

How to Stay Sane with a Crazy Busy Schedule

By [Amanda J. Carroll](#) | February 05, 2018

College is incredibly time-consuming, especially for students in STEM fields. Between lectures, labs, homework, lab reports, tutorials, research, plus the amount of time you have to devote to understanding material, studying chemistry is no joke. Compound all the demands of your course load with a full- or part-time job, family needs, and extracurricular activities (to round out your résumé), and the pressure can feel downright intense.

Colleges generally recommend dedicating at least three hours to your studies outside of class for every hour you spend in class. To a student who has to work between, before, and after school, it may seem that there is never enough time to accomplish everything—and do well.

But it is possible to create a successful balance between your coursework and your job if you have solid strategies and a positive outlook.

Flex your schedule

Whether you're working full-time or part-time, you would be surprised to know how many employers allow for flexible schedules. Many students are able to schedule for either *weekdays only* or *weekends only*. If you're on a full-

Talk to talk to your boss or the human resources department. Often, they are willing to work with you to accommodate an unconventional schedule.

Another idea to consider is scheduling longer hours on certain days so that you can devote more time to studying on days that you're off.

When you have to work, use every opportunity to get some studying in—during a lunch break, on a commuter bus or train, or standing in line at the bank. Your time is valuable, and every second counts.

As long as you carve out enough time to complete school tasks, you should be in good shape to stay on top of your schoolwork.

Reboot yourself

Everyone feels overwhelmed by heavy workloads that require a lot of time and energy to complete. That's why once those midterms are over and you've gotten through a particularly tough segment of the semester, it's totally normal to want to unwind, r,

If you write everything in your planner and consult it on a regular basis, you'll have a better idea of how to divide your work over the upcoming days or weeks and prioritize efficiently. This also makes you less likely to forget about something until the last minute or, worse, forget about it completely.

The semester has a rhythm to it, and though at times it can seem as if your professors are plotting against you, if you know you have three exams, a lab report due, and a 20-hour workweek coming up, you can stay on top of it all by getting ready early (as opposed to trying to live off of coffee and energy drinks for a week).

Staying organized and informed helps you prepare and prioritize how to allocate your time, and makes you less likely to pick up an extra shift only to realize you have a homework assignment due the day after you've worked all night.

Sneak in extra study time

Another key to success is using your time wisely. It is surprisingly easy to lose valuable time and not realize it. If you have an hour between classes, leave those social media apps alone! You'll end up in a rabbit hole. Instead, pull out your notes and look over the material for your upcoming quiz. If one of your classes gets canceled, skip that trip to an off-campus coffeehouse and use the time for homework instead. If you have downtime in lab (everyone has spent an hour distilling something for an experiment), use that time to go over flash cards, quiz friends about exam material, or work on calculations for the end of the lab (but don't forget about your water!).

Some employers don't mind if you study during a slow period, as long as you're able to get back to work quickly when you're needed. Some jobs may not allow this, but it never hurts to ask, especially since many employers realize the time struggles that working college students face. A few minutes here and there may not feel like much, but this is actually valuable study time that you can use to your advantage if you seize these opportunities.

Manage your expectations

And avoid comparing yourself to others. Whether you are talking face-to-face or following someone on social media, you only get a partial glimpse into their lives, so comparisons are meaningless. Know that you are doing the best you can on your own path. Remember that you are, in fact, giving your best; it just looks different from everyone else's best.

Last note

There is