LEARNING BOX OF UNPLUGGED ACTIVITIES

The study-work balance

In this unplugged activity, participants take on the role of individuals trying to balance part-time studies with a part-time job. Despite their efforts, they are frequently missing deadlines, arriving late to commitments, or struggling to complete tasks on time.

Participants are given a set of weekly schedules that include work shifts, classes, study time, and personal obligations. Their task is to analyze the schedule, identify conflicts and inefficiencies, and redesign a more realistic and balanced plan that improves time management and reduces missed deadlines.

Target Group

- ☐ Low-skilled adults with low digital competences
- ☑ Low-skilled adults with limited formal education or qualifications
- ☑ Low-skilled adults with low participation in lifelong learning / training opportunities

Learning Objectives

- Analyze a complex schedule with multiple overlapping constraints and responsibilities
- Apply decomposition to break down multiple commitments into manageable time blocks or components
- Identify patterns of overload and recurring conflicts within constrained systems
- Apply abstraction to focus on key constraints such as time, priority, and workload
- Develop a realistic and balanced resource-management strategy

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Theme

Time management and balancing multiple life responsibilities

Duration

60 mins

Level

Intermediate

Computational Thinking Steps Used

- ☐ Decomposition
- ☐ Pattern recognition
- ☑ Abstraction
- ☑ Algorithmic thinking

Methodological Approach

- ☐ Gamification
- ☐ Challenge-Based Learning
- ☐ Collaborative learning
- ☑ Experiential learning

Competence Areas

a) Innovation Competences

- ☐ Creativity
- ☑ Critical thinking
- ☑ Problem solving
- ☐ Communication
- ☐ Collaboration

b) Information Literacy Competences

- ☑ Ability to access, understand and critically analyse information
- ☐ Interpretation of digital and visual content
- ☐ Awareness of media influence and biases

c) Life and Career Competences

- ☐ Flexibility and adaptability
- ☑ Initiative and autonomy
- ☐ Sociability and intercultural competence
- ☑ Productivity
- ☐ Leadership and responsibility

Learning Outcomes

- Organize and interpret a complex weekly schedule with multiple commitments.
- Identify time conflicts and recurring patterns of overload.
- Apply decomposition to break down responsibilities into manageable time blocks.
- Use abstraction to focus on priorities, deadlines, and constraints.
- Design a more balanced and realistic weekly plan.

Notes

- Use realistic weekly schedules that reflect common adult experiences (part-time jobs, classes, commuting, study time, rest).
- Ensure the initial schedule is intentionally overloaded so that conflicts are clear and meaningful.
- Include both obvious and subtle conflicts (e.g., tight transitions between work and study, insufficient rest time).

- Encourage participants to prioritize explicitly (what is non-negotiable vs. flexible).
- Avoid a single “perfect solution”; multiple balanced schedules can be valid depending on priorities.
- Prompt participants to justify trade-offs (e.g., reducing study time vs. protecting rest or work hours).

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The study-work balance

Step 1: Map your weekly reality

Participants are given a fictional weekly schedule that includes part-time work shifts, classes, study sessions, commuting time, and personal commitments. The schedule is intentionally dense and includes missed deadlines or conflicts as part of the scenario.

They begin by mapping all activities into a clear visual or structured format (e.g., timetable or list), identifying when each commitment occurs and how much time each one requires.

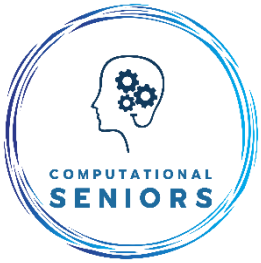
Computational thinking focus: Decomposition, breaking down the week into individual tasks, time blocks, and constraints.

Step 2: Identify conflicts and patterns

Participants analyze the schedule to detect conflicts such as overlapping commitments, insufficient study time, lack of rest, or unrealistic transitions between activities.

They also look for recurring patterns, such as consistently overloaded days or repeated deadline clashes, and prioritize which issues are most critical to solve.

Computational thinking focus: Pattern recognition, identifying recurring scheduling problems and bottlenecks in time allocation.



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Step 3: Redesign a balanced schedule

Participants redesign the weekly plan to reduce conflicts and improve balance between work, study, and personal time. They must make trade-offs, prioritizing certain commitments while ensuring deadlines are met more reliably.

Each participant or group presents and justifies their final schedule, explaining the reasoning behind their decisions and how they addressed the main conflicts.

Computational thinking focus: Abstraction, focusing on key constraints such as time, priorities, and workload while ignoring less relevant details to build an effective solution.

ACTIVITY CARDS

The study-work balance

Card Categories

Weekly schedule

Events

Constrains

Priorities

Priority Levels

Essential
Extremely necessary to take into consideration

High
Importance

Medium
Helpful to take into consideration

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Print and cut the cards on the following slides to use in the activity.

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MONDAY

Work 7:00–13:00

Commute 13:00 - 13:30

Study 14:30–16:30

Errands 17:00–18:30

Study 21:00–23:30

TUESDAY

Study 9:00–12:00

Lunch

Pick up child 16:00

Class 17:00–20:00

Study 21:30–23:00

WEDNESDAY

Work 7:00–13:00

Commute 13:00 - 13:30

Nap 15:00 - 15:30

Study 16:00–18:00

Assignment due 23:59

THURSDAY

Study 9:00–11:30

Appointments 12:00

Pick up child 16:00

Class 17:00–20:00

EXTRA SHIFT OFFERED

Your manager offers you an extra shift on Thursday morning (7:00–12:00).

It pays double but overlaps with your study block.

ASSIGNMENT DEADLINE MOVED

Your Wednesday deadline is moved to Tuesday 23:59.

You lose one full day of preparation.

CHILD SICK

"Your child is sick on Tuesday.

You must stay home all day.

Class and study are cancelled.

TRANSPORT STRIKE

Public transport strike on Friday.

Commute doubles to 80 min each way.

WORK SHIFTS

Monday + Wednesday / 7:00–13:00

Priority: Essential

CLASSES

Tuesday + Thurdsay / 17:00–20:00

Priority: Essential

CHILD PICKUP

Tuesday + Thursday 16:00

Priority: Essential

ASSIGMENT DEADLINES

Wednesday 23:59

Priority: Essential

STUDY SESSIONS

You can decide how many study sessions you do and how long are they

Priority: High

REST PERIODS

Minimum an hour a day is recommended, but you can decide when

Priority: Medium

GROCERY SHOPPING

You can decide the day or time you do the grocery shopping

Priority: High