



# Work and Study For a Passing Grade

*The benefits of working as a student.*

## Stock up on credentials

There are many benefits to working while in school. Student employment provides real-world training; builds confidence, character, and connections; and helps you discover what you like—or don't. You can develop hard and soft skills that employers value, get to know people, and earn an income while completing your studies. Also, over 70% of students work, so you *will* need some professional experience before you graduate to be competitive. Hands down, a résumé with relevant work experience and skills will make you more attractive to employers.

However, being a working student means juggling school, work, and personal responsibilities. So, whether employment is a necessity or a preference, carefully consider the total number of academic credits that you are taking, your financial needs, time constraints, as well as your long-term career objectives. This will help you select the type of student employment that works best for you.

## Opportunities for earning while learning

**Work-study** is employment at the college/university where you are enrolled and can be either federal or non-federal. Federal work-study is a type of government grant that you must qualify for as part of financial aid. Non-federal work-study positions are open to all students regardless of financial need. Work-study positions are usually on-campus, so they can be a convenient way to gain entry-level experience. Plus, working on campus connects you more to your school community, which can create a more meaningful overall academic experience.

**Experiential learning (EL)** includes internships, externships, service-learning, and cooperative education (co-op). Here, a student works as an apprentice in a company or organization to learn about their chosen field of study. EL opportunities are not always paid, but they help students build their skills, expertise, and résumés, and often can be used to earn school credit. While EL usually takes place over one to two semesters year-round, many students complete these experiences over the summer break—a good option if you like to work while school is out.

**Part-time jobs** are ideal if you are in school and need some extra funds or would like to build experience. Flexibility and time management are the keys to success with part-time employment. To make sure your part-time schedule does not conflict with your classes, provide your employer with your course schedule and availability up front. But, be aware: working more than 15-20 hours/week can have a negative impact on your academic performance, so keep a focus on school.

**Full-time jobs** can be a good option for students attending school on a part-time basis. However, it can be difficult to balance the responsibilities of a full-time job in addition to schoolwork. Plus, academic institutions generally do not assume that students will work full-time while in school; the result is often conflicting schedules. And, you'll probably have little free time in your calendar, so be prepared for a lifestyle change.

## Earn more than an "A" for effort

Consult with your school's career or employment advisor if you are considering working while in school. They can help you identify your priorities, understand your strengths, develop a plan to meet your academic and personal goals, as well as brainstorm ways to help you find a healthy balance between your work and school responsibilities.

Working as a student can set you on the right track well before you enter the workforce. It helps you gain vital professional experience early on, understand your career options, and value responsibility. You'll develop time management, communication, financial, and social skills; expand your network; become a better team player; and be more independent. So, take time to research your options before jumping into any opportunity. Finding the right type of employment will help to ensure your academic and professional success.



## **i**n a nutshell:

Working in college can jump-start your résumé credentials, skill sets, and sense of independence. It:

- **Sharpens time management skills to help prioritize and complete tasks**
- **Improves communication and social skills for better teamwork and customer service**
- **Expands network connections**
- **Fosters confidence and better decision making**
- **Provides income and teaches budgeting and financial responsibility**
- **Gives you an advantage over peers who have no working experience**

Use the opportunities and resources in college wisely; you'll learn, earn, and be a more competitive job seeker.