Healthy Academic Work Habits
for students, scholars, and researchers at all levels

COVID-19 is a World Mental Health Epidemic

Health organizations around the world have recognized COVID-19 as a World Mental Health Epidemic. Chronic exposure to fear, anxiety, and the disruption of our social world have a traumatic effect on the nervous system, harming our sleep, memory, reading, social skills, and many other functions essential to academic life. No one on Earth is producing at 100% right now, and every member of our university is near breaking point. No one can produce as much in a day in 2020 as we could a year ago, and we also need to take more hours than before for rest, recuperation, venting our frustrations, helping our loved ones, and helping ourselves. This guide describes principles of healthy work habits and self-care customized for an academic environment. These are useful at any time, but in a crisis like this they can show us how to increase and sustain our productivity, even as we give fewer hours to work, and save more for care.

Main Principles

1. Study is a Marathon not a Sprint

Time is the most limited resource, but you shouldn't just accept feeling constantly overworked. If your load seems like too much, don't assume nothing can be done and that you have no choice but to "push through" and collapse afterward. That approach is not sustainable, since your workload will increase, not decrease, as you advance through the steps of your life and career. If you work to exhaustion but still don't have time for all your work, it's time to change that, pause, evaluate how you're spending your time, and seek solutions to help you **work less but accomplish more**. It is possible.

2. Self-Care is an Academic Responsibility

Never feel that hobbies, exercise, or rest are "taking time away from" your studies. Self-care helps you produce more, keeping mind and body ready to focus, write, memorize, and perform. Sometimes people boast about giving up hobbies, skimping on sleep, or pulling all-nighters as if these are proof of scholarly dedication, but a good self-care regimen—sleeping enough, seeing friends, doing hobbies, cooking, games, sports—genuinely helps you produce more and better work. You do need to learn which leisure activities are genuinely helpful and which only provide the illusion of rest and recovery, but if you ever feel pressured to skip self-care, remember it is **a responsibility, not an indulgence**.

3. Watch for the Short-Term Task Trap

Academic life requires balancing three things: **short-term tasks, long-term tasks** and **self-care**. Short-term tasks (due tomorrow, due this week, someone waiting for a reply) have the most visible deadlines, which push us to prioritize them. Long-term tasks like "write a thesis" or "finish a chapter" are much more important, but there is no consequence to letting a day, a week, even a month slip by without working on them—the consequence looms only at the end. Similarly, self-care activities like sleep, rest, play, and

exercise are necessary to keep you productive, but there is no *immediately perceivable* consequence to skipping *one* self-care activity, or *one* night's sleep. This makes it easy to start chronically skimping on self-care, sinking into exhaustion and seeing productivity decline. **Fight to keep short-term tasks from taking over.** Accountability helps, creating your own deadlines and rules, like "3 pages by X date" or "Exercise M/W/F" or "Meal w/ a friend 2x per week (in person or via webcam)." It also helps to reserve times exclusively for long-term tasks or self-care, making the self-imposed rule never to let short-term tasks violate those protected hours, even if it sometimes means missing a short-term opportunity, or leaving someone waiting.

There is a juggling routine, in which the juggler starts out juggling three pins, then someone tosses in a fourth, a fifth, a sixth, more and more, sometimes new shapes (a knife, a flaming torch, a rubber duck), but the juggler keeps them all in the air by making more and more efficient motions at every step. Academia works like that: adding more tasks each year (mentoring, longer projects, new research steps, more organizations, more email) without ever taking away old ones. Like the juggler, we can do it, but only if we keep making our motions more efficient.

4. There Are More Things Worth Doing Than Anyone Can Do

When deciding whether or not to take on a new task or project, don't ask yourself, "Is this worth doing?" Ask yourself instead, **"Is this *more* worth doing than the thing I will have to give up to do it?"** The number of hours in a week is one of very few things in life that is genuinely zero sum, so anything you add does mean less time for something else. Think about different things you might have to give up: a more important opportunity that comes up later, fun activities you won't have time for, keeping up with news or organizations you care about, the chance to rest on some future weekend when you'll really need it. Weigh these against the new project before you say 'yes.' It can be wise to always wait 24 hours before saying 'yes', to think carefully.

