

# TIPS FOR SURVIVING A SHORTENED SEMESTER

or

## How to Get Through Summer Sessions

A three or four week semester poses different concerns than a normal 15-week semester. It is important that you consider how you will approach the increased demands you will encounter. Different strategies may be required for you to successfully complete a shortened semester. If you plan well, you can help yourself be more productive and less burdened. Here are a few tips:

1. Remember, the semester is shorter but the content is the same. Therefore, a day's worth of a short semester is the equivalent of almost a week's worth of a long semester. This means the workload for a class each day will be at least triple that of a long semester. If you are just coming off a difficult semester and have no break before a short semester starts, it might be best to ask yourself if taking a short semester course would be in your own best interest.
2. In a long semester you spend the number of credit hours for a class in the classroom plus about two hours for each credit hour outside of class for homework. So, the total number of hours of work for a three hour course would be approximately  $(3+6) \times 15 = 135$ . In a short semester you will be dividing that 135 hours by 4 weeks instead of 15, so you should plan to budget approximately 35 hours per week for each three-hour course you take in a shortened semester.
3. Plan enough time in your schedule to accommodate the increased school workload. Short semesters are probably not a good time to be trying to do much more than get through school. Working a full-time job and taking even one course may be overwhelming. You may also need to think about negotiating with others (in your family) to help with some of your routine duties during this time because of the demands the pace of a short semester may make of you.
4. Courses that depend on rote memory and repetition for learning may be especially challenging in a short semester. When learning is based on the ability to constantly repeat (like memorizing all the bones of the body), the best format is the one that gives you the most time to repeat things more often. A shortened semester may look attractive if the goal is to get through something quickly. But, you may find that, with courses that require repetition for mastery, there just isn't enough time in any day or any week to have the time for that repetition, unless that's the only thing you are doing in your life.
5. It is even more imperative in a short semester that you practice a balanced and healthy lifestyle. Remember, since one short semester day is the equivalent of a week of long semester, getting sick or not being able to come to school for a day or two has the potential to put you very far behind in your coursework. Eating right, getting a good

night's sleep, exercising moderately, and doing things to take of yourself help set the stage for you to be healthy enough to get through the semester.

6. You should not be surprised to know that more cases of pure stress reaction may occur in short semesters during the summer than during the rest of the year. Why? Because stress is the level of demand being placed on an individual at any one time. When you compress 135 hours of work (for a three-credit course) from 15 weeks to 3 weeks, the demand goes up...a lot. Take a little time each day just to relax and enjoy. Even 15 minutes of quiet time or a bit self-indulgence will make you more capable of surviving all that will be demanded of you.
7. Because the level of stress you feel is also related to your sense of your ability to handle things, take a serious look at the skills you will need to be successful in a short semester. Things like time management, pacing work instead of procrastinating, good study and test taking skills, good reading skills, self-discipline, high energy, and the ability to carve out the time you need for each task all help to make one more successful during high stress activities. If you feel one of these skills is lacking, you may find it useful to get help improving it. Student Services and your instructor are all good places to start to begin to develop better academic and self-management skills that will help you be more productive and successful.
8. Because time is so compressed, if you begin to have difficulties in a course (or in your life that affects the energy you have), don't wait to talk to the instructor. In a short semester, each day is critical. If you think you ought to wait a week to see if things improve, remember, another quarter or third of the semester just passed by. Take care of difficulties as soon as you become aware of them.

Remember, things are different in a short semester. If you prepare for the differences, you will find it easier to be as successful as you'd like to be!

Where to get help:

- Instructor: Find office number , office hours, and phone number on syllabus
- Student Services: [http://www.uhv.edu/current\\_students.asp](http://www.uhv.edu/current_students.asp)