

Break it Up

Taking an online course requires effective time management skills. It is important that you manage your time well and keep pace with the course content. Sometimes, students will complete work and study in large chunks of time (3-4 hours at a time). While that is OK, it is not the best approach. In fact, [research](#) suggests that “not taking frequent breaks can result in a decrease in academic performance.”

A more effective method is to break up your study time into small chunks. Let’s say you have 7 hours of assignments and study time you need to complete for the week. You could break your 7 hours into more manageable time slots. You could setup a schedule like those shown below:

Schedule 1		Schedule 2		Schedule 3	
Day	Time	Day	Time	Day	Time
Monday	1 hour	Monday	1 hour	Monday	1 hour
Tuesday	1 hour	Tuesday	1 hour	Tuesday	1 hour
Wednesday	1 hour	Wednesday	1 hour	Wednesday	90 min
Thursday	1 hour	Thursday	1 hour	Thursday	1 hour
Friday	1 hour	Friday	90 min	Friday	1 hour
Saturday	1 hour	Saturday	90 min	Saturday	off
Sunday	1 hour	Sunday	Off	Sunday	90 min

Stick to your schedule as best as you can. Do allow for some flexibility with life events (e.g., appointments, under the weather). Remember, your trying to attack each week in stages or in chunks.

Another way to think about how to manage and break up your time is by considering this statement:

Treat the online course as if you were taking the course face-to-face at your home school. In other words, if you were not taking the course online, you would be spending 90 minutes each day, Monday-Friday at your home school in a classroom.

While we do not require you to login at a specific time each day, the idea behind this statement is that you should be spending the same amount of time you would in an in-person class on your online course. You should be distributing your time throughout the week. In addition, you have the added benefit of Saturday and Sunday to complete your week’s work.

Furthermore, as you study, keep in mind that you need regular, scheduled breaks. Even in a one-hour study block, take 5-10 minutes to stretch your body and give your mind a break. Studying for long periods time without a break can lead to fatigue and information overload.

Breaking up the content is good for your academics and health. It helps you stay focused, reduces stress, and helps you retain information more effectively in the short and long term.