



Time Management Tips for Graduate Students

Graduate school poses an exciting opportunity to learn the skills needed to become an innovative thinker in your field. These skills may be acquired through coursework, research, teaching, and internships. New graduate students are often amazed at how much work needs to be completed each day, reporting that there is always more to do. As you attempt to balance several roles throughout each week (or even each day), it is important to incorporate strategies to manage your time effectively. Below are time management tips for surviving and thriving in graduate school.

Create a calendar system and learn how to prioritize.

- Utilize a monthly schedule that captures major papers, assignments, exams, readings, and meetings.
- Use a weekly schedule to plan which tasks you will complete on what days *and during which hours*. Learn to prioritize the most important tasks instrumental to your growth and success!
- Use a daily to-do list that captures the tasks you plan to complete that day.

Protect the time you are most alert.

- You may have days that are 8-12 hours long, even before you are able to complete papers or readings. These days may leave you feeling tired and unable to start doing work. Use these nights to spend time with family or friends. On days that are shorter or you feel most alert, try to use this time to complete work.

Use time spent waiting.

- Whether you're waiting for class, sitting on a bus or train, waiting for a meeting to start, use this time to review notes or get started on a task. You will be amazed at what you can accomplish during a 15 minute period.
- If you drive to school, try getting textbooks on tape!

Learn how to read efficiently.

- Skim chapters by taking notes in the margins, writing four word phrases that capture the main point of the paragraph(s).
- Take notes on global points of the readings and write down controversial concepts or questions to bring for discussion in class.

Learn how to say “no.”

- You most likely got into your graduate program because of your motivation to multitask and ability to follow through on a job to completion. You may be dependable, hardworking, intelligent, and have strong determination. In graduate school, you have so many opportunities to make contributions. Learn to turn down certain opportunities in order to perform well on the tasks most important to you and your long term goals.

Engage in self-care and self-compassion!

- You may not be able to get everything you'd like to get done. Try not to be so hard on yourself or get caught in disappointment. Schedule time for self-care activities and socializing each week to prevent yourself from feeling burnt out!

References

- Time Management Tips for Graduate Students. <http://gradschool.about.com/cs/timemanagement/a/tme.htm>
Work Smarter, Not Harder: Time Management for Graduate Students.
<https://www.ncsu.edu/grad/preparing-future-leaders/career-skills/docs/TimeManagement.pdf>