

Time Saving Tips

For Teachers

Borrow and Reuse

TIME SAVED: one hour per assignment

Don't be afraid to ask other instructors who teach the same or similar courses for help or ideas on lesson plans and assignments. They have already done the work – use them as a reference! This will help you save time when coming up with your own course schedule, lesson plans, and assignments.

- Ask for specific ideas on lectures and assignments in the areas you need some help. This way you won't have to wade through superfluous information that doesn't apply to your classroom.
- Every year, assess how your lesson plans and assignments went. Tweak where necessary.
- Make note of student questions or trouble areas on assignments. Use these to stamp out problems before they begin – be more specific in direction, explain certain topics a bit better, and post frequently asked questions for students.

Peer Critique or Grading

TIME SAVED: 20+ minutes per student

Students can be great at giving feedback to their peers. Use that to your advantage! Have your students critique, edit, or grade each other's papers, or, have them do all three! Here are some ideas for how you can use these methods in your classroom.

- Have students critique and edit each other's papers before the final draft is due. Save time by only grading the final draft, which has already gone through a number of edits and revisions.
- Have multiple students grade each paper on their own, then average the given scores.
- Ask students to grade each other's papers before they are turned into you. When you go through to grade each paper, you can look at the student-given feedback and agree or disagree. If you agree, not much more additional feedback is needed. If you disagree, comment where and why.

Ungraded Assignments

TIME SAVED: varies according to assignment length

Students can learn from assignments that are never collected or graded. The work they perform while completing the assignment is what helps them to learn. The beauty of these assignments? They help your students learn but take up no more of your time. Below are some great assignments to try.

- One Minute Papers – ask your students at the end of a lecture or during a natural pause to write down the most important topics from that section's discussion. This helps reiterate the information presented in class and helps as a reference later when studying for exams or simply reviewing notes.
- Require students to keep a daily journal or blog in which they are to keep track of important topics from class and put their ideas and thoughts into words.

Prevent Grading Bottlenecks

TIME SAVED: varies

Even if you only assign a single paper or large assignment over the course of your class, the week or so of your life after the due date goes towards grading. You can spread out your time more evenly by using one of these different methods.

- If the larger assignments you have for your class can be easily divided into clear sections, break them into parts and assign each section at a different time. Being able to grade smaller sections over a matter of weeks will reduce the grading required with the final draft.
- Encourage early submissions to get some grading out of the way.
- Stagger due dates by requiring a portion of your class to turn in papers on one date, another portion a few days later, and another portion a few days after that. This helps you to pace yourself and not feel too overwhelmed.

Peer Assistance

TIME SAVED: 5+ hours per student each semester

As mentioned before, students truly can give good feedback to their peers. They can also act as a great source of information about the class if they pay attention! Instead of letting your students flood you with simple, sometimes silly questions, encourage them to ask their peers before coming to you.

- Have a few short breaks throughout lectures and allow students to help each other fill in any blanks they might have in their notes or clarify fuzzy points.
- Have student lead review sessions where students can ask their classmates questions they might have. Let the others answer the questions they are sure of, and step in when needed.
- Have a question and answer forum on your content management service where students can both ask and answer questions.

Streamlined Schedules

TIME SAVED: 1+ hours per day

Sometimes simply having a great schedule and sticking to it can help you accomplish more in a shorter period of time. Here are some ideas to help you streamline your day.

- Set aside an hour or two to answer emails and return phone calls. During this time, do only those tasks. During any other time, don't allow those things to break up your work flow.
- Schedule work for your most productive hours. If your best hours are first thing in the morning, work on your most important tasks then. Whatever you do, don't schedule time for important tasks for parts of the day when you feel sluggish.
- Make a list of your To Dos and group the most important and time sensitive tasks together. Work on them first, without interruption. Knowing that it is important that these tasks be finished, and soon, will help keep you focused and getting things finished.

Use Technology

TIME SAVED: 10-200+ hours per semester

A plethora of tools exist to help teachers in just as many ways. These tools aren't always fancy, but certainly perform valuable tasks. Whether it's content management or sharing information with your students, below you can find some tools that can help you save time inside and out of your classroom.

- Use content management systems like Blackboard or Moodle
- Help create and store content using wiki pages, blogs programs such as Wordpress, Typepad, and Blogger, Whiteboards, office tools like Microsoft Office and Google Documents, and podcasts and videocasts
- Share original and other content using RSS Feeds, social bookmarking, social networking, photo and video sharing, and Slideshare

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