

Juggling studying with other commitments

<http://www.screencast.com/t/3Tii6htM>

Transcript

Introduction:

Welcome to this tutorial on juggling studying with other commitments from the University of Reading Study Advice team. The tutorial is designed for you to go through at your own pace and you can pause it at any time.

Slide 1: A balancing act: If you are combining studying with a job, parenting or caring responsibilities, the time and work required for your studies may seem overwhelming. But, although you may have more commitments than some of the students around you, your experience of working or of looking after family members means that you are used to organising your time. This tutorial will explain how to use these skills so that you can balance the demands of academic study and your other commitments.

Slide 2: Plan your workload: The key to success is organising your time. Have a look at the recommended study time for your modules, and put time aside for studying in a weekly schedule. Start to plan as soon as coursework has been set and work around any clashes. Break your tasks down into manageable chunks, and use these to set yourself weekly and daily goals. Remember not to be too hard on yourself – inevitably, there will be some clashes and unforeseen circumstances. Building buffer time into your weekly schedule is a good way of dealing with delays you had not anticipated. Protect those precious study times by letting family and friends know when you are not available, and ask them to support you, if necessary by taking over your other commitments during these times. For more advice, click on the link to watch our tutorial on making a study timetable.

Slide 3: Make space for study: Decide on where to study as well as when to study. Find a study space that works for you. If you can, keep it as a space just for studying. Use a simple system to file your study materials so that you have easy access to them. Defining study times and spaces also means defining times when you don't study and spaces where you do not work. That way it doesn't feel like your whole life's been taken over by studying. You



need down-time as well as study time. Stress and a lack of sleep will make you less productive.

Slide 4: Study effectively: The quality of your study time is more important than the quantity. Use the time that you have effectively.

- Identify what study activities take up a lot of your time, and become more efficient in these. For example, you can save time on academic reading by being selective about what you read and setting yourself reading goals. For more advice on how to study more efficiently, have a look at the study guides on our website.
- Are there any opportunities for studying that you are not using? Don't underestimate what you can achieve by using small pockets of time, and make sure you are prepared for when these come up. Make a list of small tasks that don't require a lot of time, and always have something to read to hand. Use longer stretches of time for more complex tasks such as data analysis and writing, and set yourself clear goals.
- Set yourself realistic standards. At times, there may not be enough time to get things done the way you want. Try not to be discouraged when this is the case. Accept that sometimes, good enough has to be good enough.
- Finally, if you find it difficult to remain focused on your academic work during your study times, distinguish between real distractions and replacement activities that are a way of procrastinating. Identify the things that often distract you from studying, and think about strategies to deal with them.

Slide 5: Prioritise: Even the most well-laid plans can be disrupted sometimes. When time is tight and it seems simply impossible to get all of your work and other commitments done, prioritise according to the 4Ds. Make a list of everything you need to do. Then, for each task, decide whether you should do it now, whether you can postpone it to a later stage, whether you can do it to a lower standard, or whether you can drop it altogether. For your academic work, take into account whether the task involves a deadline, how much time you think you need, and if you are working on an assignment, how much it contributes to the overall mark for your module. Aim to prioritise tasks that are urgent but to also put time aside to chip away at large time-consuming tasks with later deadlines. Your list will help you to clear your mind and use your time in a rational and strategic way.

Summary: To recap, to balance academic study and work or family commitments, get organised by carefully planning your workload. Set aside regular times for studying in a weekly schedule, and make sure that you use that study time effectively. Finally, be flexible and prioritise your tasks if there is not enough time to get everything done. Following these steps will help you achieve the right balance between your course and your other commitments.