

Time Management

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How many times have you said to yourself, "There isn't enough time in the day!"? Several, we're sure. However, don't fret. You're not alone. Our ideas about Time Management can help you to gain better control of your academic schedule and help you feel a little more organized. In this module, we'll uncover information on: How You Spend Your Time, Wasted Time and Ten Tips for Better Time Management.

What is time management?

- "I always end up cramming for exams."
- "I never have enough time to do my work."
- "I only study when there's the pressure of a test."
- "My work always takes longer than I expect it to."
- "I've tried to make schedules for myself, but I don't stick to them."
- "I've tried to make schedules for myself, but unexpected things come up."
- "When I'm doing work in one subject, I get distracted by thoughts of what I have to do for my other classes."

If you have ever thought or said one or more of the above, then you may have to consider better managing your time. There are only 24 hours in your day, just the same as everybody else's. The good news is that there is enough time for the things you want, but only if it's used, and used to your advantage. Time management is the managing of your time so that time is used to your advantage and it gives you a chance to spend your most valuable resource in the way you choose.

In high school you got up at the same time everyday and you went to school from eight o'clock to three o'clock or eight o'clock to 2:30. You basically had no say in where your time went. Now that you are in college your schedule is your business. If you want to have class from one o'clock to four o'clock or eight o'clock to eleven o'clock, it is your business. With this new freedom comes some decisions to make on how to effectively spend your free time. I am sure you have had to deal with a time crunch of several exams in a week or tons of papers and projects with approaching dead lines. And of course, add to that part-time jobs, dating, partying, sleeping and whatever else college students try to cram into their days. So what to do? Study or have fun? These situations can be handled and all it takes is a few techniques on how to better manage your time.

The benefit of using a planner

Time management begins with the use of a calendar or planner with daily lists and taking the time to write down everything that you must do, so that it gets done. If you sleep seven hours a night, you have 119 hours a week do everything that you need to do. That, of course, includes everything from going to class, eating, athletic events, social activities, personal hygiene, time-in-transit, studying, student organizations, and telephone and television time, and everything in between. You must use all 119 hours a week to schedule everything that you must do. Then you must stick to your schedule, which should give you an idea of where your real priorities are.

To begin, make a semester calendar. Use a wall or desk calendar for major exams, due dates, and meetings; basically the events that you must do and that do not change. Use your class syllabi to help you complete the calendar. You should then keep a pocket calendar or use the month calendars in a planner as a reminder of classes, appointments, meetings, and errands. In addition, a weekly schedule should be used, which should be made once a semester of all classes, exercise routine, work and extracurricular activities, housekeeping duties, sleeping and eating, and blank spaces to fit in necessary activities as they come up, which is usually done weekly, preferably on a Sunday night before the week begins. These blank spaces should be utilized for studying and the completion of assignments. Study time should be scheduled at a ratio of two hours of study per hour of class. Moreover, a daily list should be made each day, either when you wake up in the morning or each night before you go to bed. The list should be kept short, about five or six items, both academic and personal. The list should also be prioritized and the items should be small specific goals such as read five pages in psychology, not read a chapter of psychology.

You must learn to use your schedules every day and learn to say "no" so that you can keep to your schedules.

Monitoring your time

Now that we have discussed how to schedule your time, there are a few pointers to consider about the schedules to help make the schedule and to help stick to the schedules.

Tips when making your schedules:

- Be specific. Rather than writing "do Calculus problems," indicate which problems.
- Be reasonable. Schedule what you think you will do.
- Take advantage of ALL your time, including little chunks of time such as riding on the bus.
- Be flexible, use a pencil when making your schedule.
- Plan to review your lecture notes everyday.
- Do not forget to schedule breaks.
- Make use of time before and after class.
- Schedule difficult tasks for your most alert periods.

To plan your time:

- Schedule fixed blocks of time first.
- Include time for errands.
- Schedule time for fun.
- Set realistic goals.
- Study two hours for every hour in class (this varies, some people may need more in certain classes than others).
- Avoid scheduling marathon study sessions.
- Study in short sessions or stop and rest a few minutes every hour.
- Set clear starting and stopping times.
- Plan for the unplanned.
- Study during the daytime, as well as the nighttime.
- Schedule each study period as close to that class meeting as possible.

