The problem. One could easily spend all one’s time doing research, or teaching two classes each semester. But to earn one’s salary, develop one’s research and work toward tenure one must do both at once. The problem is to figure out how much time and energy to put into research and how much to put into teaching, and to develop strategies for doing both research and teaching efficiently and effectively.

There is no universal solution to this problem. Each person must try to find the best personal balance between research and teaching. Many factors have to be taken into account, including one’s tendencies and talents, the expectations of one’s discipline and department, and the kind of teaching that one is required to do.

Here are a few recommendations based on my own experience of trying to solve this problem. Some of them may not apply to your situation. I hope that a few of them are helpful to you.

My basic principle is that research should be one’s highest priority, with teaching a close second (and committee work and other institutional obligations third).

This does not always translate into more time spent on research than on teaching. In a given week, when teaching classes and grading student papers, for instance, one might spend much more time on teaching than on research. How can one continue to place the highest priority on research under those inevitable conditions? Here are a few suggestions.

1. Try to arrange your schedule so that you can work every day on your research, preferably first thing in the morning, before you have spent your energy on teaching.
   a. Keep a record of how much time you spend each day on your research.
   b. During a semester when you are teaching, try to reserve at least one day per week when you can work on your research for several hours.
   c. Try to do the most time-consuming and soul-searching aspects of your research over the summer, or during breaks, or semesters off, so you can focus on background reading, writing an outline, or editing a draft during the semesters when you teach.
   d. Do your best to avoid teaching two new courses in any one semester. Try to develop courses that you can teach regularly.
   e. Apply for fellowships and grants that release you from teaching.
f. Don’t accept an invitation (for instance, to write a book review, or to give a substantial talk about a topic that is not integrated with your research project) if it will interfere with more important parts of your research (such as working on a substantial paper or a book).

2. Try to design your courses so that there is some overlap each semester between what you are teaching and your research interests.

   a. Try not to schedule two 100-level classes during the same semester.

   b. Use upper-level classes to examine or develop material that is relevant to your research. (But don’t let this trump curricular and student needs.)

Finally, within a framework that puts research first:

3. Do your best to document, review, and improve your teaching.

   a. Starting in the first year, ask your department chairperson to arrange to have colleagues visit and give you feedback on your teaching. Do this regularly, so there is a record of such visits by the time you come up for tenure.

   b. Request Instructor and Course Evaluation System (ICES) student evaluation forms for each class, and schedule time for students to fill them out. (If you don’t request them, they will not be sent to you.)

   c. Think carefully about your own teaching goals and methods, so that you can evaluate and put into context the feedback you get from colleagues and ICES forms.

   d. Take the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) seminar or the LAS Reflective Teaching Seminar.