



5 Tips for Balancing Life, Work, and Grad School

1. Use Your Support System

Managing your life as a graduate student can be challenging. You can save yourself a lot of stress by leaning on your support system: friends, family, professors, coworkers, etc. Find the people you can talk to when you're overwhelmed. Connect with those who will pray with you, help you think through problems, and encourage you as you make your way through graduate school.

And don't forget to **ask for help**. This may be as simple as inviting a friend to hang out with you as you work on homework at a coffee shop or emailing your classmates when you're stuck on an assignment. Think about it: wouldn't you be glad to help a friend in need? Chances are, your support system feels the same way.

2. Plan Ahead

Managing your time is critical when you're in grad school, especially if you're working and/or have a family. At the beginning of the week, take some time to review both your calendar and the assignments you should be working on. Schedule time blocks in your calendar for each assignment so you have a step-by-step plan of how you'll succeed that week. If possible, schedule a "no-homework" day every week so you can look forward to a day of mental rest.

3. Integrate Your Schoolwork into Your Job

A great way to maximize your time is to look for overlap between the work you do at your job and your assigned schoolwork. Can you choose a research topic that would provide valuable information to your department? Would your workplace be willing to support those efforts, allowing you to work on the project on-the-clock? Would you be able to apply a new theory you've learned in class to a project you're working on? Allow your school and work lives to integrate. You'll be surprised how much of what you're learning in school can be applied to your job—and vice versa.



4. Take Advantage of Online Classes

A busy schedule means you need all the flexibility you can get when it comes to classes. Enter: online classes. There are many grad schools that offer fully online programs, for example John Brown University (shameless plug 😊). Online courses give you the flexibility to do schoolwork when it fits into your schedule. Plus, with live chatrooms, video conferencing, and other new technologies, online courses can feel almost indistinguishable from the traditional face-to-face experience.

5. Learn to Say “No”

Saying “no” to things isn’t easy, but sometimes it’s necessary. Learning how to do this is very important if you want to have balance in your life. If you keep adding to the plates you’re already spinning, they’ll eventually all crash to the ground. If heading up another committee at church or taking on a new freelance client will push you past the limits of what you can balance, consider saying “no.” You can (and should) still commit to things that aren’t school-related, but give yourself a little grace, and expect that others will, too.

Remember: You won’t be in grad school forever—this is just a season. You’ll be able to say “yes” a lot more often once you’ve graduated.