

10 TIPS TO FIT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT INTO A BUSY LIFE



- 1. Make it a priority.** If you don't there is unlikely to ever be a perfect time.
- 2. Take time to reflect.** [Benchmark](#) your current professional competencies against where you'd like them to be – either to move forward in your current position or to prepare for the next step in your career.
- 3. Be strategic.** Make good use of your time and professional development resources by intentionally filling your identified gaps.
- 4. Start small.** It's generally easier (and more affordable) to fit in a 1-hour webinar or evening workshop than to take a full course or program.
- 5. Find learning that fits.** Consider your [learning style](#), stage of life, roles and responsibilities, geographic location, [budget](#), professional goals, and job or certification requirements. All these, and more, will impact the learning opportunities you choose – whether formal or informal; individual courses, certificates, or degree programs; in-house, classroom-based, or online. Independent reading, job shadowing, cross-training, in-house training, workshops, webinars, conferences, and scheduled courses all meet specific learning needs.
- 6. Organize your time.** Most professional development activities can be clustered into two categories – tasks that can be accomplished a few minutes at a time and tasks that require dedicated time for deeper reflection, reading, and/or writing. Strategically plan your professional development activities – make a list of 5 minute tasks that you can easily do “off the side of your desk” (e.g., registering for a course, ordering a book, Googling a topic, downloading an article). Then, block chunks of dedicated time for reading, taking a course, or attending a conference.
- 7. Find a coach, mentor, or even an expert to observe from afar.** Learning doesn't have to be formal. In fact, it can be more efficient to learn by watching, working alongside, or talking through your challenges with someone who knows your field well.
- 8. Attend a conference.** Some people find it easier to take time off work to focus on professional development. Consider choosing one annual conference as your professional home – a place to learn and network.
- 9. Be creative.** If you don't find the professional development opportunity you need, make it happen. Arrange for [customized in-house training](#), request training topics from your professional association, negotiate a “directed studies” course with a subject matter expert, or do some independent research on a topic that interests you.
- 10. Give back.** Share what you've learned. Contribute to a blog or newsletter, facilitate a “lunch and learn” for your team, submit a proposal for a conference presentation, or write an article for a professional journal. It's amazing how much you'll learn as you prepare to teach others!



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