

CASE STUDY: Anne Drops Out

ANNE was a really committed student—never missed a class, always turned in assignments on time, read almost all assigned readings (even taking notes on them in some situations), got to know each of her professors early in the semester, and never fell behind. In short, she was intelligent and orderly, a professor’s delight!

During the summer she had a baby (**JIMMY**) and decided to take an online class in the fall so she could keep progressing toward her degree. She and **TOM**, her husband, thought this would be manageable, and so Anne signed up for the class early. Tom said he would help take care of Jimmy so she have time to study. She sent an email to the teacher, **PROFESSOR SMITH**, a month before the class began asking for textbook information so she could start reading early.

Two days before the class began, she still hadn’t heard from the instructor, so she contacted the college to get Professor Smith’s phone number. When she called, the Professor said that the email address listed in the schedule was wrong and gave her the correct one as well as the textbook and orientation information.

Though Anne got a later start than she hoped, she was able to do well in the course for the first half of the class. She kept up with the assignments, participated in the online discussion, and asked questions when she was confused.

About halfway through the class, Jimmy started teething and had trouble sleeping. The time Anne had set aside for the class was now taken by soothing Jimmy or catching a nap. Anne tried to work after her husband got home from work, but he wasn’t as skilled with Jimmy and tended to doze off after a hard day at the office. Anne requested an extension, but when her instructor replied 4 days later she said Anne would lose 50% if the assignment was late. Though this was in the syllabus, Anne hoped the instructor would make an exception.

Anne finally began the assignment 2 days before it was due, and when she ran into difficulties, she sent a frantic question to the instructor. The instructor replied 2 days later, the day the assignment was due. Anne then knew how to proceed and was determined to meet the midnight deadline. At 10pm, she was almost finished when Jimmy began crying. Tom was already asleep, so she took care of Jimmy, and with an hour to spare, she returned to her assignment to finish it and turn it in. At about midnight she finished the assignment and attempted to turn it in. Unfortunately, her Internet connection didn’t work, and by the time she figured out the problem and fixed it, the deadline had passed. She sent an email to her professor with the assignment and an explanation, but the instructor still gave her half credit.

“A deadline is a deadline, and learning to meet deadlines is just as important as doing the assignment,” wrote Professor Smith.

The sleep deprived and stressed-out Anne fell apart when she received Professor Smith's email.

"I just can't do it all!" she thought, and dropped the class that afternoon. The next day, she felt more rested and felt some regret for dropping the class after all her hard work, but decided it was too late to do anything about it.

● * * * *

Whose responsibility is it that Anne dropped the course? Give a number to each person listed below in order of responsibility, with 1 being the most responsible and 4 being the least responsible. Be prepared to explain your choices:

| | | | |
|-------|-----------------|-------|-------|
| _____ | Professor Smith | _____ | Tom |
| _____ | Anne | _____ | Jimmy |

Diving Deeper:

1. Is there someone not mentioned in the story who may also bear responsibility for this situation? Who? How?
2. What were some of the successful strategies Anne exhibited?
3. Put yourself in one of the roles. Would you have done anything differently?