



The UNIVERSITY of
WEST ALABAMA

How hobbies impact personal growth

Say the word “hobby” and most people have visions of little old ladies armed with yarn and crochet hooks (and we’ll come back to that stereotype in a minute). But the fact is, hobbies aren’t just for people who have nothing but time on their hands.

Hobbies can provide some significant benefits, regardless of what you choose to occupy your time, and some are particularly useful to students:

- **Hobbies help you think creatively.** Don’t confuse this with artistic creativity, though hobbies can definitely help build that kind of creativity, too. By pursuing a hobby that’s outside your normal comfort zone, you develop problem-solving skills and practice new ways of thinking.
- **You’ll stretch your skills and knowledge.** Continuous learning – both the practice of learning new things and the philosophy that learning new skills is a worthwhile endeavor – is an idea worth embracing. It broadens your mind and your skills—all while establishing a sense of personal growth that will serve you well in the future.
- **They can serve as a substitute for a bad habit.** Keeping your brain and your hands (and maybe even your arms and legs) busy can be a great distraction from a habit you’re trying to break. Maybe you spend too much time on your phone, or you’d like to cut down on snacking or even smoking. Having something purposeful to do can make it a little easier to break from routine.
- **Hobbies can give you a sense of accomplishment.** Going to school semester after semester can start to feel like treading water, even as you make progress toward your degree. Sometimes just having a tangible project you can start and finish in a few days can shift your perspective and give you a great feeling of achievement.
- **You can expand your social circle.** You may meet new people as you learn a new hobby through a class or team. Or share your skills with people who are interested, either for free or as an instructor. Participating on a team is also a great way to meet people. Best of all, your circle of friends will likely become diverse as your hobby may be the only thing you have in common.
- **Hobbies can relieve stress.** Whether your hobby is an exhilarating physical activity or a calm, quiet effort, these pastimes can lower your blood pressure, increase your ability to focus, and in some cases, even produce the same physical results as meditation.

No matter what hobby you choose, you’ll see some or all of these benefits. Whether you decide to take up watercolor painting, find a regular game of pick-up basketball, or join a book club, making time for yourself is bound to improve your performance in the classroom and at work. So, find something new you’d like to learn or pick up an old hobby you used to enjoy. Just make some time for yourself.

Need help finding a new favorite activity? Be sure to check out UWA’s [wealth of campus clubs and organizations here](#).