

Building Better Habits

Being Productive & Balancing Life

There's only so much time in a day. Being productive and efficient when you need to focus on school work will give you more time for fun. Being productive and finding balance between school and life can be tough. Here are 9 tips to help you do both better.

1) Use a Calendar (physical or virtual)

Productivity: Knowing what you need to do and how long you'll be doing it is the base for being productive.¹

Balance: Be mindful while you work. Focus on what you're doing and getting it done. Multitasking can be harmful.²

Additional Resources: *Daily Planner* handout

2) Make a To-Do List

Productivity: To prepare for your week, sit down weekly and check your syllabi for what you'll need to do. Write it down and estimate how long each task will take you.¹

Balance: This will help you set boundaries as you will have a rough idea of how long tasks will take you.²

Additional Resources: *Understanding/Using Your Syllabus* handout

3) Prioritize and Plan the To-Do List

Productivity: Organizing tasks in order of importance will give you clear, short-term goals/deadlines to hit.¹

Balance: Doing everything at once tends to lead to not doing it well. By prioritizing and focusing on time management, you'll reduce stress, likely increase your performance, and ensure you're working effectively.²

Additional Resources: *How to Prioritize* handout

4) Minimize Distractions

Productivity: Find a space without distractions specifically for studying, notifications off, cell phone away. Allow yourself the space to focus on the task at hand until it's complete or time for a break.¹

Balance: Reward yourself when you complete a task—a short walk, watch a T.V. show, check your phone, etc.²

Additional Resources: *The Pomodoro Technique* handout

5) Listen to Your Body

Productivity: If you're tired, you're losing productivity. Working when you're rested will pay dividends.¹

Balance: Working at full capacity all of the time is harmful. By listening to your body, you can set boundaries.²

Additional Resources: *Self-care 101*

6) Prioritizing Non-Academic Tasks

Productivity: Do your errands in one trip. Make a list of the activities you're in to make sure you still enjoy them.¹

Balance: One trip a week will be better than five. Your schedule can feel packed, so it's important that you're using your time to do things that are enjoyable. Make sure that's the case. If not, replace them with something that is.²

7) Multitask the Right Way

Productivity: Doing 2 things that require conscious effort "at the same time" means doing 2 things halfway.

Balance: If you want to do two things at once, pair a conscious activity with a "no-brainer." For example, get exercise (take a walk) while listening to a recorded lecture, or have a friend quiz you while you fold laundry.¹

8) Take Care of Yourself

Productivity: We're more productive when we're rested – make sure you eat, sleep and exercise.¹

Balance: Being healthy and well-rested will make study time more effective and efficient. Additionally, always do your best, but let go of being a perfectionist. The emotional toll of missing perfection can be harmful.²

9) Connect with SMU Resources

Productivity: Using SMU resources to learn efficient and effective skills can increase your productivity.¹

Balance: Effective efficiency frees up time, and making connections to SMU improves your social life.

SMU Resources: Writing Center, Library, Tutoring, Peer Mentors, Advising, Counseling – all free and available.

¹ "9 Simple Productivity Tips for College Students." n.d. Wwww.apu.edu. Accessed June 8, 2023.

<https://www.apu.edu/articles/9-simple-productivity-tips-for-college-students/>

² "A Guide to Achieving a Healthier School-Life Balance." 2020. Elite Educational Institute. October 13, 2020.

<https://eliteprep.com/blog/achieving-a-healthier-school-life-balance>.