Time Wasters

If you were to monitor your time for a day you would be sure to find at least one, or maybe even more, time waster. A time waster is something that occurs in the day that is not necessary to your day, and if it did not occur, you could have quite possibly gotten something else done in its place. A time waster prevents you from accomplishing some goal. You need to monitor how much time you spend sleeping, eating, studying, traveling to class, watching television, talking on the phone, running errands, exercising, etc. The two main time wasters in the previous list are watching television and talking on the phone. Time wasters need to be recognized and then one needs to figure out why it occurs and if the situation can be remedied. The following exercise should help you to identify and eliminate time wasters, which would give you more time in your day.

Time Management Exercise

Mark the average hours per day or hours per week spent doing the activities on the left. While filling this out, think about where most of your time is wasted. The time remaining total will automatically update to show the amount of time that could be used for studying per week.

See: <http://tutorials.istudy.psu.edu/timemanagement/TimeEstimator.html>

Life is hectic: Let's make a plan!



- weekly schedule
- long term goals

2. Friends
3. E-mail

discipline

- Follow your schedule
- Be flexible but firm
- Take breaks and reward yourself

Tips to Better Manage Your Time

1. Concentrate on one thing at a time. Study difficult or boring subjects first while you are still fresh and get this "chore" out of the way to make the rest of the day easier for yourself. Be active in what you are doing at the time.
2. Be aware of your best time of the day. When do you study best? Daylight? Nighttime? Schedule study time during your best study hours for the classes that are hardest or you like the least. Experiment. Get up early, stay up late to see what works best for you. Remember to use your daylight hours and minutes and consider staying on campus between classes and finding a quiet place to study.
3. Use waiting time. Have short study tasks ready to do when you are waiting, such as between classes, while waiting for a friend, or standing in line somewhere. An example would be to carry 3 x 5 cards with you that contain facts, formulas, or definitions, which could be brought anywhere while you are waiting. Use time between classes to review class notes and to again use 3 x 5 cards. Use a tape recorder to make a tape of you reading your notes, which you could listen to on the bus, while exercising, or while walking to class.
4. Use a regular study area. Train your body so that you can focus attention more quickly. Use this area ONLY to study, such as the library or a study lounge, which has good lighting, low noise, and no distractions. Find a place where you can study everyday that has tables and chairs, is quiet, and has low traffic. If you are studying at a computer table, shut the computer off. This way, you will not become distracted (tempted) with E-mail or Instant Messenger.
5. Study where you will be alert. Do not study where you sleep and avoid chairs and sofas. You need ENERGY, not relaxation.
6. Pay attention to your attention. Keep a note pad next to you while studying to jot down random thoughts that interfere with your studying. Get them out of your mind and onto a paper so that you can refocus on studying. If the task is really pressuring, do it, and then return to your studying.
7. Agree with living mates (roommates, parents, spouses, or kids) about study time. Have set times or a signal to indicate that you are studying and need to be left alone. Try using a "Do Not Disturb" sign on the door.
8. Get off the phone. Do not use the phone as an excuse to not study. Tell people when they call that you are studying and they should understand. If it is that

- important they will call back. If you must, unplug the phone, let the answer machine pick up, or go study somewhere else where there is not a phone.
9. Learn to say no. People understand that you need to study.
 10. Plan your day each morning or the night before and set priorities for yourself. If you have morning calls, look up the numbers the night before and leave them by the phone. Get the materials you will need together to complete your morning tasks. Pack your lunch and book bag.
 11. Call ahead. Before walking all over campus to get a form or go to a meeting, find out what you need or directions to where you are going.
 12. Do just one more thing. Before going to bed, try to do just one more thing to make the day more complete, and eliminate one task for the next day.
 13. Notice how others misuse your time. If someone else, say a roommate, is misusing your time, then you have to do something about that, such as studying somewhere else, where your roommate can not misuse your time.
 14. Be sure and set deadlines for yourself whenever possible and reward yourself when you get things done as you had planned, especially the important ones.
 15. Make class time your best study time. Go to class prepared, and if you do not have enough time to read the whole assignment, at least look over it. Be sure to review notes from previous class. Listen attentively and paraphrase what the professor says in your own words.
 16. Do NOT procrastinate. Do not let questions about material accumulate. Instead of trying to get it perfect - just do it.
 17. Be realistic in your expectations of yourself.
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Procrastination

- "One more day won't make any difference; I'll just put that off until tomorrow."
- "It won't matter if I'm a few minutes late; no one else will be on time."
- "I work best under pressure."
- "I'll watch just fifteen more minutes of TV."

