

Our guide to breezing through your childcare qualification



Summary

1. Bite-size chunks
2. A few minutes here, a few minutes there...it soon adds up
3. Find your learning method
4. Don't worry if it doesn't all go in first time
5. Don't be alone
6. Your studying haven
7. Leave me alone!
8. Take a break

Studying for your childcare qualification can be difficult, especially when you have to fit it around full time employment. Luckily, vocational qualifications mean a lot of the work is practical and fits neatly into your job.

Taking feedback from our learners and assessors, we've compiled some tips to help you manage your qualification.

Bite-size chunks

At the beginning of your course, it might seem like you have a huge mountain to climb. That might be true if the course was a week long, but you have months. Start by breaking down everything into weekly tasks. Then, work out how long you will need to spend each week to tackle them all. If you aren't sure at first, ask your assessor who will have plenty of experience helping learners to manage their time. Breaking the course down in this way will make it seem manageable.

It's important to keep yourself on track with regular reviews. Keep a list of what you have to do and sit down once a week to review it. Add to the list and cross off the things you have done. If it helps to motivate you, you can commit to emailing the list to your assessor every week.



Leave me alone!

There'll be a host of distractions wherever you choose to study. Most of these will come from friends and family wanting to talk. These can come in the form of visits, calls or social media, like Facebook or Twitter.

Put your phone in another room, use your laptop only for studying and tell your housemates not to disturb you (that goes for pestering pets too!).

Instead, schedule breaks when you can catch up on Facebook and respond to emails.

A few minutes here, a few minutes there...it soon adds up

Saving up all your studying for Saturday, might mean you don't have to worry about it during the week, but who wants a weekend of work looming over them? Especially when your friends and family have other plans. Here are some ideas for breaking it up:

- **30 minutes during your lunch break**

It's nice to have a break at lunch but how about using some of it to study? Not only is half an hour an ideal length of time for your concentration levels but, if you do it every weekday, that's two and a half hours of productive time under your belt.

- **30 minutes before your evening starts**

Slot in 30 minutes while the dinner is cooking and, along with the 30 minutes you did at lunch, you've totalled up five hours before you even reach the weekend.

- **On the commute**

Do you take the train or bus to work? If so, it's an ideal time to study. Put your headphones on with some soft music to drown out the hustle and study away.



Take a break

Breaks are as important as the study time. Try to concentrate for too long and you'll struggle to absorb the information.

Plan to have a ten minute break every hour and make sure you do something completely different during that time.

Find your learning method

Different people prefer to learn in different ways. Try the following methods to see what works for you:

- **Practical** – taking a vocational qualification, you'll get plenty of chance to practice what you learn. Talk to your assessor and your manager about how you can do this.
- **Reading** – for some, just reading information is enough to understand and remember it.
- **Writing** – reading material and writing notes works for a lot of people. This works best if you read and summarise using your own words because it will show you have understood the information. For the best results, finish writing and re-read your notes before you stop for the day.
- **Visuals** – some people use diagrams and drawings to help them. Don't be afraid to use colours and images to help you remember. Mind maps are a great way to draw and write as you learn. If you've not used them before, a quick Google search will bring up lots of examples. These kinds of things are great for sticking on the walls around the house so you can frequently remind yourself of them.
- **Listening** – record yourself talking about subjects or reading about them. Then you can listen back to the notes wherever you are.



Don't worry if it doesn't all go in first time

It's not unusual to not fully understand something first time. Some concepts are harder to grasp than others.

Start by learning the general principles before concentrating on the details. Sometimes it can just be that the materials you are using are not clear. Remember that your assessor is there to help you with anything you are really struggling with. If you have a friend or a colleague that is taking the same course, ask if they can help.

Another place you could look is online. There may be articles people have written or forum discussions – chances are, if you are struggling, others will be too. Just remember that the internet is not edited, so make sure that what you are reading is from a reputable source.



Don't be alone

Remember being put into groups at school? Or asking your classmates what they 'put for question four on the maths homework'?

Talking through your work can really help to make it clearer. Find a colleague who is taking, or has taken, the same course. Otherwise there are online communities. Lots of learners follow the Parenta Facebook page and use it as a forum for discussion.

Finding some support from your peers can keep you motivated too. Chat about what you're studying, where you've reached and how you are tackling your coursework. You'll want to keep up with the others and the conversation will keep you interested; just because you're not attending a school or college, doesn't mean you can't have virtual classmates.

Your studying haven

Picking the right study place is essential. Make sure you are comfortable and free from distractions. Adequate lighting, a glass of water (dehydration causes concentration levels to drop) and some peace and quiet can go a long way towards successful studying. Snacking is fine as you study, but remember that sugary foods and drinks will make your concentration levels fluctuate. Keep to healthy foods like nuts or yogurt for a productive session and a good night's sleep afterwards.

For more information on creating your learning oasis, see our guide 'Build your study haven'.



And finally...

...enjoy the course! Childcare qualifications are there to help you make your time at work as happy, safe and productive as possible for you and the children. The courses aren't there to catch you out. It's about reaffirming what you know and teaching you some new things along the way.

Good luck!