help you reach these outcomes (such as readings or instructional videos); and
- 3) Tasks to complete which demonstrate you have reached the outcomes. We call these “deliverables” because they each need to be “delivered” or completed at a specific time after your session in a particular course.

Within this basic structure, a wide range of learning experiences can occur and your teachers have been thoughtfully considering what content and resources to provide you so you can accomplish the tasks they set out.

Distance learning relies more upon YOU to move things forward, whereas, at Blair, you may have felt more as though it was the classroom schedule that kept things moving. This is where you might feel the biggest change during this period. Your teachers are still here to help; you will still have some form of meeting with your class, but ultimately, you will need to structure your day to accomplish what needs to be done without the familiarity of an in-person class day.

Our goal has been to try to limit screen-time where possible and to keep the workload manageable for students as we make this transition. Each learning unit should represent about an hour's worth of work in total, and we've encouraged faculty to avoid additional homework on top of that hour if at all possible.

And, don't forget, Blair is still here! Yes, we might not be in classrooms together or walking by the magnolia tree as it first blooms, but the same faculty and friends whom you leaned on to navigate the day-to-day of life at boarding school are still just an email, text or video conference away. While it is true that you will do more of your learning in the absence of others, we all hope to stay closely connected through the coming months in a variety of ways—some scheduled and others more spontaneous!

What do I need to do?

Beginning on Thursday, March 26, the following distance learning expectations will go into effect.

- 1) All courses will be organized using Google Classroom. Over the next week, invitations will come from teachers who have not previously used Google Classroom. Please make sure to join any new Blair Classroom when invited.
- 2) Set up a location in your house for distance learning. It should be free from distraction (away from other technology), have enough space to allow you to work on paper while video conferencing and have access to the strongest possible wi-fi signal. Also, try to ensure you are facing the brightest light in the room so your face is viewable for video sessions.
- 3) Check to ensure you brought all your materials home for spring break. If you need something that is currently at school, make sure to record it in the Google Form sent by Mr. Pagotto earlier in the week so it can be mailed to you.
- 4) Build a schedule for yourself. Work in short bursts, intermixed with other activities/responsibilities you need to do. While virtual meeting time is required for most students as scheduled, other aspects of distance learning are more flexible. Think about what is going to be most productive and healthy for your needs!

What is the schedule for distance learning?

A copy of the weekly schedule for distance learning accompanies this guide. Before looking at the timing of the blocks, the most important times for distance learning are as follows:

Learning Unit	“Materials” due to go “live” in Google Classroom	Includes virtual meeting?	Deliverable due date in Google Classroom
1	8:00 a.m. EDT Monday	No	Tuesday 8:00 p.m. EDT
2	8:00 a.m. EDT Tuesday	Yes (Tuesday or Wednesday)	Wednesday 8:00 p.m. EDT
3	8:00 a.m. EDT Wednesday	No	Thursday 8:00 p.m. EDT
4	8:00 a.m. EDT Thursday	Yes (Thursday or Friday)	Friday 8:00 p.m. EDT

Students have 36 hours to complete learning units once they are posted. All learning units post at the same time Monday through Thursday, and any deliverables to complete from the unit are due at the same time.

The rest of the daily schedule is designed to help you accomplish these learning units. Note that there are two types of blocks in the schedule:

- 1) Faculty Office Hours: These are times during the day when we recommend you should work independently on the learning unit. Your teacher will be actively available for questions and assistance via email/chat/video conferencing. These are not required commitments for you but represent a way to structure your day somewhat similarly to how things normally go at Blair.
- 2) Virtual Meetings: All classes have two virtual meetings a week, during which your teacher will send a link for a Google Meet session. During these sessions, you will engage in learning directly with your teacher and classmates. Typically, these sessions will be a response to things you've done during other learning units, like reading or problem-solving. These sessions will be recorded and posted to Google Classroom so that students unable to attend can still review what was covered.

Will attendance be taken?

Class attendance (in order to earn credit) will be measured in two ways.

The first way is through the submission of deliverables for each learning unit. Submit the deliverable on time and you will be marked as having “attended class.”

For the second and fourth learning unit, a virtual meeting will take the place of a deliverable and will be a requirement for students in the course. In these cases, students will be marked as having “attended class” for participating in the virtual meeting as outlined on the daily schedule. It is possible that the requirement for attendance could be anything between a full hour session to a short five-minute check-in for attendance purposes and a set of individual follow-up discussions with the teacher at appointed times in the block.

We recognize that some students, due to time zone differences or challenges with Internet access, will not be able to attend virtual sessions. Students who find themselves in this situation will be excused from the attendance requirement of a virtual meeting while still having the opportunity to review the session from a recording after the fact.

