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5 Ideal Jobs for Work-Life Balance

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Training for a triathlon. Knitting. Playing in a rock band. Growing heirloom tomatoes. We each have preferences when it comes to using our precious hours of free time. Whether you choose to work on your political blog or lose yourself in a book, there's no denying that we all could use time to pursue whatever hobby or interest helps us feel more alive.

Sadly, leisure activities usually can't pay the rent or even cover the grocery bill. All too often, personal rejuvenation gets put on the back burner because career demands leave us with little time or energy left to devote to ourselves. Being employed doesn't have to lead to a life dominated by work, however. In fact, there are careers out there that can offer you the freedom to use your "me time" to do exactly what you want.

1. Teacher, K-12

These days, newcomers to the teaching force include twenty-somethings just beginning their career as well as middle-aged workers who are switching to [teaching](#) after working in another field. Average earnings for elementary school teachers were just over \$50,000 in 2007.

Prepare Yourself: If you have a bachelor's degree, becoming a teacher can be as simple as enrolling in a year-long master's [teaching program](#) which can make you eligible for certification as a teacher. Some schools even offer employment in conjunction with a training program, allowing you to earn your credentials while working in a classroom.

Me-Time Potential: Although the workload for teachers during the school year is often intense, extended winter and summer vacations can allow you time to reconnect with yourself and loved ones.

2. Emergency Room Nurse

The fast pace and high intensity of emergency room nursing is not for the faint of heart. However, for registered nurses who perform well under pressure and want a position that will keep their critical thinking skills sharp, ER nursing is an attractive option. The median salary for RNs was \$60,010 in 2007.

Prepare Yourself: To become a registered nurse you'll need at least an [associate's degree in nursing](#), available from vocational schools, community colleges, and even online institutions.

Me-Time Potential: Although working as an ER nurse could keep you challenged while on the job, many professionals in this field enjoy at least several days off a week.

3. Administrative Assistant

Offices of every size, in nearly every industry, rely on [administrative assistants](#) with strong communication and organizational skills to keep them running efficiently. Average salaries in this field were nearly \$30,000 in 2008.

Prepare Yourself: Online diploma, certificate, and associate's degree programs can prepare you for an administrative career, or allow you to specialize as a legal or medical secretary.

Me-Time Potential: Punch out at the end of the day and you should be able to leave most of your work behind, allowing you to spend evenings and weekends as you please.

4. Computer Support Specialist

Maintaining hardware, upgrading software, and keeping a network online are just some of the duties of computer support specialists, whose median earnings were \$42,400 in 2007.

Prepare Yourself: Although some support specialists are self-taught, most employers look for candidates with at least an associate's degree in a computer-related field. A bachelor's degree in [computer science](#) or information systems could offer you more career options, however.

Me-Time Potential: While unexpected tech problems sometimes arise at 4:30 on a Friday afternoon, computer support specialists for the most part enjoy a 40-hour workweek, with few out-of-the-office responsibilities.

5. Retail Sales Associate

The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that over 500,000 new salespeople will be hired through 2016. Earnings in this field, while low overall, top \$40,000 for sales professionals in the insurance and auto industries.

Prepare Yourself: No formal training is required for entry-level sales positions, but if you would like to be eligible for management jobs or promotions, a bachelor's degree in [sales and marketing](#) is suggested.

Me-Time Potential: Hours for salespeople rarely follow a 9-to-5 workday, as most consumers make purchases on evenings and weekends. If your hobbies are best pursued during daylight hours, however, the schedule of a career in sales could be a perfect fit.

The Bottom Line on Making Time for Yourself

Social obligations, family activities, and household tasks can easily eat into the hours you hope to spend doing your thing. While you may find yourself feeling guilty carving out time for yourself, remember that in order to be an effective worker, friend, or family member, personal time is essential. Plan me-time into your weekly schedule and honor that commitment as you would any other. You deserve it!

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