University of Manitoba | Student Support

Guide to School/Work/Life Balance

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This package was created by Healthy U: Peer Health & Wellness at the University of Manitoba. We are a group of trained, non-judgmental, and confidential student health and wellness leaders on campus.

We provide outreach activities, workshops, and one-on-one support for our fellow students on a variety of health and well-being topics. Feel free to drop in to chat or pick up more information packages.

If you would like to request or attend one of our workshops or events, check out our website for details.

How balanced are you?

Take this quiz to find out!

1. I feel like I have little or no control over my work or school life. Agree/Disagree (circle one)

2. I regularly enjoy hobbies or interests outside of work and school. Agree/Disagree

3. I often feel guilty because I can't make time for everything I want to do. Agree/Disagree

4. I usually have enough time to spend with my loved ones. Agree/Disagree

5. I frequently feel anxious or upset because of what is happening at work or school. Agree/Disagree

6. When I'm at home, I feel relaxed and comfortable. Agree/Disagree

7. On most days, I feel overwhelmed and over-committed. Agree/Disagree

8. I have time to do something just for me every week. Agree/Disagree

9. I often feel exhausted. Agree/Disagree

10. I rarely lose my temper. Agree/Disagree

11. I usually work through my lunch break. Agree/Disagree

12. I rarely miss out on important family events because of work or school. Agree/Disagree

13. I frequently think about work or school when I'm not there. Agree/Disagree

14.I allow myself to take days off from studying on occasion. Agree/Disagree

15. My family is often upset with me because of how much time I spend working or studying. Agree/Disagree

Flip the page to find out your score!

Scoring your quiz

Give yourself 1 point for every odd question (blue) you answered "disagree" to.

Give yourself 1 point for every even question (black) you answered "agree" to.

My score: _____

If you scored...

0-5: Your life is out of balance - you need to make significant changes to find your equilibrium. But you can take control!

6-10: You're keeping things under control - barely. Now is the time to take action before you're knocked off balance.

11-15: You're on the right track! You've been able to acheive work/school/life balance - now, make sure you protect it.

This quiz was created by the Canadian Mental Health Association (2012).
cmha.ca/work-life-balance-quiz

Why is balance important?

While having a little bit of stress can help you be more efficient, too much stress can be harmful to your mental and physical health. Your answers to the "How balanced are you?" quiz in this package can help give you an idea of how your stress may be affecting your health and well-being.

By taking a few minutes to consider what in your life you can realistically change, you invest in your health, your quality of life, and your ability to enjoy your university experience.

Consider what areas of your life cause you the most stress, and how you might be able to decrease how stressful they are. Can you afford to work a few less hours? Can you take one less class next semester? Are there scholarships or bursaries you can apply for to help with finances?

Finding Balance

By valuing school or work over your own well-being, you actually perform worse. Why prioritize school and work in a way that makes you miss out on relationships, rest, exercise, or doing things you enjoy, if it doesn't lead to better outcomes? It can be hard to learn how to balance these things, but here are some tips:

Managing your time

By learning time management skills, you can improve your grades, your professional success, as well as gain more time for hobbies and self-care.

- Plan your schedule: using a day planner or a Calendar app can help you schedule time to work on specific tasks. Having time set aside for certain tasks helps you get them done without feeling guilty for doing other things as well.

- Prioritize your work: instead of stressing about all the things you have to do, prioritize your work so that you're doing one thing at a time. Try doing a few quick tasks, and then blocking off time to work on the important things.

- Set goals and deadlines: if you're a procrastinator you may need to set deadlines for yourself. For example, having a rough draft done by the end of the week, editing over the next two days, and having the final copy done the day before it's due. Sticking to your deadlines can help build good habits.

- Avoid being a perfectionist: While it's great to aim high, perfectionism can get in the way of your own well-being. Remind yourself that you have done your best, and that there are some things you just have to let go.

Relieving Stress

- Relaxation techniques: Learn to relax your body and mind through techniques like meditation and breathing exercises. Ask a Healthy U member for help with this!

- Practice positive self-talk: Using phrases like "I can do this," or "One thing at a time" helps you learn to be gentle with yourself. Our thoughts have a strong effect on our mood, so remind yourself to think positively!

- Ask for help: There is no shame in asking for help. Whether this is from a friend, a family member, or a professional, asking for support shows that you value yourself and your needs.

Healthier Lifestyle Choices

- Sleep: Just because you're functioning doesn't mean you're at your best! The average young adult needs 7-9 hours of sleep per night. Plan your schedule so that you have enough time set aside for sleep.

- Healthy eating: Food is what fuels your body - protect your health by finding healthy foods you enjoy! Healthy food doesn't need to be bland or boring.

- Make time for yourself: Being on-the-go all the time can really wear down your body. Give yourself time to rest, stretch, exercise, or do something you enjoy.

- Exercise: Even light exercise such as walking or stretching can really improve your physical and mental health. Plus, even 15 minutes of walking can really decrease your stress!

Adapted from Johns Hopkins University

Managing Multiple Demands

School, work, family, and friends can place many demands on you, and trying to balance these can be challenging. Here are a few tips to manage this:

- Be where you are: Stay focused on what you're currently doing. Remind yourself not to let your worries about school or work interfere with the time you spend with family and friends.