5. Academia Pushes Us In Many Directions

University culture pushes us to ask a lot of ourselves, and it helps to realize how many different directions we get pushed at once. Students and faculty alike tend to feel pressured to try be outstanding in six different major categories, to be:

1. An outstanding version of your job: scholar, researcher, writer, scientist, journalist, artist
2. An outstanding teacher, whether teaching a class or explaining things to classmates & friends
3. An outstanding friend and mentor, helping and supporting those around you
4. An outstanding public intellectual, sharing knowledge in social media, blogs, groups, op-eds
5. An outstanding agent of positive institutional change, within the university, a club, a dorm
6. An outstanding activist helping big political causes and keeping up with news

No one, no matter how intelligent or hard-working, can give outstanding effort in so many directions at once. Think about which are most important for *you personally* to give your all to. You can focus on two, or perhaps three, but in return ration the time you give to the others, recognizing that you can do a little bit of everything but that trying to excel at all of them will wear you out. Focus on what you value most, what will advance your long-term life goals (employment), and on activities that don't drain you too much.

Communities are teamwork, so if, for example, you find navigating institutions stressful but like doing online activism, then you can help most by focusing on online activism, and leaving the institutional change efforts to friends with the inverse skill set.

Give Your Best Hours To Your Most Important Tasks

1. Not All Hours are Equal

It may seem like an impossible dream to say you can do more in less time, but if you maximize the *quality* of your working hours you genuinely can reduce the *quantity*. An hour of work when you are at 100% may produce as much as two hours put in when you are tired, stressed, hungry, and not your best. Productivity is affected by:

> (A) **circumstantial factors** such as workspace comfort
> (B) **metabolic factors** such as nutrition, time of day, or what you have eaten and when
> (C) **sleep** and physical wellness
> (D) **mental health factors,** such as stress management, socializing and fun

No one is at their best all day, but only a few tasks truly require you at your best. If you reserve the hours you are at your sharpest for the tasks that truly need it—writing, reading, research—you can use the hours when you are tired, hungry, or less focused for tasks that don't require you to give 100%, like chores, e-mail, web surfing, or more mechanical tasks.

2. Experiment to Find Your Own Best Hours

Different people work differently, and some people produce best first thing in the morning, others right after lunch, others after midnight. Rather than assuming that your current schedule is already optimal, try varying what time of day you do different things and observe when your most important tasks flow best. For example, many tend to do e-mail and short-term tasks early in the day to "get them out of the way," but if you concentrate best in the morning this means giving your best hours to minor tasks, and approaching important work only when are already tired. Others assume that working late at night will not produce good work, but some people discover they work best in the solitude of late night, when news and interruptions quiet down. Some find their concentration improves for the hour right after a meal, while others find themselves sleepy and groggy while digesting. Similarly, some people find they produce most in short blocks of time, say reserving 30 minutes for writing every morning, while others produce best in long blocks, say reserving every Wednesday exclusively for writing. You cannot know which times and schedules best for you until you try several options, so experiment with moving tasks around, to discover when you truly produce at your best.

3. Track Your Time to Learn Where Your Hours Really Go

Try a week or two keeping a time diary, recording what you did in each part of the day, ideally hour by hour, as well as what you accomplished. Include small things like "phoned home" or "washed lunch dishes" in addition to work tasks. After two weeks you can analyze patterns. You may discover that days which felt like they were full of academic work actually contained many secondary time traps which could

be reduced. Conversely you may discover that a day which felt doldrumy and unproductive was actually full of useful tasks, and you are being too hard on yourself. Once you know where your time actually goes, you can make a plan. You may want to continue recording long-term, not what you do every hour, but the general activities achievements of each day in a sentence or two, so if you are feeling unproductive you can look back and see "Oh, I really did do a lot last week," or "Oh, five things interrupted me yesterday, no wonder I didn't get much reading done." Once you learn where your hours are going, you can try making changes:

