

Have you taken a longer break from your studies after the birth of your child? Would you like to return to university, but are a little unsure whether you can manage it?

The Diversity & Inclusion Office spoke with Michelle, a mother of three children, who started to study at the University of Basel a few years ago. She has an inspiring attitude and she is very open to share her experience with other parents. Thank you Michelle! Here you find an overview of her tips:

Tips and tricks for parents going back to university

Returning to university is exciting but comes with a set of new opportunities. You have been used to prioritizing your children and family. Initially, it may be challenging to prioritize yourself, but with time, both you and your family will adjust to this new dynamic.

1. Planning ahead

Prioritize open communication with your family about your decision to return to school. Encourage self-sufficiency by involving children in household tasks such as cooking, dishwashing, and laundry. For instance, if the children are 12 years or older, they can be encouraged to manage their own laundry. Additionally, planning meals in advance and assigning each family member the responsibility of cooking a meal, if appropriate for their age, can teach valuable life skills and contribute to a harmonious home environment. Proactive planning and delegation of responsibilities will help create a supportive environment for your academic journey.

2. Help and Support

Seek assistance and support from friends, family, and your employer. Enlisting help with tasks such as babysitting or gardening can provide you with the necessary time and space to focus on your studies. When seeking understanding from friends, engage in open communication to articulate the reasons behind your limited availability due to your academic commitments. Additionally, familiarize yourself with the [childcare options available at the University of Basel](#) to address your child care needs effectively.

3. Time management

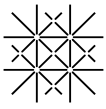
Effective time management is crucial when balancing academic pursuits, work, and family responsibilities. Consider reducing involvement in extracurricular activities, such as assisting regularly with children's school or sports events, to make sufficient time for your studies. Taking a full course load while working more than 20 hours per week may lead to stress or burnout.

Set achievable goals with clear deadlines, such as including buffer time for writing assignments to allow proofreading and edits. The [language center of the University of Basel](#) is available to help strengthen academic writing skills.

Part-time enrollment options exist to accommodate work and family obligations. While it may take longer to complete a program part-time, prioritizing self-care and optimizing your schedule in this way can significantly improve chances of success. For employed students, communicate course commitments respectfully with supervisors to discuss potential work adjustments.

4. Motivation

Building a supportive community can help ease the transition back into academic life. Many fellow students also juggle competing priorities, so do not hesitate to seek their understanding and perspective.



Consider engaging with peers in class chats and study groups on platforms like Whatsapp, Signal etc. You will likely find classmates facing similar challenges who can offer valuable empathy and camaraderie. This social support forms an essential network for sharing knowledge and holding each other accountable. Your diverse life experiences and motivation for returning to education lend a fresh and valued perspective. Do not hesitate to draw from your background to contribute meaningfully to class discussions and school projects.

With maturity and greater independence comes an opportunity to truly customize your education to suit your needs and aspirations. While demands on your time differ from younger undergraduate years, returning to university as a more experienced learner can prove deeply rewarding on an intellectual and personal level.

5. Study Space

Designating a dedicated study space is important for focus and productivity. Aim to set this up before the semester begins.

Where possible, identify a private area at home with a desk or table where you can spread out materials and work without distractions. Sound-absorbing partitions can help create an effective workspace, even in a shared living area.

Especially with younger children, clearly communicate that study time at this space is not to be disrupted unless absolutely necessary. Establishing boundaries respectfully is key. Positive reinforcement works better than punishment - compliment children for respecting quiet times, which strengthens the home learning environment long-term.

Open discussion helps the whole family understand each person's needs. Emphasize that just as studying cannot be interrupted, neither can children's activities. A give-and-take of courtesy and alone time benefits all family members in balancing responsibilities.

Designating a private yet accessible study area allows dedicated work without constant distractions. Clear boundaries and a cooperative approach help integrate academic commitments smoothly into family life.

6. Study Time

It is important to incorporate study time into your schedule. If studying at home is not feasible, consider making a study appointment with a friend at the library. This accountability partnership can benefit both of you by providing structure and support for scheduled study sessions. Alternatively, if leaving home is not an option, you can plan a designated reading hour with your children where they engage in quiet reading or independent activities while you focus on your studies. This approach allows you to create a conducive environment for learning while involving your family in a positive and productive activity.

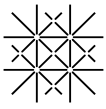
7. Exercise and Sleep

Taking care of your health and well-being should be a top priority as you return to university. The transition can place physical and mental demands, so focus on rest, nutrition, and activities like [the University of Basel's sports program](#). Gentle exercise is ideal for preventing fatigue and reducing stress. Prioritizing quality sleep and mindfulness techniques can optimize your energy and focus. Be kind to yourself through this process by safeguarding time for self-care.

8. Institutional resources

At our university, you will find a wide [range of resources](#) available to support you such as; the student advice center, academic advice, funding, career counseling, social services & health care and diversity & inclusion.

Whether it's through university, private/foundation scholarships, or government-provided aid, financial support options are accessible to students. You are encouraged to schedule an appointment with the [financial aid office](#) to explore these opportunities before or during your studies.



Our on-campus [language center](#) offers valuable support for planning papers, improving writing techniques, and enhancing overall writing skills. Taking advantage of this assistance can greatly enhance your academic experience.

Additionally, our [student advice center](#) can provide guidance in selecting the right program, courses, social advice, and career advice. If you have ADHD or dyslexia, our [social services & health care office](#) can provide the necessary resources to improve your chances of success at the university. The [diversity & inclusion office](#) provides services and information to make everyday life at the University as inclusive and enjoyable as possible for all students.

Furthermore, [the career service center](#) organizes various activities that can be highly beneficial for students. We encourage you to engage with these groups both before and during your studies to maximize your university experience.

Feel free to reach out to these resources to make the most of your academic journey.

And last but not least...

Pursuing your education benefits both you and your family. Many parents are furthering their academic journeys, with research showing students with children often achieve strong results. Children also tend to do better when parents obtain higher education. As you embark on this new chapter, balance school and important events in your children's lives. Returning to university can enrich your entire family.

Have faith in your capabilities - aim for excellence with compassion for yourself. Remember that "good enough is actually enough". You have the strength and determination to complete each task to the best of your abilities.

The University of Basel is committed to supporting students from diverse backgrounds, including parents returning to education. This guide is designed to offer practical tips and strategies to help parents successfully balance their academic pursuits with family responsibilities. The challenges in this situation are different for everyone. Please use this document as inspiration and adapt the tips to your situation.

If you have any questions about balancing family and studies, please do not hesitate to contact us: <https://www.unibas.ch/en/Studies/Advice/Social-Services-Healthcare/Raising-Children-While-Studying.html>.

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