



## BLACK HAWK COLLEGE

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### Effective Study Habits for Continuing Education Students

Time is of the essence, especially when you have a full-time job, a family, and all the other responsibilities of maintaining your life beyond the studying you have to do for your continuing education classes. Time management, of course, is one of the major issues facing continuing education students, for most of them do not have the luxury of enrolling full-time in a program and forgetting about everything else. In other words, this is not going to be like your undergraduate years.

But that doesn't mean that budgeting your time has to be difficult. After all, if you were disciplined enough to get your application in on time, and studious enough to make it into the program, then you shouldn't have too difficult a time implementing effective study habits. It does, however, require a good deal of planning and foresight. The kinds of study habits required of continuing education students are quite different from those required of full-time undergraduates.

With a little bit of planning, you should be fine. Just make sure you know exactly what to expect, and start formulating a game-plan before you begin classes. Do that, and studying will be a breeze.

#### **Balance**

Above all else, successful study habits for those enrolled in continuing education classes and working at a full-time job or raising a family comes down to one word: Balance. It is impossible to overstate this point. Maintaining a healthy balance between school, work, and family is more important than almost anything else you can do.

Unfortunately, it is not always easy to do this, and most people make the mistake of not setting boundaries. The truth is that balancing all these things can get overwhelming, and if you're not careful, you'll get to the point where something has to give. When that happens, something inevitably ends up getting pushed aside, or at least shortchanged of all the time and effort it requires and deserves.

Therefore, scheduling is key. If you can plan ahead and manage to arrange the hours of your day before you actually have to deal with them, then you'll be able to better manage that time once it arrives. But when you actually are planning it all out, it is imperative that you don't budget too much time on one particular thing or

another. In other words, no one can run a marathon every single day; only schedule those things you can realistically accomplish each day, and make sure you leave enough time for all the many aspects of your life, from studying to work in the office to spending time with your family.

### **Breathe**

Returning to school can sometimes feel overwhelming - especially in the beginning. Don't expect to hit the ground running at full-speed. Instead, set attainable goals for yourself; minor daily victories will boost your confidence in your own abilities, and eventually lead to greater productivity.

At the same time, it is important not to become so obsessed with the details of all your many activities that you lose sight of the big picture. After all, an education is an ongoing process, and the intellectual journey is the most important part of the endeavor. So if you find yourself getting overwhelmed, don't be afraid to take a step back and reassess the situation. Remember, no one ever benefited from working so hard that they lost sight of what they were working towards in the first place.

### **Setting Limits**

There are two major limits that must be set when you are continuing your education and working at a full-time job simultaneously: The amount of time you spend in the office, and the amount of time you spend hunched over your school books. When it comes to all you have to do for work, you need to realize that there is no possible way that you will ever get everything done all the time. For most people, work is a constant struggle to stay ahead of the curve, and if you let yourself, it's quite possible to have enough to do at the office to justify never leaving. So set strict time-limits on the hours you spend there. Remember, the work is not going anywhere; it's perfectly fine to step away from it once in a while and focus on other things, like your continuing education.

In much the same way, though, it is possible to spend every hour of the day reading and studying for your classes at the expense of every other responsibility you have. And there is always the point of too much time spent on school work. So don't be afraid to step away from it after an adequate amount of study time. You will never know everything about whatever it is you are studying; even your professors don't. So just do the best job you can with your school work, and make sure that it plays a role that is roughly equivalent to your office work. Balance is key.

### **Relax**

At the end of the day, we're all human. This means that there is a limit to how much effort we can possibly put into everything we need to accomplish each day.

So when you finally reach that point - as we all inevitably do - that the work you're attempting to do becomes unproductive, step away from it and relax. There is no shame in admitting that you need a break.

One of the best things you can do when you've reached your capacity for productivity is physical activity. Because the truth is that sitting in front of a computer at work all day and then in front of a book studying all night is exhausting. Move around. Get the blood flowing. Join a gym and lift weights or simply take a walk around your neighborhood. You'll be amazed how much more centered and focused you are afterwards.

And sometimes, the best thing you can do is take a day off. Like a battery, your brain needs occasional recharging. And you're always better off missing a day of studying than charging through it and studying unproductively.

Finally, keep it all in perspective. There will be times when you just can't do it all. Expect this. Accept this. And increase your productivity when you're ready. It will all work out in the end.