What if a student is sick or needs to be absent for another reason?

Parents of students who are not able to participate in distance learning on a daily basis either due to illness or other conflicts should be in touch with Carm Mazza (mazzac@blair.edu) or Kathy Otinsky (otinsk@blair.edu) in the student life office.

Students will have full access to what was expected of them that day from their teachers and can begin making up work when they are able to do so. Deadlines on deliverables will be extended for students in these circumstances, and academic monitors will be available to help students set a plan for getting caught up.

What should international students do about distance learning, due to the time-zone differences?

Students who are not able to attend virtual meetings, due to time-zone differences, are excused from the attendance expectation. Please make sure to review the recorded session when it becomes available.

Blair will offer office hours specifically to support international students from 8-9 a.m. EDT on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Faculty will prioritize virtual extra help and answering questions from international students during those windows, in addition to being available during the other times assigned by class in the daily schedule. Of course, if these times present a challenge as well, please reach out to your teacher who will help you figure out a time that might work for the two of you to connect.

In some cases, international students may have difficulty accessing Google tools and services based upon where they live in the world. We have asked students to provide alternate email addresses in the Google Form sent by Mr. Pagotto last week and will support students who need help accessing learning materials on a case-by-case basis.

Google Meet and privacy concerns

When teachers record Google Meet sessions, they may include video clips of any student who speaks during the class. While we would encourage our students to use these virtual sessions as a means of connecting with the community, we understand that this may present a privacy concern for some families, especially given that the sessions will be recorded for others to view.

If there is a concern with being recorded during a virtual session, students may choose to turn off their camera. Any additional concerns about Google Meet can be addressed to Mr. Pagotto (pagotr@blair.edu) or Mr. Molteni (molten@blair.edu).

How can I get extra help while distance learning?

Your first person to go to for support and guidance remains your classroom teacher. They are always just an email, text, call or video conference away. We've scheduled blocks each week specifically for office hours to help with your learning units. You may want to schedule time with your teacher outside of those hours, and that's okay! Be as flexible with your own availability as you can, since we are all in different situations now as opposed to when we are at Blair together. We'll make sure you have the support you need while doing distance learning.

What if I fall behind or need an extension?

If you need an extension on individual learning units or assessments, please discuss it directly with your teacher first. You will find them very willing to help!

If you are getting overwhelmed with work or missing deadlines regularly, you should reach out to your academic monitor for assistance in setting a plan for doing your work in a timely fashion. They may recommend you meet with Mrs. Leddy virtually to develop strategies for organizing your time.

Will there still be grades? How will we be assessed?

Students will still receive grades on the 6.0 scale during this period. In addition to deliverables counting as daily attendance for class, some of the work you do for learning units will be graded and incorporated into your average. Your teachers will offer clear guidance about how this will occur for specific classes at the start of this period.

There will be some quizzes and tests, but teachers also plan to assess using other formats, such as papers, projects and presentations, to avoid the challenges that come with giving tests in a non-proctored environment.

Students who focus on meeting the learning outcomes each day and doing a thorough job with the deliverables will be prepared to demonstrate their knowledge on any form of assessment that your teacher will provide. The signature assessment model asks students to demonstrate knowledge in a number of ways beyond just cumulative tests, so Blair students have plenty of experience with being assessed through different formats. If at any point you are unsure of how you are being graded, please reach out to Mr. Molteni (molteni@blair.edu).

What are the rules about cheating and plagiarism during this time?

Our honor code, which all students sign at the start of the school year, holds true for distance learning as well. As a reminder to all students, here is the text of that honor code pledge:

I understand that academic honesty is fundamental to my success and reputation as a student and citizen at Blair Academy. Moreover, I understand that guidelines for what may be acceptable in terms of collaboration on work in—and outside of—the classroom will vary from class to class and teacher to teacher. Accordingly, I accept that it is my personal responsibility to understand and abide by the particular expectations of each of my teachers in this regard and to ask if I am at all unclear about them.

As a general rule of thumb, we offer these basic guidelines to students to try to avoid any violations of the honor code during this time.

- 1) Ensure that all work you submit for a class is your own. If you are using anyone else's ideas, words or overall structure for an assignment, you must cite them as a source. If you need help with citations when writing assignments, reach out to your teachers.
- 2) Pay close attention to what resources are approved for learning on a daily basis and can be used for deliverables and assessments. Since we are on the Internet for almost all learning, there are a wide range of resources out there, all easily searchable. Remember that your teachers care about what you can do and do not care about what can be done by an online translator, math problem-solving program or paper written by someone else.
- 3) Avoid sharing your individual work with others unless directed to do so by your teacher directly. Separately, don't ask others to share their work directly with you for viewing. Asking questions of

each other is a great way to learn, but simply looking at and copying another's work is not okay.