- **Some activities are neither work nor self-care**. These are great places to save time. As you track your time, note such activities—can you accelerate them or reduce them? Make shopping faster via subscriptions or delivery? Learn to do dishes more efficiently? Alternately, **can you turn such activities into work or self-care?** Listen to an audiobook to make tidying double as research or leisure? Bike to make a commute double as exercise? Do [mindfulness meditation](#) while on public transit? You have to eat, but instead of spending 30 minutes twice a day hastily preparing mediocre meals, you could make one meal super quick with a protein shake, then take an hour later to cook a leisurely, delicious meal that turns cooking into self-care while adding up to the same amount of time.
- **E-mail is a time-eater.** You can't squeeze email into the cracks between tasks without those tasks getting crowded out. E-mail is also an infinite stream of short-term tasks, so a threat to long-term tasks. Ration email time, and think of it as its own task, not something you just squeeze in. When there is more email than you can deal with without sacrificing your important work or self-care, then falling behind can be the right choice—make that choice consciously and don't stress about it. You can also learn to deal with email faster: being brief, re-using replies, rereading less, getting off lists, and creating automated filters or labels to flag emails from important people can shave minutes off each email session, adding up to hours every week.
- **Web media can be a time trap**, since links and threads make you lose track of time. Try timing your media usage to see how much you are really spending. If it's not too much that's fine, but if it's too much, try making a rule like "only 45 minutes of web before noon" or "no YouTube before dinner" or "set a 10 minute timer when I open Facebook."
- **Progressing on long-term tasks is vital for morale.** It is demoralizing working all day and yet seeing the things you truly care about stagnate. Reserve at least a small amount of time daily, or several times a week, to work on long-term projects, *even if* short-term ones are pressing.
- **Sometimes intentionally missing a minor deadline is the right choice.** If doing a minor task on time means skipping self-care (sacrificing future productivity), or giving up the time reserved for long-term projects (hurting your morale), sometimes missing an event or deadline can be the right choice. It's better to consciously decide to skip something, sending an apology and initiating a backup plan, than to get overwhelmed by stress, which will often make you miss deadlines anyway.
- **Try an accountability buddy.** You and one or more friends can set a shared goal, and let each other know "I wrote for an hour," or "I exercised today." "Me too!"

Productivity apps can let you track your to-dos, daily tasks, and goals all in one place, with reliable reminders. Popular programs include List.ly, Todoist, 30/30, DropTask, GTasks, Limitless, Zenday, and the gamified group app Habitica.

4. Make a Workplace that Works For You

Experiment with how, where, and when to work. Some people work best at home, others in a library, in a crowded space (you can simulate one with web audio), in the morning, at night, with music, in silence. Try various options, and don't assume that the workplace setup you have been using is best for you without trying others. You may find that one arrangement works best for one kind of work, another for another.

- **What you wear can affect productivity,** by changing how you feel. Try working in different clothes: slobby, formal, looser, tighter, warmer, cooler, to discover which works best for you.
- **It can help doing something to make you feel "on duty" as you start work**—a shower, a lighting change, making tea, a scented candle, something to signal to yourself that it's work time.
- **Does a cluttered work area distract you?** Some people work fine in a cluttered space but others concentrate better in a tidy place. Try tidying your workspace once to see whether that affects your productivity—if it doesn't, the experiment is done, but if it does then you can make tidiness a priority, or seek a more ordered place to work, like a library carrel.
- **Don't work hunched over a laptop.** This strains the spine, wrists, and shoulders, making work physically grueling in ways we are not conscious of. More than half of academics end up developing some form of Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI) from computer use (Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is the best known form). Making a safe work desk is quick and easy, simply either:
  A. Get an external monitor and position it up high so it is in front of your face when you're sitting up straight, while your laptop serves as your keyboard and is set nice and low. OR
  B. Get an external keyboard to put at keyboard level, then put your laptop up high so the screen is in front of your face. You don't have to buy a special stand: a pile of books or a box will do.
  Stretching breaks at least once an hour can help, as can chair yoga. If you have wrist pain, wrist braces can help especially if worn, not for typing, but while you sleep to keep your hands in a healthy position.
- **"Work in Company" can work well**, getting together with a friend to work in parallel, or getting on voice or video chat while you work. Having someone to chat with can raise morale, and spur you to keep working. Many find this works well for some kinds of work but distracts from others which require uninterrupted concentration; the only way to know is to try several combinations.

