

ACADEMIC SKILLS CENTER

STUDY SKILLS LIBRARY

Balancing School with Kids

Discussion

Returning to school may be overwhelming when you have children and many other obligations. You may ask yourself, "How do I balance my kids with my schoolwork? How do I navigate the school and classes after being absent from the regular school schedule?" With some time management, scheduling, simplifying, and strategizing you can do it all. You can still be a wonderful parent and an excellent student.

Things You Can Do At Home

Time Management/Scheduling: with your busy life, time management and creating schedules of your day, week, and quarter can help you plan and manage your daily life helping you gain time and reduce stress. As important and effective as these schedules can be, they are only as useful as you make them. Therefore, remember to not only make these schedules realistic, but also to make an effort to follow them.

- Making a quarterly schedule with all of your midterms, projects, and finals listed can help when your family is planning on going on trips and weekend vacations. You can refer to this calendar to plan accordingly with your studies.
- Weekly schedules and daily to-do lists are useful in scheduling doctor appointments, noting when your kids have practice, knowing your class schedule, knowing when your kids' classes are, and when you need to tend to your family's needs such as breakfast, lunch and dinner. Pace yourself and plan your day according to your personal abilities.
- Think outside the box when planning your schedules. Think of efficiencies such as packing lunches the night before so you are not rushed in the morning, start prepping for dinner in the morning so when dinnertime arrives, most of the elements are already assembled, and if you are already out and about finish all the errands on your to-do list for the day. These simple actions will give you more time throughout the day to complete other tasks and possibly even relax.

Simplify: Now that you have taken on another responsibility, try to simplify what you are already doing at home to include your new obligation to school. In addition to your usual study hour, perhaps you can join your children at the kitchen table and make it a family activity. This way you are able to spend time with your family and be a positive influence in your children's lives as everyone is making scholastic effort. Dropping extraneous obligations can free up your time. You don't have to do everything. Just because parents are socializing at your child's practice doesn't mean you have to be involved. Instead, utilize your time studying flash cards, reading, or re-writing class notes.

Strategize: There are many simple things you can do to make studying easier without having to take away extra attention from your family and home life. While you are in class it is a good idea to tape the lecture, that way you can pay attention to the most important ideas to jot down for additional notes. Listen to lectures you taped in class while at soccer practice, baseball games, or even when doing household chores. Whenever you are doing a more visual activity and you can handle the auditory information, get out your tape recorder and study. Making flashcards can be a very effective study tool and they are portable! You can keep them with you almost everywhere you go and if you have a couple of spare minutes on the bus, waiting in line at the grocery store, or waiting in the car to pick up your kids, you can whip them out and get some studying in.

Things You Can Do At School

- *Time Management:* If you have any down time while waiting for your next class make sure that time is productive in some way or another. Whether it is studying or perhaps a phone conference with your child's teacher, try to do something useful.
- *Simplify:* Simplifying your studies and schedule is a great way to not only create time during your week, but to also relieve stress. A great way to simplify your days is to schedule your classes on the same days so you don't have to make many trips a day to and from the school to catch classes.
- *Strategize:* The best way to strategize on campus is to know what resources are available to you and how to use them. Get in touch with your academic advisor. Advisors are there to help and provide guidance, and are one of the best campus resources available to you.
- Developing relationships with faculty such as your professors is useful as well. Going to office hours to talk about topics in class that maybe you didn't understand, or for any other questions you may have about the course content, is extremely effective in heightening your educational value.
- You should be aware of all the resources available to you on campus. This includes everything from the Library, Health Center, and even to the Disability Resource Center. Many schools offer study skills seminars that can help aid you in your studying. The Disability Resource Center provides many services such as note taking to those who may have a learning disability. Make sure you utilize all the resources on campus.
- Use the library whenever you need a quiet study area. It has great desk space, computer labs, reference books, and a nice atmosphere for you to concentrate in.

Additional Tips for Studying and Managing Your Family Life

- *Do a little every day:* Cramming is NOT a good study technique. If you spread out your studies and work a little each day in every class you will retain more knowledge and do better on your tests.

- *Use your kid's nap times wisely:* Use this quiet time to get in some extra reading or to get other household tasks done. And it may be a great time for you to take a nap!
- *Get up an hour early:* This extra hour is a great opportunity for you to have time to yourself, to get a head start on breakfast, or to finish up some homework that needs to be done.
- *Get some extra help from family and friends:* If you really need some extra time for studying during midterm or finals week reach out to your family and friends to arrange a babysitter until you have finished all your important exams.
- *Involve your family in your learning:* Don't let your studies consume you to the point you are locked in a quiet room and come out only for food. Let your family know what you are doing, what you are accomplishing and if you find something particularly interesting bring it up at dinner or whenever you can to make a conversation about it. Chances are they will be interested because you show invested interest and it's a great way for them to be involved in your education.
- *Don't forget play time:* As noted before don't let your studies consume your life. When formulating your schedules make time for "game night" with your family or "date night" with your spouse. Taking a little time off here and there will award you much needed relaxation and decrease your stress.

Remember though, you don't have to do EVERYTHING listed. These are just suggestions that you can try out and if they work out for you then think about adopting them into your daily routine. Do not overload yourself.

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