



Balancing Your Time

How can you accommodate all your study, social, work and domestic responsibilities?

The balancing act

As a university student, you may be taking several papers, working part-time, and trying to balance an active family life all at the same time. Fear not... it can be done! Balancing study, work and home requires finely tuned time management skills, motivation, and effective study skills.

Motivation

Balancing many commitments is only successful when accompanied by setting realistic goals and being committed. You must be motivated to achieve your goals, especially when things get difficult. Concentrate on the things you are trying to achieve at varsity and always dwell on the positive aspects of your abilities. If you think you can achieve something, you can!

Study skills

It is important to make every minute count when balancing many commitments so focus on becoming an effective learner by improving your study skills. Talk to the staff at Student Learning Development for advice on time management and sharpening your study skills.

Become an active listener in lectures

When you sit in lectures make sure you are actively processing what the lecturer says and not just writing everything down without thinking. Prepare for lectures by reading the background material for each lecture, and review your notes from the previous lecture. When sitting in lectures or reading course material look to answer questions such as, “what are the central ideas”, and ‘what arguments support or detract from the arguments presented’. Right after a lecture, jot down all the key points you can recall without looking at your notes. Then, check your recall against your lecture notes. What did you recall correctly? What did you miss? This exercise will help you remember that main ideas from a lecture.

Time management

Having an overview of the big semester picture will help you to remember upcoming goals that may be competing for time. Semester planning keeps you focused and motivated.

A weekly timetable or diary allows close monitoring of your time. To create a weekly timetable follow these easy steps:

- Fill in your commitments for each day (class time, time for assignments, sport etc.).
- Plan your study time when you are able to concentrate most effectively.
- Plan to study in the environment that suits you best (avoid places you can be easily distracted).
- Plan recreation time to complement your study time; don't relax, exercise or do the shopping or housework at the time when you study best.

Spend a few minutes at the beginning or end of each day to compile your daily plan. Daily planning helps you to maintain an immediate focus on the tasks you want to get done.

Do you feel you waste a lot of time? Try this exercise: Keep a log of how you spend your time for a week. How long do you spend waiting for things, day dreaming or procrastinating? Where are you? When do you tend to do this? With whom? Then ask yourself, why? Look for trends in your behaviour that might help you to reduce wasted time.

Personal management

We all know how easy it is to plan our times and goals, but not follow through. In order to balance all your responsibilities you must be committed to them even when the going gets tough. The most difficult part about time management is personal management.

Try some of the following ideas to keep yourself on track:

- Remind yourself of your long-term goals. They are why you are working so hard.
- Hang a “do not disturb” sign near your study area.
- Record your revision notes as voice notes, and listen to them while driving, walking or doing housework.
- Study in short bursts of time. Most people can only concentrate effectively for about 20 minutes.
- Set rewards for yourself for successfully completing blocks of work.
- Be realistic about your planning by breaking large tasks into smaller ones.
- Delegate domestic or work tasks (as you reasonably can) in order to free up time.
- Practice saying NO to yourself and to others to remain in control of your time.
- Say to yourself “I can do it” at least once a day.