A few years ago, the costume-makers at the Shakespeare's Globe Theater in London tried an experiment: they gave up their electric sewing machines and recreated an Elizabethan tailor's room by getting rid of their solitary, wall-facing desks, and sitting in a circle around a big central table. To their amazement, productivity sped up instead of slowing down, since the fun of working with friends made work flow better, and they could easily ask for advice and help each other with tasks. You never know what work environment is best for you until you try.

Student Wellness offers an Academic Skills Assessment Program (ASAP) that evaluates your academic skills and offers help with time management, learning and memory, test anxiety, reading effectiveness, effective exam preparation, and general study skills, while their personalized Wellness Coaching, can help you develop goals and strategies to take better care of yourself.

Self-Care Principles

1. No One is Helped by You Sinking

You do need to put on your own oxygen mask before helping others. It is a common impulse to prioritize helping others over things we need for ourselves. **This is especially true during the COVID-19 emergency, and the many social and political crises, large-scale and small, that it has amplified.** Sometimes we want to help an individual—a friend needs a reply, a file, an errand, company, advice—and sometimes we want to help a group, the public, or the world—this injustice needs to be called out, this charity needs a fundraiser, this organization needs volunteers, this cause needs action. Remember that your ability to help is also long-term, so giving too much at once, sacrificing self-care so you crash later, will not only hurt your work, but leave you to burnt out to keep helping. Giving what you can give steadily over weeks and months while taking care of yourself will let you help more long-term than wearing yourself out in one burst. When evaluating whether to sacrifice one of your own needs for someone else's, it can help to ask yourself, "Would I encourage a friend to give this up to do something for me?"

2. Choose Leisure Activities Wisely

Not all leisure activities are equally rejuvenating. Some activities *feel* like leisure *while you are doing them,* but don't leave you refreshed and more prepared for work. **Less recuperative leisure activities**, which are fun but leave your brain more exhausted, not less, can include "gripe sessions" and other downer conversations, heavy drinking, intensely competitive games, and extended solo media consumption, such as marathoning television for several hours, or playing a videogame for several hours without interacting with others. The fact that these activities are not recuperative does not mean you should never do them, it simply means you can't count on them to make you feel rested, so you should plan to do other restful activities afterward. **More recuperative leisure activities** include talking with friends, cooking or baking if you enjoy it, sharing a meal with friends, pleasure reading, playing with a pet, taking a bath, journaling or writing, craft projects, listening to music, exercise, massage, walking outside, and consuming screen media (TV, videogames) in shorter segments (one or two hours), especially if doing so with friends.

3. Know How Screen Media Affects the Brain

Many of us stare at screens (computers, tablets, TVs, phones) for most of our waking day, so it is useful to know what that does to brain and body. Studies show that frenetic screen media, with rapid action and frequent changes of camera angle, cause the brain to produce "fight or flight" chemicals associated with fear and anxiety—think here of the frenetic pace of a music video or action game compared to the slower cuts of an old-fashioned drama or a city-building game. These "fight or flight" chemicals can linger in the brain for an hour or more, but studies show that if you have a conversation with another person afterward, the chemicals flush out within a few minutes. Thus, it is more recuperative if you consume screen media with friends, pausing to discuss between episodes or levels, or if you call a friend afterward to chat. Screen media also reduces your blink rate, straining your eyes, which is part of why an hour or two of screen entertainment is often refreshing, but several straight hours tend to leave one feeling more tired, not less. Limiting consumption to an hour or two can help, but if you do want to marathon something, or play a game for several hours, just remember this will be *fun* but not *restful,* so you should follow it with a more recuperative activity.

