

Time Management Tips for Online Students

1. Plan ahead.

Your hectic schedule, combined with daily distractions, can easily get in the way of finishing tasks. The best online students know how to set aside time to focus. This includes having a consistent time and workspace, tuning out those distractions, and avoiding surfing the internet.

Despite the flexibility in being an online student, it's important to have frequent engagement with your studies throughout the week. Provide plenty of time to space out your required readings, assignments, and online discussions.

Consider purchasing a calendar you can use to plan your daily and weekly assignments, highlighting:

- Assignments due, including drafts and final submissions
- Activities related to your program, such as study group meetups or on-campus networking events
- Virtual or in-person office hours with professors and advisors

Melanie Kasparian, associate director of assessment for the [Northeastern University College of Professional Studies](#), shares a sample schedule of what a typical week might look like:

Monday	Begin required readings and multimedia	Friday	Read and respond to posts and work on assignments
Tuesday	Continue reviewing materials	Saturday	Read and respond to posts and finish assignments
Wednesday	Post to discussion forum and begin assignments	Sunday	Check your work and submit assignments
Thursday	Continue posting and working on assignments		

2. Don't multitask.

Avoid **multitasking**—which can actually decrease your productivity. Focus on one assignment at a time and zero in on the specific task at hand, whether that's studying for an exam, reading a textbook, emailing a professor, or participating in an online forum. Arrange your tasks in order of importance, and pay attention to the three or four crucial tasks that require the most effort.

If you need help staying focused, then consider creating lists using a project management tool, such as **Trello** or **Smartsheet**, to help organize tasks. If you prefer a traditional to-do list, then look at digital notebooks like **Todoist**, **Wunderlist**, or **Evernote**.

Lastly, concentrate on what needs to get done in the present and avoid anything too far-off. If it's a small assignment that you don't need to address for several weeks, put it on your calendar to focus on when the deadline is closer.

3. Set up your virtual office.

Whether you study at home or your local café, it's important to work in the optimal setting needed to complete your work. Make sure there's high-speed internet, and that you're in a comfortable space with the right lighting, sound, and background. For example, some people prefer to work with headphones on, while others prefer silence or an ambient backdrop with people quietly chatting. Sit in a comfortable chair, and make sure the lighting isn't too dim. Close out your browser windows, and put your phone away.

Along with these elements, make sure you have all the required materials, such as textbooks and industry-specific software. Set up as much as you can ahead of time to stay on task with your coursework.

4. Block out distractions.

Make sure to avoid surfing the web excessively. It's easy to become distracted by the news or your favorite celebrity gossip site. Stay focused, and avoid Facebook, Twitter, and other social media tools when you need to concentrate on your studies.

If you're struggling to stay focused, then consider the **Pomodoro Method**. This technique helps with productivity by arranging how you work to increase efficiency. The tool builds on 25-minute work sessions, optimizing your time to focus on your online studies. The best way to use this method is to:

- Set a timer for 25 minutes and work uninterrupted for the scheduled period.

- Take a five-minute break to grab a coffee, check emails, or do something else.
- Once you've completed four work sessions, treat yourself to a longer, 15-minute break.

If you're still struggling with procrastination, download a website blocker for your Pomodoro sessions. [Freedom](#), [KeepMeOut](#), and [Switcheroo](#) minimize online browsing and let you follow through on your daily tasks. With these tools, you can block all websites or redirect your favorite sites to your school's homepage.

5. Reward yourself

It's important to reward yourself after a job well done in order to avoid burnout. Otherwise, it will be difficult to concentrate on even the simplest tasks.

You can reward yourself by celebrating your accomplishments and treating yourself to something you truly enjoy, whether that's watching your favorite show on Netflix or going out to a nice dinner and a movie. If you've been working on an assignment for several months in a row, then take a week off when you're finished.

6. Create a balance.

In addition to rewarding yourself, it's also important to find a balance between coursework and your other obligations, especially if you're [juggling school and work](#).

To help [create an effective balance](#) and avoid burning out, be sure to prioritize your time in a way that allows you to focus on school, work, and your personal life when you need to. Creating a predictable schedule can help you get into a routine that works for your lifestyle and allows you to dedicate your full attention to each aspect of your life at a given time.

6. Get a good night's sleep.

Sleep is essential to rest your body and keep your mind fresh for the next day. Try to get seven to eight hours of rest a night. Pulling all-nighters is less productive than studying consistently. Include sleep in your schedule, and you can reap huge rewards.