

RETURNING TO SCHOOL AS AN OLDER STUDENT

If you are returning to school after a long break from the classroom, you may feel out of place. However, your life experience gives you a sound basis for choosing new educational goals. Based on that experience, you can ask questions and make connections between coursework and daily life. Many instructors will especially enjoy working with you and encouraging you to participate in classroom discussions and activities. You can succeed! Here are some suggestions for returning adult students.

Plan Your Week

Many older students report that their No. 1 problem is time. One solution is to plan your week. By planning a week at a time, you get the bigger picture of your life roles: student, employee and family member. Sort out high-priority tasks from lower priorities and schedule specific times for the important items.

Use Time Management Techniques

If you're pressed for time, get up 15 minutes earlier or stay up 15 minutes later, and use that extra time to scan a reading assignment or review class notes. Stretching each day by just 15-30 minutes yields 91-182 extra hours each year. Use that time to promote your success in school. Use "found" time such as standing in lines or waiting for appointments as study time. Create flash cards based on your class notes or reading assignments and use them during these spare minutes.

Get to Know Younger Students

You share a central concern with younger students: succeeding in school. It's easier to get past the generation gap when you remember this. Consider pooling resources with younger students. Share notes, form study groups, or proof each other's papers.

Get to Know Other Returning Students

Introduce yourself to other older students. Being in the same classroom gives you an immediate bond. Exchange work and home phone numbers with these people to build a network of mutual support. Some students even adopt a buddy system, pairing up with another student in each class to complete assignments and prepare for tests.

Review Before You Start Classes

If you are registered for Functions or College Algebra and you have not taken a math class since high school, brush up on the subject before classes begin. When possible, talk to instructors before the semester begins about ways to prepare for their classes.

Share Your Educational Goals

The fact that you're in school will affect the key relationships in your life. Committing to classes and studying may prompt feelings of guilt about taking time away from others. Discuss these issues ahead of time and ask the key people in your life for support.

Adapted from Becoming a Master Student, by David B. Ellis, 1995.