

Transitioning to College: Helping You Succeed

<http://www.transitioning2college.org>

Jason's 7 Tips for Balancing Work and Play

The new sense of freedom you get from being a college student is great! You spend a lot less time in class than you did in high school, and it feels like you have all this extra time. Just having less class time doesn't mean that you have to study less.

Balancing both work and play will be key to getting the most out of your college experience. It's advice we hear all the time from our parents and our teachers, but after struggling with time management during my first year at college, I discovered that they were actually right! So here are a few of my time management tips that could help you:



- 1. Take a close look at how you really spend your time.** Do you ever wonder where your day goes? Try keeping a log or calculating the amount of time you spend on daily activities for about a week to help determine where adjustments can be made. The **Personal Time Management Tool** at CollegeBoard.com provides an online form to help track where your hours go. Access it at: <http://www.collegeboard.com/student/plan/college-success/118.html>
- 2. Your syllabus is your friend—read and re-read it often.** A syllabus is your guide to what your instructor expects of you. It includes your instructor's attendance policy, assignment descriptions and due dates, a schedule of readings and tests, and a description of how you will be graded. Copying this information from all your class syllabi (plural) into a student planner and/or onto a wall calendar helps you get organized and set priorities. Consulting your syllabi regularly keeps you on task and helps you better prepare for classroom discussions. Like all good friends, your syllabi offer you tremendous support, but not if you neglect them. So, be sure to stay in touch with your course syllabi.
- 3. Go to class regularly.** Regular class attendance may be the single easiest thing you can do to improve your chances of success in college. It's a proven fact: the best students hardly ever miss class. Missing classes causes several unnecessary time management issues. You'll need to track down classmates to get notes and copies of any missed handouts. You'll have missed your professor's discussion of your readings and will most likely need to study longer to catch on. You'll also have missed a great opportunity to ask questions and hear the questions of others.

4. **Avoid procrastination.** Putting off schoolwork and not studying until the last minute takes all the joy out of being a college student. If you're not careful, you'll end up feeling overwhelmed, like you have no time for fun. Start each day with a "to do list." Having a plan keeps you focused on both your short-term and long-term goals. Try establishing regular study times, breaking your assignments down into smaller tasks, and making the most of your spare time. Get into the habit of reviewing or rewriting your notes. Also, consider summarizing your reading assignments. Above all, avoid cramming and all-nighters. These study strategies rarely pay off. The knowledge you gain will be offset by the fatigue and stress caused by staying up all night.
5. **"No" is a good word.** With so much to do on campus and your new sense of freedom, you may feel tempted "to do it all." Life's all about choices, and it's important to limit things that might disrupt or prevent you from achieving your goals. So be sure to carefully evaluate your needs and wants before committing yourself to social activities or a part-time job. If you have a test early the next morning and your friends are pressuring you to go to a late-night party, remember, it's okay to say "no." In the long run, passing your exam will be more important than your friends' temporary disappointment. If they're true friends, they'll understand.
6. **Don't be afraid to ask for help.** Your college professors hold office hours specifically for the purpose of making themselves available to students. Meeting with your instructors early in the term can save you a lot of time and frustration especially when you're not sure how to approach class assignments or the course subject matter. The library and other campus resources (e.g., academic advising, tutoring, and writing centers) are big time savers, too. All of these services exist to help students succeed. Keep your ears open at your orientation sessions when these services are being introduced to you, and later, don't be afraid to use them and ask for the help you need.
7. **Finally, be sure to schedule some fun.** All work and no play isn't what college life is all about either. Taking time out periodically to relax, socialize, and engage in extracurricular activities is a welcomed treat after a hard day's work of studying and attending classes. If not overdone, these types of activities will revitalize you, making your college experience much more rewarding and less draining. Also, the friends you make and the lessons you learn outside the classroom can be valuable to you both personally and professionally, and will make you more likely to catch the eyes of future employers.

For helpful time management Web sites, check out my list in the **Additional Resources** section of the Transitioning to College web site.