- 4) If asked to take tests and quizzes in the home environment, remember that your integrity and character is of top concern, even more than your performance on that test. Following the expectations of teachers and remembering that you are "on your honor" in those situations is something we expect of all Blair students.

If a teacher has a concern about an academic honor violation, he or she will first speak with you directly about what part of your work presents a problem, typically with the department chair of the discipline as well. Afterward, potential violations will be addressed by the Academic Honor Committee using the same process as previously outlined in the student handbook. The main difference is that the meeting will happen virtually during this period of distance learning.

Will I still have an advisor and monitor during distance learning?

Yes! Your advisor will be in touch weekly for a brief check in, either by email, text, phone or video chat. We have two blocks in the daily schedule specifically reserved for advisors and their advisees to catch-up, but that's not the only time you could use. They are still going to want to be in the loop on your life, on how things are going and what the transition to distance learning has been like for you.

Monitors will continue to support students with academic issues, communicate with families when additional support is needed and guide students through any decisions about course registration which need to be made for the 2020-21 school year. They are another great resource to reach out to if you need help during this transition period!

What can parents do to help support students during distance learning?

- 1) Help your son/daughter identify a good working environment for distance learning. Discourage them from doing distance learning from a bed or couch, since students will likely need to be writing simultaneously while working on the Internet.
- 2) Minimize distractions around the workspace (television, video games, phones, etc...) between 8:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., if at all possible. We expect some students may need to assist with more tasks at home than while at Blair; to that end, we've built flexibility into the daily schedule and given a longer time for submission of assignments to help students in a variety of circumstances.
- 3) Ask your child about what they are learning. Help identify what is going well and what needs improvement in their overall work. Encourage them to reach out for help as outlined in this guide.
- 4) Avoid getting too involved in the end product of their work. Offer to be a sounding board for a paper topic or check over their math problems if you know the topics. Practice vocabulary for a foreign language or read an article together for a history project. We believe that students' engagement will be at the highest level and that our approach with them will be most successful if

they have agency over their work; your support of and interest in your student's work is invaluable as they engage in distance learning, and that support must be carefully balanced with the student's need to maintain some autonomy in this process.

- 5) Advocate for what you think is needed with your child's advisor, monitor, etc...If you think the transition to distance learning is not going well, don't hesitate to let us know early on. We'll be keeping track of student progress, and monitors will reach out actively to share any concerns we have. Please feel comfortable to initiate a conversation with your student's monitor whenever necessary.

How can I get academic support during distance learning?

Mrs. Leddy, our director of academic support, will still be available to meet with students via Google Meet during the academic day, between the hours of 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Students who have previously been meeting with her on a weekly basis will receive an email from her inviting them to set up times to continue that work.

Any student can email Mrs. Leddy (leddy@blair.edu) to ask for assistance in organizing their academic work during this period. The end of this guidebook includes a longer update from Mrs. Leddy to help students and families work together to get organized for distance learning.

How will classroom accommodations work during distance learning?

Many accommodations are specific to the details of a classroom environment and will have limited application to a distance learning environment, such as preferential seating or quiet room testing. One more commonly asked question is how the extended time accommodation relates to the deadlines for deliverables. Extended time accommodations at Blair are only for timed tests and quizzes. We do not modify student work loads as part of accommodation plans.

Students with extended time accommodations will not automatically be granted additional time to submit deliverables to teachers during distance learning. All students may ask for an extension from their teachers if they feel they cannot meet a deadline. If students are asked to take timed tests or quizzes for a course, extended time accommodations would apply in those circumstances.

Any additional concerns on this topic can be addressed directly to Mrs. Leddy (leddy@blair.edu) or Mr. Molteni (molten@blair.edu).

From the Student Life Office

The members of the student life office are available to students, much like when school is in session. Students are welcome to reach out to Mr. Mazza (mazzac@blair.edu), Mrs. Ryerson (ryersa@blair.edu), Ms. Wilson (wilsoca@blair.edu) or Mr. Pagotto (pagotr@blair.edu) at any time.

Students are welcome to share ideas for virtual activities and community building with any member of the student life office. Mrs. Ryerson will be in regular contact with underclass council members and Ms. Wilson will be in regular contact with Senior Class Council members. They will also connect with club leaders regarding ideas, initiatives and announcements to sustain the forward momentum of campus organizations to the extent possible.

