

# School hacks: 5 tips to juggle work, life and college



By Laurie Davies

## Juggling work, life and school as a busy student

As the famous expression goes, “All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.” It also makes him a burned-out boy. That’s true for all the Jills out there too.

It’s important to **maximize your time** and perhaps even **multitask** throughout the year on your way to earning a college degree. But it’s also important to take time for yourself, a move that seems counterintuitive when the crush of work, school and life deadlines is upon you.

“It can be incredibly tempting to sit and work all day if your schedule does not allow for a break,” says **Christina Neider, EdD**, dean of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences at [University of Phoenix](#).

“However, we are actually being counterproductive by not taking a few minutes to step away and reset our focus. Research has shown that when we work, work, work, our brain will get tired, and we make more mistakes.”

## 5 hacks to do it all as a busy student

So, **how do you get the most out of the time you have** and still find a few minutes for you?

**Mike Marticek, DBA, MBA**, a University of Phoenix adjunct faculty member who teaches classes in information systems, value management and operational systems, has a few hacks students can follow. A self-described “systems guy,” Dr. Marticek says it’s important to have a plan and work it en route to a degree — especially if you’re **juggling work, home, kids and school**.

Here are his **top five hacks** for maximizing your time.

### 1. Start a to-do list

As basic as this tip sounds, a to-do list can be your best friend, according to an [article at Study.com](#). Without one, you’re shooting in the dark. With one, you can see your list of responsibilities (even if it’s daunting) and prioritize according to due dates.

If your list is long, several items may belong on the back burner. And, because this is reality we’re talking about here, **some of the activities on your list can be done when you’re tired**.

“Housecleaning, laundry or watching your favorite show are probably better to save for later in the day when you don’t need as much mental focus,” Dr. Marticek says.

### 2. Carpe diem with downtime

If you’re at work, and you have downtime or a long lunch break, use that time for homework — even if that means getting a running start on it rather than completing it.

Start by assessing what activities will get done and in what order. When is everything due? How complicated is each assignment? “Sometimes multitasking simply means the **seamless shifting of gears from one thing to another** rather than trying to do three things at once,” Dr. Marticek says. Efficiently using downtime can set you up for success, he advises.

### 3. Prep for the week on weekends

Let’s face it: For most of us, Monday comes and it’s off to the races. Dr. Marticek recommends getting ready for the sprint by **preparing most of your lunches and dinners — the kids’ school lunches too — on the weekend**.

“This makes it so much easier during the week so that you can focus on other things,” he says.

While you’re at it, set up your calendar. “I find if I put things into my calendar on a Sunday for the whole week, I’m less stressed,” he says.

#### 4. Eat bite-size pieces

It's tempting to look at the 80-page assignment your instructor dropped into your lap and panic that you'll never get it done. As the one who *gives* those 80-page assignments, Dr. Marticek recommends **breaking down the reading (or whatever the assignment is) into bite-size chunks**.

"If you look at it that way, it's much easier to digest," he says.

This practice can lower stress for everyone in your family as you all learn to navigate daily commitments rather than panic over deadlines that are several weeks away.

#### 5. Unplug

Dr. Marticek ends where Dr. Neider began – with rest. It's **essential to unplug, even if just for a few minutes, every day**. For his part, Dr. Marticek practices meditation. "It seems to help put me in a better mood," he says. Relaxing music, exercise, a quick walk outside or simple breathing exercises can help reset your mind, he suggests.

If you absolutely have to do two things at once, Dr. Marticek recommends voice-dictating the opening paragraphs of a paper or another assignment while you're walking. "**Exercise is proven to stimulate our brains** more. When you walk or run, your body is in a different state. You are more creative with your ideas," he says.

#### Putting school hacks into action

In the end, you know your body and its limits. If you can return work emails while hopping on a school-related conference call, more power to you. But if you end up doing both things badly, it may be time to remember that double work and no play make Jack and Jill doubly dull employees and students. Your grades, work performance and home life may be inviting a classic case of less is more.

*For additional information, please visit: <https://www.phoenix.edu/blog/school-hacks-for-adult-students.html>*