How to Help Your Student Balance Work and School

Once your college student settles into their new life at school, they might be thinking about finding a part-time job to make some extra money.

Over 70% of college students work a job while in school. Some do it to have extra spending money, while others do it to save up for a trip or a car.

There are also many students who keep a job as a way to pay for college and to try to keep their student debt as low as possible. And of course, there are some students who have no choice but to work to support themselves while in school.

Money is an obvious driving factor for college students looking for full- or part-time employment. But working while they’re in school comes with other benefits, too:

Work experience can help secure a job after graduation

Balancing work and school teaches time management

Working while in school can actually improve grades? more focused time management, organization, and study planning can help students perform better academically

Some jobs provide health and 401k benefits

But working while trying to attend school full-time also comes with potential downsides for your student? namely, burnout. If your student is working too much, their studies could flounder.

Feeling overworked and doing poorly in school are some common causes of stress in college students. That stress can lead to sleep loss, depression and a whole variety of health problems.

The key for your student to maintain good grades, their job, and their sanity is to find the proper work-study balance.
Figuring out how to balance work and school can be hard, but with the following tips, you can help your student succeed at school and at work.

5 Tips to Finding a Work-Study Balance in College

1. Make a Schedule and Stick to It

When your student takes on full-time classes, homework, a job and extracurricular activities, it’s vital that they organize their schedule to make sure they can successfully balance everything they’ve committed to.

A planner is great for keeping track of competing commitments. Your student’s smartphone is a treasure trove of apps that can help them create and stick to a schedule— including apps specifically for students looking to organize their homework and class schedules.

Some recommended planning apps include:

- Todoist
- do
- OmniFocus
- iStudiez
- myHomework
- MyStudyLife
- Loop Habit Tracker
- The calendar or reminders app on most smartphones

No matter what your student is using to plan their time, it’s important they create a schedule that is reasonable. Sleeping for four hours, going to school all day, then straight to a six-hour work shift, all while cramming in homework during 15-minute snack breaks is not a sustainable schedule.

Once your student has established their schedule, the next goal is to stick to it. This will allow them to do everything they want without going crazy.

If your student starts to feel overwhelmed with the schedule they’ve created for themselves, it’s time to review it and see what can be changed.

Many students report actually becoming more productive in their school work after getting a part-time job. Without a job, some students have so much free time that they endlessly procrastinate, finding themselves pulling all-nighters before a big project is
Getting a job can enforce better time management, leading to more productive study habits.

2. Communicate with Teachers and Bosses

If your student gets a job while in school, it’s important that they communicate their impending schedule change to their professors, friends and family.

A professor who understands your student’s demanding schedule is more likely to be helpful if your student is struggling, and will likely be even more supportive when your student is excelling.

Your student’s friends and family can also be an important support structure. If they know how busy your student is, they’re likely to pitch in where they can to offer rides, help with chores, etc.

At work, it’s important for your student to make it a point to talk to their new boss about their course load and their academic goals. And they should make it clear that school is their number one priority.

If possible, this conversation should happen before your student starts their new job. This allows your student more time to figure out a work schedule that works for both your student and their employer.

Ideally, your student can start with a light work schedule (just a couple days a week, if possible), and then work their way up to a more intensive schedule, if they feel they can handle it.

3. Find a Study Space

Setting aside a dedicated study space can be helpful for students with heavy course loads and jobs on the side.

Whether it’s their desk in their dorm room or a study room at the library, a dedicated space will always be associated with schoolwork in your student’s mind.

This means that whenever they sit down at their study space, they’re less likely to be distracted by thoughts of work or their phone. The study space tells your student’s brain, “Okay, for the next ninety minutes, we’re focusing on homework and nothing else.”

Plus, a study space provides a consistent, organized space where everything your student needs to do homework is right at hand.
Ultimately, a study space will allow your student to stick to their demanding schedule by helping them focus and finish their work on time.

4. Prioritize Health

There are endless studies on the effects of our health on our ability to focus and stay stress-free.

A busy schedule of difficult coursework and a demanding job will require a lot of your student. Good health is essential to maintaining the mindset to attack their to-do list each and every day.

This means getting enough sleep, regularly exercising, and eating a healthy, balanced diet.

In some ways, this may seem counterintuitive?after all, exercise will take even more time out of your student?s schedule! But staying healthy should help your student be more productive when they do sit down to do schoolwork.

Plus, there are ways to multi-task. For example, downloadable lectures can be listened to on headphones while working out. And your student can schedule time to read their chapters during meals.

5. Set Aside ?Me Time?

What?s the point of all that hard work and studying if your student never gets to enjoy life?

A demanding schedule can quickly become overwhelming if your student never gets ?me time.? Whether that?s time with a partner, going out with friends, or just spending an afternoon alone reading at the park, personal time is key to being able to perform when it?s time to go to work or hit the books.

The best way to prioritize personal time? Put it in the planner!

Having this personal time set aside on the schedule can help motivate your student to get schoolwork done in the allotted time so they can look forward to their pre-planned free time.

6. Get the Right Kind of Job

Ideally, your student can find a job that lends itself to a healthy work-life balance.
Any on-campus job will make maintaining a work-study balance easier, simply because of the fact that it's closer to where school is.

If your student can't find an on-campus job, encourage them to look for one near campus or where they live.

For many students, the best job for a good work-school balance is one that's related to their major?they get to stay focused on what they're passionate about and continue learning while making money at the same time.

Remind your student to keep an eye out for a job working as a teacher's assistant, or helping a professor with a research project.

Another option for students who qualify for financial aid is to look into the Work-Study program, a program supported by the federal government to provide jobs specifically to college students in need of extra financial assistance.