Monday School Meetings will continue to be run by Mr. Pagotto, and students will receive a link to the video on Monday mornings.

Friday School Meetings will continue to be run by the Senior Class Council and students will receive a link to the video on Friday mornings.

Please continue to check your email regularly for updates regarding various processes such as prefect application, and, later in April, for information regarding housing and self-nomination for leadership roles such as the Rules and Discipline Committee, Academic Honor Committee and Blue and White Key Society.

With regard to disciplinary processes, it should go without saying that students are expected to conduct themselves with honesty, integrity, respect and good judgment during this period of distance learning. We trust students will evince the sort of character expected of a Blair student and that no further action will need to be taken. If, however, students do not act in accordance with the School's values and expectations, the disciplinary system may need to be invoked, including the possibility of virtual Rules and Disciplinary Committee hearings.

Lastly, in the event school does not reopen for the remainder of the year, we will be in touch about the process of shipping, retrieving or storing students' belongings.

Counseling Services During Distance Learning

Mrs. Acker and Mrs. Thomas are still a resource available to students for consultation during distance learning and are happy to hear from students. Students may need extra attention from adults and may want to talk about their concerns, fears and questions. Mrs. Acker and Mrs. Thomas can also provide guidance to mental health supports in your hometown if therapy is necessary.

Although our counselors cannot provide teletherapy, due to legal and licensing restrictions, they can help direct you to mental health resources. They are not available for crisis intervention or emergency response. In the event of a mental health emergency, please contact your physician or go to your nearest emergency room.

You can schedule a consultation appointment by contacting them through email, and they will set up an appointment with you during school hours (8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. EST).

Mrs. Acker: ackerl@blair.edu

Mrs. Thomas: thomaa@blair.edu

From the Athletic Office

Even during distance learning, and perhaps more importantly at this time, Blair believes in the value of student wellness and exercise. Varsity coaches have shared or will share fitness plans and exercise programs with their teams, and afternoon activity leaders may share assignments to maintain continuity with their respective programs. If students have any questions, they should email their program leader directly. Any students who wish to access additional exercise plans may reach out to Mr. Clavel (clavep@blair.edu) or download one of these recommended apps:

[Nike Training App](#)

[Adidas Training App](#)

[Daily Yoga App](#)

From the College Counseling Office

Reaching your college counselor...

In the coming weeks, we look forward to conferring with you through Google Meet, our distance learning platform for video conferencing. Most of these virtual meetings will take place during the traditional class day, with counselors setting up meetings during your free blocks, just as we have done in the past. For students in different time zones, college counselors will work with individual students directly to arrange mutually convenient times.

Using Google Meet is actually very simple. When you receive a calendar invite from your counselor, it will have a link to Google Meet. When it's time for your meeting, simply click on the link and you'll be connected face-to-face with your counselor. In the coming days, you will be receiving an invite...simply agree to the meeting time and our meetings will occur in seamless fashion.

If you need to get a hold of a college counselor for questions about testing, interview or other items related to the college process, please send an email to one of the following:

Lew Stival (stival@blair.edu)

Joe Mantegna (mantej@blair.edu)
Shana Russell (russes@blair.edu)

From the Academic Support Office

The following tips and advice are suggested to make online learning more effective:

- **Use a dedicated work space for your work.** A desk or table are ideal spaces (avoid doing any work in bed!).
- **Get your technology in order before your virtual class begins.** Charge your devices daily and make sure you have your books and support materials near you during your virtual class.
- **Create a morning routine.** Get out of bed, shower and get dressed. Although tempting to stay in pajamas all day, you will be more efficient when dressed for the day ahead.
- **Use the scheduled breaks throughout the day for non-screen time.** Take a walk outside, eat a meal/snack, and try to avoid screen use.
- **Use a weekly schedule/to-do list to keep track of assignments that are due.** I have attached a schedule [here](#) that will allow you to track your assignments each day.
- **If you are working in your room, make a sign for your door to remind family members/younger siblings of when you will be in your virtual classroom.** Use a red piece of paper (means you are online and should not be disturbed) or a green piece of paper (means it is okay to enter).
- **Keep in touch with your faculty.** Your teachers are ready and willing to help you. Those who ask for help are the most successful!

Finally:

- Check in with Mrs. Leddy (ledhya@blair.edu) if you have any questions or concerns about how to use your time and resources effectively. I will be available for virtual meetings each day! Please email me to set up a scheduled time to talk each week.

The following are apps and extensions that may be helpful with online learning:

Note Keeper

Keep by Google: This is like post-it notes on steroids. Take notes on a digital sticky, which you can export into a Google Doc to continue to develop thoughts that get too long. To organize notes, tag them with a common topic or color, and schedule reminders for date-sensitive subjects.

