

Time Management Tips for Teaching Assistants

Time is precious and finite! Consider these tips for managing your teaching tasks efficiently while you are a teaching assistant.

Lay a solid foundation.

- **Determine roles and responsibilities.** Before the term begins, have a conversation with your teaching team to determine how your team will divide tasks related to a course. Eliminate redundant work as much as possible.
- **Set up a recurring meeting with your team.** At the beginning of term, establish a recurring teaching team meeting to check in with other TAs and faculty. Come to this meeting with a list of questions or concerns that you'd like to address.
- **Establish boundaries and set expectations of you and your availability.** This is helpful for your teaching team and your students. Ensure these boundaries and expectations allow you to maintain a sustainable "life balance."
- **Familiarize yourself with the CoursePlus tools being used in the course *before* the term begins.** If you're not sure how to use a particular tool or feature, reach out to the CTL Instructional Designer for the course. Consider refreshing your memory with a scheduled CoursePlus Refresher and/or LiveTalk/Zoom Training session, if needed.
- **Schedule time for grading and other recurring tasks.** At the beginning of term, enter all assignments and due dates for the course into your own calendar, then schedule time to grade them. Be realistic with how long you think it will take to grade one assignment. Then multiply that estimate by the number of students in the class and then multiply by 1.5 or 2 to give yourself an additional buffer. Put enough blocks of time on your calendar to accomplish this task.
- **Establish a grading rubric.** Even if one was not given to students, consider working with your teaching team to establish an internal grading rubric.

Emails, emails, emails!

- **Reduce emails with the discussion forum.** If your faculty is supportive, encourage and promote the use of the CoursePlus discussion forum for general, non-personal questions about course content and assignments. This will allow you to answer common questions ONCE in a public forum. If you receive a question from a student (in person or via email) that the whole class could benefit from, anonymize the question and then post it to the discussion forum with the answer or save it to include in your weekly email to students.

- **Subscribe to the daily digest feature in CoursePlus to receive ONE daily email containing all the NEW discussion forum posts.** This will save you time logging into CoursePlus if there is no new activity.
- **Stay organized.** Create a folder in Outlook *only* for emails pertaining to the course you are TA-ing. As soon as an email is addressed, move it from your inbox to this folder. This may be a great reference/archive if you TA this course again.
- **Schedule time for emails.** Establish a block of time on your calendar once or twice a day—just for writing and responding to emails or the CoursePlus discussion forum. **ONLY** respond to student inquiries during this time block.
- **Do not re-write emails!** After you send an email to a student, save it in a separate word file or folder for future reference. When the same or a similar question comes around again, you are halfway there – just tweak to the situation and send. As a TA, you can also access archived communications from previous course offerings that were sent using the CoursePlus email tool.
- **Send ONE weekly email to students.** Coordinate with your teaching team to draft and send *one* weekly email to students with reminders, course announcements and common questions. Students are swimming in emails too. Sending one weekly email consistently helps them too!

Ask for help!

- **You do not need to provide technical assistance.** If students reach out to you about a technical issue in CoursePlus, do not hesitate to direct them to [CTL Help](#).
- **Reach out!** If you are struggling with something, please talk to your teaching team or fellow TAs.
- **Don't spend time reinventing the wheel.** If you come across something new or challenging, reach out to other TAs, faculty, or other experts for advice and guidance.

*This list is a compilation of advice from the BSPH Teaching Council and the Center for Teaching and Learning. If you found this advice helpful, or have other tips to share, please reach out to Sara Lupolt (slupolt1@jhu.edu).

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