

TEACHING TIP OF THE MONTH

Theme: Tips for Study/Grading Breaks

Tip 1: Pomodoro Method

As the semester draws to a close, it is important for students and faculty to remember to incorporate self-care into their study and grading routines. Taking breaks helps reduce stress, clears your mind, and improves productivity. Recommendations differ on how often to take breaks and how long to take breaks from brain-intensive activities; however, one technique to use is the [Pomodoro](#) method:

1. Make a to-do list
2. Set a timer for 25 minutes and focus on one task
3. When the timer goes off, take a five-minute break
4. Repeat steps 1-3 until you reach the fourth break
5. Take a longer (15-30) restorative break

If you are not sure what to do during your break, here are a few activities that not only give your brain a break but also help energize you:

- Take a shower
- Make a healthy snack
- Take a walk outside to get fresh air
- Do stretching exercises to reduce tension

Tip 2: Set SMART goals and reward yourself

Set SMART goals (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-bound) to get you through major, time-consuming tasks, and reward yourself with a short, fun activity when you reach the goal. The reward can be something creative (complete a page in a coloring book, make an origami animal), social activity (call/text a friend), or other (listen to the next episode of your favorite podcast). After rewarding yourself, set a new goal to get you through the next leg of your task and identify a new reward. Here are a couple of sample smart goals:

- **Student:** For the next two weeks, I spend one hour each night before bed to outline one chapter to prepare for my sociology exam. After outlining each chapter, I will read a poem from one of my favorite poets.
- **Instructor:** During the two hours before lunch and dinner each day, I will grade six essays (twelve total). I will reward myself with one of my favorite snacks with lunch and Face Timing a different friend each day after dinner.

More Info on Teaching Tips

“Teaching Tips of the Month” began as a project of the Program for Active Learning in STEM (PALS) and Teaching to Increase Diversity and Equity in STEM (TIDES) grants. Many thanks to Ray Gonzales and Alla Webb, who served as Principal Investigators of the TIDES grants. You can view archived Teaching Tips of the Month on [The Hub](#). We welcome feedback and invite you to submit ideas for this publication to Angela Lanier, angela.lanier@montgomerycollege.edu

