



Going Back to School as a Nontraditional Learner

If you are returning to school after a long break from the classroom, DO NOT feel out of place! You are a part of the growing population of returning adult learners and nontraditional students. Below are tips and suggestions for returning adult learners and nontraditional students to help make the necessary connections between daily life and course work.

1. Ease into it

- Consider attending school part-time as opposed to full-time for the first semester.

2. Delegate tasks

- Consider hiring others to help with errands, childcare and household tasks. Yes, this will add another expense but look at it as an investment in your education and future career. Don't be afraid to reach out to family, friends and neighbors.

3. Become acquainted with younger students

- Bridge the generation gap by getting to know younger students. They may provide fresh, new perspectives and "secrets" to surviving college. Consider teaming up with them to compare notes or form study groups. After all, you share a common goal: being successful in school.

4. Become acquainted with other nontraditional students

- Again, you share a common goal with other nontraditional learners. Exchange phone numbers and email addresses to begin building a network of peer support.

5. Look for childcare

- Many schools have childcare facilities on or near campus. Some facilities offer childcare to students at a reduced rate.



6. Prepare for an academic environment

- Academic life may be much different than the life you have been living the past few years. Parking may not be as easily accessible as you are used to. Professors and instructors may take longer to respond to emails than your boss at your job. And getting to know the bus routes may be challenging. Getting to know the rhythm of academic life may help ease the transition.

7. Plan well

- Planning ahead may ease the stress that comes from being a student, parent and employee. Write your schedule on a calendar and hang it up at home (on the refrigerator or on the back of a door are good places) so that other members of your family or household know your class schedule, work schedule and study schedule.

8. Be prepared to adopt new study habits

- Study habits used during your previous school experience may not work as well as they used to. Be flexible. Learn from other nontraditional students and younger students and be receptive to any advice given to you, whether it is from your peers or your professors and instructors.

9. Find common ground with instructors and professors

- Instructors and professors may be juggling school, their careers and a family just like you. Finding this common ground may give you a leg up on being successful in their class. It will also break the ice!

10. Share your education goals and plans with family, spouses, friends and employers

- Involve the people in your life. Discuss issues, such as a reduction in the amount of free time you will have to spend with them or a change in your work availability. You may even want to give them a tour of the campus or introduce them to your instructors or classmates. Taking these steps may help them feel more involved in your educational plans and may ease tensions that may arise from the changes taking place in your life.