4. Sleep Quantity and Sleep Quality

Increasing work hours by cutting sleep may *seem* to increase productivity but rarely does, since a sleep-deprived person absorbs less from reading and produces fewer words in an hour of writing. The National Institute of Health recommends 8 hours of sleep per night. The majority of people believe they can get by on less than average sleep, but the NIH believes only 10% of people are actually fully functional on less than 8 hours of sleep. Recognized symptoms of chronic lack of sleep include many things that interfere with study: reduced creativity and problem-solving, concentration and memory problems, inability to cope with stress, fatigue and lack of motivation, moodiness and irritability, difficulty making decisions, and immune system weakness leaving you vulnerable to colds and infections. Above all, without enough sleep your brain is never at 100%. **Student Wellness** offers Sleep Tips and a Refresh Sleep program.

- **A consistent waking time is more important than a consistent bedtime.** Your body starts preparing to wake up more than an hour advance, and waking at an unexpected time can make you wake during the wrong part of sleep, leaving you groggy. Waking at a consistent time avoids this. Sleeping in until 11:00 most days but getting up at 9 Tues/Thurs for an early class will make you more exhausted than getting up at 9 every day, even if getting up at 9 daily means sleeping fewer hours total during the week. Counter-intuitively, after staying up late, you can feel more rested getting up at your usual time sleeping in an extra 45 minutes, since that means waking in the deep middle of a sleep cycle when your body isn't ready.
- **Sometimes it takes a while to fall asleep.** Factors that can help you fall asleep faster include exercise during the day, avoiding meals too close to bedtime, listening to gentle music, mindfulness meditation, and avoiding blue/white/daylight illumination after dark by switching to yellowish bulbs, and programs like f.lux (free) which tint your screens golden after dusk. A "no glowing screens" rule for the last 30-60 minutes before bedtime can help too.

5. Mind and Body are Connected

It's easy to think that productivity is a pure question of mind and discipline, but the brain is an organ, part of your body like any other organ, with medical needs that are just as real. Just as athletes time meals carefully to maximize performance, you can take steps to help your brain think better, remember more, and produce more. Stress and fatigue too are biological phenomena, as real as hunger, colds, or flu. **This is more true than ever as we all wrestle with the neurological trauma effects of 2020's crises.** Just as an athlete with a sore muscle will stretch and use heat therapy or other methods before using that muscle,

so when you feel draggy, fuzzy-brained, or unable to concentrate, you can and should do something to fix that instead of just trying to plough through, which tends to leave you exhausted and demoralized.

- **The brain needs steady blood sugar.** While most cells can metabolize many energy sources, nerve cells (i.e. your brain) depend on sugars. This means that fluctuations in blood sugar affect your brain very directly. Meals high in protein, or with a mix different energy sources (proteins, carbs, and fats), help keep blood sugar steady over time. Sugary foods can cause blood sugar crashes, so if your brain feel draggy try a snack with a mix of sugars, fats, and proteins, like a snack mix with nuts and fruit.
- **The hours right after exercise are often your sharpest.** Advice about exercise, weight, and health can be overwhelming, since there are so many contradictory approaches and constantly-changing studies, but one very consistent finding is that exercising regularly (30 minutes 3 or 4 times a week) accelerates metabolism, making you feel more awake, and improving concentration. Exercise also releases endorphins which make you feel happy and powerful, peaking right after the exercise but lingering into the next day. This can counter stress and make you feel more capable of tackling work. If you have been putting something off, or feeling overwhelmed, try exercising and then facing it again.
- **Exercise makes you fall asleep faster and sleep better.** If giving 45-60 minutes to exercise (30 minutes + shower) every other day means you regularly fall asleep after 15 minutes instead of lying awake in bed for an hour, you more than made up for the time investment.
- **Studies show that loneliness reduces immune function,** increasing the risk of cold, flu etc. Fun with friends in person or via the web a few times a week protects against losing a week to illness.

