



The UNIVERSITY of
WEST ALABAMA

9 Ways to Get More Done

Whether you're a full-time student with a part-time job or a part-time student with a full-time job – or honestly, just a student period – you know there just aren't enough hours in the day. Between class time, study groups, writing papers, extracurricular activities, and a social life, it can be almost impossible to squeeze it all in.

You can't create more time, but you *can* do the next-best thing: make the most of the time you have. Here are a few ways you can work more efficiently and maximize your productivity:

1. **Grab a seat up front.** You're going to be in class anyway, so you might as well make the most of it. (If you're not in class, we should probably talk about that at some point.) Sitting up front ensures you stay engaged in the conversation, you're more likely to participate and more likely to remember what you hear. This will save you study time later.
2. **Take regular study breaks.** At some point, everyone reaches maximum capacity. Once you've reached your limit, you may end up spinning your wheels. Take a break, have a snack, stretch your legs.
3. **Set self-imposed deadlines.** By setting interim deadlines ahead of an exam date or a paper due date, you can set and achieve smaller goals along the way. This will keep you motivated and focused on your next step.
4. **Quit multitasking.** This isn't really a thing. You can't actually do two things at once; you can only switch from one to another very quickly. To make better use of your time, set time blocks to do both things, independent of one another, and stay focused on one at a time.
5. **Take exercise breaks.** Exercise gives your brain a break and helps restore your focus. You don't have to squeeze in a Crossfit class or a 10-mile run. Just go for a walk, spend 30 minutes shooting hoops, or do some yoga stretches.
6. **Turn off digital notifications.** Nothing creates more distraction than that little vibration from your phone. During your scheduled study time, turn off your notifications... all of them. SnapChat, Instagram, Twitter, text, email, everything. You can catch up on everything during your scheduled break. Chances are, you won't miss much.
7. **Write things down.** If you're taking class notes, take them by hand. [Handwritten notes](#) are more cumbersome than typing and take longer. Studies show that because you can't possibly write down every word in a lecture, your brain digests and summarizes the material so you can capture the essence of the lecture. That means you're forcing your

brain to engage in some heavy “mental lifting,” which increases both comprehension and retention. And that means more productive study time later.

8. **Sleep well and take naps.** Napping, defined as daytime sleeping that lasts between 15 and 90 minutes, is [actually good for you](#). A quick nap can improve brain functions ranging from memory to focus and creativity, and it can even lower stress and recharge your willpower. So you’ll be more likely to stick with studying even if you don’t really want to.
9. **Make a to-do list and prioritize it.** Writing a daily task list ensures you stay focused on the 5-7 things that need to be done today. And by putting that list in order based on importance and urgency, you can make sure you accomplish your most important tasks first. By putting first things first, you can make the most productive use of your time for the day. And when you’ve finished, you know exactly where to focus your efforts next.

There’s no magical secret to productivity. The key is to identify your goals each day and stay focused. It’s also worth your time to figure out what your biggest time-wasting temptations are, such as social media, Netflix binges, or time with friends. Once you’ve identified them, don’t try to completely eliminate those activities – that’s just not realistic – *schedule* time for those things instead. That way, you can stay well-balanced and productive, rather than frustrated and burned out.