ASSIGNMENT

Topic

Balancing Penn with work, family, and other

activities and responsibilities

Drafting Your Essay

This assignment requires two paragraphs. Each paragraph

employs a pattern of development that was covered in the

reading for this lesson. Before you begin, you should refamiliarize

yourself with narration, description, and process

analysis by reviewing the required readings for Lesson 4.

For your first paragraph, use the narrative and description

techniques you learned in this lesson to describe daily activities.

You’ll write about the activities you dedicate your time

to: schoolwork, family responsibilities, or your job. Don’t

**103**

forget to include other pursuits such as hobbies, sports, and

volunteer and social activities. Since this is your prewriting,

write as much as you can, up to 500 words.

In your second paragraph, focus on how you manage your

time to accomplish everything you need and want to. For this

paragraph, use process analysis to explain how you manage

your time. Consider the tools you employ such as a planner

or calendar, whether paper or electronic, or even a chart or list.

Again, write as much as you want, up to 500 words, to clearly

illustrate your process for managing your busy schedule.

This is an example of what the *description* portion might look

like:

It has been a challenge to balance all the areas of my life

since I became an online student. Each day, I struggle to

balance my full-time job, my personal life, and my schoolwork.

I work as a Physicians’ Aid at Holy Cross Hospital.

Monday through Friday, I leave at 6:00am to make the

hour and ten minute commute from my home so I can be

on time. My job is multifaceted. I help the nurses and

doctors by doing intake for their patients, taking patient

weight and height measurements, temperature, and blood

pressure. I also go over each patient’s medical history to

ensure everything is correct. Most of my job, though, is

focused on administrative duties. With all these responsibilities,

my work day is a blur, and I often don’t have time

to take a break before it is 3:30pm and I begin my commute

home. Even though my workday responsibilities are

done, my weeknight responsibilities often make me feel as

though my day has barely started. I have two teenaged

daughters, Zella and Jade, so I spend much of my

evenings enforcing rules, dispensing advice, helping with

homework, and occasionally providing a shoulder to cry

on. Our dog, Gizmo, also needs attention. I must have

dinner ready for the whole family by 7 PM, when my husband

gets home. After dinner, I am responsible for

cleaning the house. As if this weren’t enough, I am

responsible for looking after my aging mother, since my

sister Alyce is only eighteen and can barely look after herself.

Two or three evenings a week, I go to my mother’s

house, I pay her bills, help with household chores, and

**104**

provide her some much-needed company. I must also

complete my coursework. Though I like my job, I would

like to help animals, not people. So, I enrolled in Penn

Foster’s Veterinary Technician program. I find it very hard

to complete schoolwork amid my other responsibilities. I

am currently taking English Composition and Veterinary

Office Management. I am really enjoying the Veterinary

course. My English Composition course, however, has

been a big of a struggle. The readings for this course

requires my full attention. I find the writing assignments

in the English course interesting and applicable to my

future career, but the amount of effort I must put into

each paper is exhausting. I need at least a two-hour

chunk of time in order to get any meaningful work done,

and that is hard to come by during the day with everything

else going on in my life. I usually try to study

around 11:30pm, once my children and husband have

already gone to bed. However, Gizmo is usually still

awake, and between him vying for my attention and my

sister texting me every three seconds, I am behind on my

schoolwork. Each night, as I stumble into bed around

12:30am, I wonder why I am putting myself through all

this.

Here’s an example of what the *process* portion might look

like:

To help find a way to balance all the home, work, and

school responsibilities together, I decided to use some

time-saving techniques, ask my family for help with

responsibilities at home, and set up a distraction-free

study space to help me balance my life. First, I started

saving time by planning out our weekly meals instead of

wasting hours each night trying to think of what we

should have for dinner. I also started making a grocery

list, based on my weekly meal plan, to save time while

grocery shopping. Before I made these changes, I wasted

several hours each week deciding what to make for dinner

or haphazardly picking out random items when grocery

shopping. Now that I have all those extra hours available,

I am able to devote about an additional hour each weekday

evening to my school work. Second, I decided to call a

meeting to delegate some of the chores and responsibilities

at home to my husband and my energy-filled

teens. Zella now handles all the laundry during the week

for both herself and Jade, Jade cleans the bathrooms

every other weekday, and I now handle these chores only

Saturdays. My husband also agreed to cook or bring home

take-out two weekday nights per week, so that I would

only have to cook three weekday evenings. He also agreed

to take one of my three weeknight visits to my mother’s so

that I could have more quality time with the kids, as well

as more extra time for my schoolwork. This is a big relief.

With all this extra help, I now had a total of three full

hours I could study every weeknight. But I still needed a

way to avoid distractions during my designated study

time. So, for my third step, I converted our guest bedroom

into a dedicated office, since we so rarely get visitors anyway.

I sold the guest bed and used the money to buy a

sturdy office desk. Then, I got some good lights to help me

see my schoolwork and a bookshelf on which I organized

all my study guides and work materials. I close the door

whenever I am working so Gizmo can no longer devour my

schoolwork. I also advised my sister that I will be unavailable

each weeknight evening between 9:00pm and

12:00pm, and I shut my phone off and do not log into my

email or messenger services on my computer during this

time, to avoid temptation. My new office has made is so

much easier to get my work done, and I’m now back on

track with all my schoolwork. I even have enough time left

over to take a full day on the weekends (Sunday) to relax

and spend time with family. Honestly, now that I have a

plan and everyone has agreed to help out more, I don’t

feel so stressed, I remember why becoming a Veterinary

Assistant is so important to me, and I know I can do this.