- Set a schedule: By scheduling time for class, work, studying, and socializing you can do these things without wondering if you should be working on something else - after all, there's time for that in your schedule too.

- Remember that you are human: While setting goals is important, always remember that you can only do so much. Do your best to balance your life and do well, and let go of the things that don't work out.

- Learn to say "no": There will always be something else you can do, another opportunity you can sign up for, or another friend who wants to hang out. It's okay to say no to things if your schedule is full or if it will add extra stress to your life!

- Have some fun: Don't forget to spend time with family or friends, enjoy your hobbies, or do things that might help relieve your stress.

Adapted from Johns Hopkins University

Hobbies

Although it seems like hobbies can take up a lot of time that you may not have, they're often worth it. Having a hobby is a great way of taking a break, which reduces stress and helps you avoid feeling burned out. It can allow you to socialize or spend time alone, depending on the hobby you choose.

Studies have shown that people who engage in hobbies for at least 20 minutes a week don't get fatigued as easily. That's only 20 minutes to boost your energy for the week!

Adapted from Elizabeth Scott (2018)
VeryWellMind.com

Low-Cost Hobbies

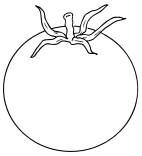
Reading: Not all books are as dry as textbooks! Try finding something that interests you, and consider joining a book club!

Writing: This can be a really good outlet for stress or other emotions. You can start a journal, write poems, or create a fictional story. You might choose to share your writing with someone, or write just for yourself.

Listening to music: This counts as a hobby! Listening to music you enjoy can help boost your mood, and looking for new songs can give you something to do when you need a break from studying.

Visit the Active Living Centre (ALC): If you're a part-time or a full-time student, you've already paid for a gym membership in your tuition! The ALC has something for everyone: a track, a pool, a skating rink, weights, and lots of exercise machines. Don't force yourself to try something you don't think you'll like, because exercise shouldn't be something you dread. Try something that sounds fun to you and see how you like it!

Pay attention to your interests: If you're curious about something, explore it! Maybe you want to grow a tomato plant, fix up a bike at the UMCycle Bike Kiosk, or try roller-blading... if you're interested in something, honour that curiousity the best you can!



Resouces

H**ealthy U***
Talk to a peer health and wellness volunteer about finding balance. Check out other health packages to learn about other topics.
474 UMSU University Centre
Check out our Facebook for hours
https://www.facebook.com/healthyumanitoba

Health & Wellness*
The Health & Wellness Educator is a Registered Nurse and available to talk about health and wellness topics. Check out the website for more information.
469 UMSU University Centre (within the SCC)
204-295-9032
Britt.Harvey@umanitoba.ca
http://umanitoba.ca/student-supports/health-wellness

*There are no in-person services at the University of Manitoba currently.
Check the relevant websites for remote services and updates.

Student Clubs

Becoming a member of a student club can be a great way to meet new people and enjoy the 'student experience.' There are many clubs on campus for students who share common interests, ranging from a hobby or social cause, to religion and culture, and more.

The following link lists all the student clubs through UMSU that are available to join. Find one that suits you and get involved today!

umsu.ca/get-involved/student-clubs

You can also check in with your department or faculty for available associations.

168 Hour Week

Do you find yourself wishing that there were more hours in a day? How often do you look at another looming deadline and think that you're a bad time manager? Maybe you're not as bad a time manager as you think. It could be that you just don't have an accurate sense of how much time you actually spend on other tasks. We often forget that sleeping, eating, bathing, jobs, doing laundry or simply visiting with friends take up a lot of time. Getting an accurate sense of how much time you spend on those activities makes goal setting, making a to-do list, and creating a useful (and do-able) schedule easier.

Estimate the number of hours a day you spend on each task and then multiply by the number of days per week that you do that task. If you have consistent hours of work or classes, you can simply enter those times in the Total column (i.e., if you work 25 hours a week then put 25 in the total column).

Activities	Hours	X	# of days	Total
Sleeping				
Personal care (showering and grooming)				
Eating (preparation and clean-up)				
Travel time (work, campus, other)				
Work				
Other commitments (volunteering, church)				
Exercise & sports				
Leisure and social time				
Errands/cleaning/laundry				
Classes (3 hours per every credit + lab time) For example, 5 courses (5 x 3 = 15) plus 2 labs (2 x 3 = 6) would equal 21 hours per week spent in class				

Add up the total column to calculate the weekly hours spent on activities _____

Hours in a Week		Hours Spent on Activities		Time Remaining
168	—	_____	=	_____

If you don't have much time left, then you might need to look at reducing the courses you are taking, the number of hours you are working, and/or other commitments (friends, sports, volunteering), because you have not even begun studying or preparing assignments yet! **If you have a lot of time left**, then your challenge is to use that time wisely. Interestingly, it is easier to waste time when you think you have extra time. Realistically, if you are a full-time student, you should be spending about 35 hours a week on school which means you should be studying **at least** 10-15 hours in addition to going to classes and labs.