Speech-to-Text

Chrome

- **Voice Typing tool:** Built into Google Docs and Google Slides, this hidden gem is accessible from the “tools” pull-down and uses your Chromebook’s built-in mic to work. This works best in a flexible classroom where students can find quiet corners to work, or for doing homework.
- **[VoiceIn](#):** This extension adds a microphone to the browser for voice-to-text functionality outside of Google Docs. After speaking into the microphone normally, words show up.

Microsoft

- **Dictate:** Activate this button—built into Office 365 (Word, PowerPoint and Outlook—and then speak into the built-in microphone on your device.

Tools to Stay on Task

These tools are based on the Pomodoro Technique: work steadily for a set time interval, then take a five-minute break. These programs can help students eliminate distractions while they work by blocking access to content that isn’t used for learning.

- **[Block Site](#)** (Chrome extension)
- **[Stay Focused](#)** (Chrome extension)
- **[Strict Workflow](#)** (Chrome extension)
- **[SelfControl](#)** (Apple)

Help with Online Reading:

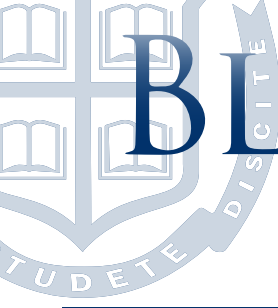
Text-to-speech functionality is available on most devices, and it can help provide audio to aid easily-distracted students when reading long passages.

Chrome

- **[Read & Write](#)** extension: Reads words, passages or whole documents aloud with highlighting, and displays the dictionary meaning of words.
- **[Mercury Reader](#)** extension: Clear the clutter from your web page! Activate this extension to strip away everything except the text—including side captions, text boxes or columns.

















Microsoft

- **Immersive Reader:** This Word Online tool, found under the View menu, reads text aloud.

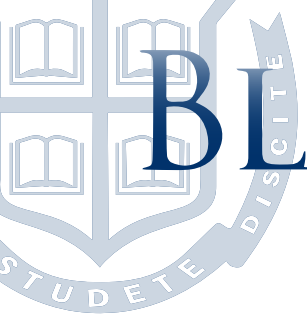


BLAIR ACADEMY

Distance Learning Schedule




Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8 AM	Materials Posted Monday–Thursday @8AM				
8:00–9:00	Department Meetings (8:30)	International Office Hours	Department Meetings (8:30)	International Office Hours	Department Meetings (8:30)
9:00–10:00	School Meeting 	A 	E 	D	D 
10:00–11:00	A	B 	F 	C 	G 
11:00–12:00	B	F	A	E	School Meeting Lunch 
12:00–1:00	Lunch	Lunch Advisory	Lunch	Lunch Advisory	B 
1:00–2:00	C	C 	G 	F	E 
2:00–3:00	D	D 	B	A 	F 
3:00–4:00	E	G	C	G	Free Block
4–10					
10 PM		Assignments Due Tuesday–Friday @ 10PM			

Key	Free/Homework Time	Class Office Hours (faculty available)	Required Class Time	Vimeo 	Google Meet 
-----	--------------------	--	---------------------	---	---



BLAIR ACADEMY

Distance Learning: Opening Days

Time	Thursday 3/26	Friday 3/27
9:00–11:00	Faculty Organization Meetings	Faculty Organization Meetings
11:00–12:00	School Meeting 	D 
12:00–1:00	Lunch Advisory	Lunch
1:00–2:00	A 	E 
2:00–3:00	B 	F 
3:00–4:00	C 	G 

Key	Free/Homework Time	Required Class Time	Vimeo 	Google Meet 
-----	--------------------	---------------------	---	---

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:00	Materials	Posted	Materials	Posted	
8:30-9:00		Intl Office Hours (8-9am)		Intl Office Hours (8-9am)	
9:00-10:00	A	F	B	D	E
10:00-11:00	School Meeting	G	C	G	School Meeting
11:00-12:00	B	A (Virtual)	E (Virtual)	B (Virtual)	G (Virtual)
12:00-1:00	LUNCH	LUNCH/ADVISORY	LUNCH	LUNCH/ADVISORY	LUNCH
1:00-2:00	C	B (Virtual)	F (Virtual)	A (Virtual)	D (Virtual)
2:00-3:00	D	C (Virtual)	G (Virtual)	F	E (Virtual)
3:00-4:00	E	D (Virtual)	A	C (Virtual)	F (Virtual)

Block	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
A					
B					
C					
D					
E					
F					
G					