Heavy alcohol consumption requires recovery time. If you choose to enjoy alcohol, plan to use the next day for less rigorous tasks, like errands or e-mail, rather than attempting high-level work when mind and body are still recovering.

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6. Learn the Patterns of What Makes You Feel Good Or Bad

Many things affect mood, and if you learn what makes *you* feel good or bad you can use that knowledge. Keep a log and write down whenever you find yourself feeling unusually fatigued, exhausted, sad, or more upset by something than you think you should be. Make note too of times you feel particularly good, or times something bad happened but didn't get you down as much. Reviewing the log can help you spot patterns (I always feel down after a test; I feel great after singing practice; I enjoy our Thursday movie but feel gloomy afterward). Learning to recognize when one of your personal patterns is kicking in can help you feel more in control (Oh, I know why I feel so upset tonight, it's my downer after the test!).

- **Once you learn your patterns, you can make changes** (I'll eat lunch earlier so I don't get cranky; I'll sing more often; I'll plan a weekly cookie bake after the movie to cheer up).
- **Make a list of questions to ask yourself when you are feeling down** (Did I skip a meal? Did I have a test today? Did I skip exercise too often? Did I forget my allergy meds? Did I not shower?)
- **Make a list of things that make you feel good,** and do them when you catch yourself feeling down (energizing music playlist, exercise, shower favorite shirt, play with a pet, organize books, rage baking, ask choir friends to come sing with you or record parts at a distance via webcam).
- **Create a "morale" tag/folder for emails** that make you happy (things you're proud of, notes from friends, congratulations on successes) and reread them when you're feeling down on yourself.

7. Listen To Your Upset Self

After we discover what makes us feel bad, it's easy to think that the version of ourselves who comes out when we're tired, hungry, etc. is not our *real* self—that the *real* you is the calm you. But the upset you is *also* you, and frequently the things we rant about when we're feeling bad are real problems that have been hurting us in the background, but that we've been ignoring under the stream of projects and activities that tend to fill our happy hours. If you catch yourself in bad mood, it's wise to hold off on action, to *not* send that irate email, quit that club, yell at that friend, and to instead use your list of things that make you feel better. But *after* you feel better (after you exercise, or bake, or have a good night's sleep), think again about the things that bothered you while you were upset. Is there a real problem? Is there action you can take? Someone you can ask for advice? Often our upset self has keener insight into what is hurting us, so use the two in partnership, trusting your upset self when it detects problems, then using your calm self to act and solve them. **COVID-19 is making everyone break down periodically, lashing out at friends, loved ones, or being extra hard on ourselves; remember that breaking down in this situation is normal, that everyone will do it, and that even if the crisis is the cause, you should still listen to what you feel and say during a breakdown, to help learn how to prevent the next one**.

8. Everyone Should Self-Monitor Mental Health

Monitoring your mental health is just like monitoring your body, looking out for aches and blisters and pulled muscles, and trying to fix the cause. Just as any athlete learns about the medical conditions common to that sport, it's common sense for students and scholars to stay informed about mental health conditions common in university communities, so you can look out for them in yourself and others. **This too is more true than ever in this Mental Health Epidemic, as the torrent of disruption, fear, and upsetting news spreads trauma just as contact and residue transmit the virus. We all have a duty to watch for COVID-19 virus symptoms in ourselves and our friends, and we have the same duty to watch for mental health symptoms, which are just as serious.** If you find yourself feeling bad frequently, making use of [Wellness Services](#) is just like going to a clinic about a pain in your knee. Sometimes a doctor has a very simple solution (different shoes, a knee brace), and similarly Wellness Services has lots of [simple solutions](#) (vitamins, a schedule change, [yoga](#), [pet visits](#), [more sun](#)) which can make huge difference. They also offer an eight-hour [Mental Health First Aid](#) training course that teaches thee skills to spot and help a friend who is developing a mental health problem or having a crisis.

- **Depression is not just feeling sad.** Depression is very common in academia, and while we associate it with sadness, it can have many other symptoms, including decreased energy, difficulty concentrating, irritability, sleeplessness, feelings of guilt or powerlessness, fatigue, exhaustion, or the experience of simply being unable to make yourself do the things you know you need to do. Milder depression can be helped by many simple self-care steps and lifestyle changes, medication is not the only way.
- **Seasonal Affective Disorder** is a common phenomenon in which shortening winter days cause drowsiness, irritability, fatigue, and difficulty with concentration. Many people are affected, especially in harsh Chicago winters. Vitamin D, daylight-simulating lightbulbs, time in the sun (there's a [map of sunny spots on campus](#)) and other treatments can help, but simply knowing the phenomenon is common can help you be less hard on yourself if you find your productivity waning in December.
- **Impostor Syndrome** is the feeling that you're a fake, that you aren't as good as your peers, that your accomplishments aren't real, that people overestimate your, that you don't belong here, that everyone

else is doing "real work" or "hard work," or that when people look at you work they'll realize you aren't really good at this. These feelings are extremely common—in the USA studies show impostor syndrome is experienced by 60% of professional straight white men, and more than 99% of professional women, LGBTQA+ professionals, and professionals of color. If you have such feelings and mention them to friends, a lot of your peers will say they've felt the same—it can feel a lot better just realizing it's a common experience.

Example: Healthy Work Habits in Practice

Here are daily schedules for two imaginary students, Kat and Robin. Both have the same tasks, and the same class at 2 PM, but Robin follows the following principles:

1. Get enough sleep, and wake at a consistent time each morning
2. Give your best hours to your most important tasks (research & writing)
3. Save minor tasks for when you are hungry or tired
4. Save time for seeing friends, and for exercise, and make use of the energy boost
5. Avoid glowing screens and snacks during the last half hour before bedtime

	Kat	Robin
9 AM	Wakes up to an alarm groggily, has trouble getting out of bed.	Gets up well-rested, grabs a quick breakfast.
9:30 AM	Morning e-mail & web browsing	Morning e-mail, urgent e-mail only
10 AM	Still doing e-mail & web browsing	Working on a paper, writes 2 pages
11 AM	Getting minor tasks "out of the way"	Working on a paper, writes 2 pages
12 AM	Still doing minor tasks	Hungry; good time for minor tasks
1:00	Finally finishing minor tasks	Lunch with a friend (using webcam)
2:00	Hasty lunch alone	30 min e-mail & web browsing
2:30	Preparing for class	Preparing for class
3:00	CLASS	CLASS
4:00	Food shopping (online or at store)	Exercise
5:00	Reading	Energized! Races through class reading
6:00	Same reading dragging on, hungry...	Food shopping (online or at store)
7:00	Dinner	Dinner
8:00	TV	TV
9:00	Reading & research, writes 1 page	Minor tasks
10:00	Reading & research, writes 1 page	Minor tasks
11:00	Reading & research, writes 1 page	30 min email, 30 min leisure reading
Midnight	Losing steam, snacking, tired	Bedtime, falls asleep very quickly :-)
1 AM	e-mail & web browsing before bed	SLEEP :-)
2 AM	Lying awake in bed :-(	SLEEP :-)
3 AM	FINALLY ASLEEP	SLEEP :-)
TOTAL WORK	3 ½ pages writing, 3 hours of minor tasks, class, reading for one class.	4 pages writing, 3 hours of minor tasks, class, reading for one class.
TOTAL REST	1 hour TV, no exercise, no time with friends, 5 hours restless sleep.	1 hour TV, lunch with friend, exercise, 30 min leisure reading, 8 hours sleep.

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