If you have ever said one of the above or more, or something quite similar, you have most likely been dealing with procrastination.

What is procrastination?

Procrastination is the avoidance of doing a task, which needs to be accomplished. This can lead to feelings of guilt, inadequacy, depression, and self-doubt among students. Procrastination has a high potential for painful consequences. It interferes with the academic and personal success of students.

Why do students procrastinate?

Students procrastinate because of poor time management. Procrastination means not managing your time wisely. You may be uncertain of your priorities, goals, and objectives. You may also be overwhelmed with the task. As a result, you keep putting off your academic assignments for a later date, or spending a great deal of time with your friends and social activities, or worrying about your upcoming examination, class project, and papers, rather than completing them.

Students also procrastinate because they have difficulty concentrating. When you sit at your desk you find yourself daydreaming, staring into space, looking at pictures of your friends, etc., instead of doing the task. Your environment is distracting and noisy. You keep running back and forth for equipment such as pencils, erasers, dictionary, etc. Your desk is cluttered and unorganized and sometimes you sit/lay on your bed to study or do your assignments. You probably notice that all of the examples that you have just read promote time wasting and frustration.

In addition, students procrastinate because of fear and anxiety. You may be overwhelmed with the task and afraid of getting a failing grade. As a result, you spend a great deal of time worrying about your upcoming exams, papers and projects, rather than completing them.

Furthermore, students procrastinate because they have negative beliefs such as: "I cannot succeed in anything" and "I lack the necessary skills to perform the task," which may allow you to stop yourself from getting work done.

Moreover, students procrastinate because of personal problems, finding the task boring, fear of failure, and unrealistic expectations and perfectionism.

Overcoming procrastination

- Recognize self-defeating problems such as fear and anxiety, difficulty concentrating, poor time management, indecisiveness, and perfectionism.
- Identify your personal goals, strengths, weaknesses, values, and priorities. Post your goals so that you are reminded of them daily.
- Discipline yourself to use your time wisely: set priorities. Make a schedule of these priorities and how to accomplish them.
- Study in small blocks instead of long time periods.
- Take big jobs and break them into a series of small ones. For example, take a long reading assignment and break it up into several smaller ones.
- Motivate yourself to study: dwell on success, not on failure.
- Try to study in small groups so that others keep you motivated.
- Set realistic goals for yourself to accomplish.
- Modify your environment: eliminate or minimize noise and distraction. Ensure adequate lighting and have necessary equipment at hand. Do not get too comfortable when studying.
- Make sure your study area is neat to avoid daydreaming.
- Convince yourself that the task is worth doing, even if it's hard getting started.

Preparing for Final Exams

By the end of a semester a standard three-credit course may have covered over a thousand pages of text, forty or more hours of lecture notes, and hundreds of definitions or problems. It is easy to see how you can feel overwhelmed by the volume of material to be learned. Where do you begin.

First, develop a game plan: Creating a plan for the final exams will help you to face finals more confidently.

- List all the courses you currently have to take a final exam in.
- After you have listed all the courses, then indicate the grade average you currently have in the course.
- Next, think in the terms of your goal for the course. What grade do you want to get out of the course?

Now take each course separately - list the course and think about it. What are the things you have to do to make the grade you want in this course?

Review the things you have listed to do for each course. Consider the amount of TIME you have left to do these things. Are they things that realistically can be accomplished in the time you have left before the final exam? If your list can not realistically be accomplished within the amount of time left - make revisions in your list.

Second, schedule study sessions. This should be at least three weeks ahead of time. Make a schedule of when you should study and for what courses, spending more time on the courses you need the most work in to put your goals and plans into action. Decide where you will study; a place with the least amount of distractions as possible, where you can focus. Remember to plan for study breaks and the unexpected. If you are going to study in groups, schedule your meeting sessions. And most importantly, remember to take care of yourself and not to wear yourself out.

Third, identify and select the most important material. To do this, find out about the exam and exactly what will be covered on it; use your course syllabus, the table of contents from your textbook, and old tests, quizzes, and homework assignments. Integrate information from your reading and lecture notes.

Fourth, explain information in your own words. This will improve concentration and provides feedback about how well you understand the material. In addition, it stores the information in your long-term memory.

Fifth, organize and condense information into a one-page summary and make flash cards for memorizing detailed information. Practice asking and answering potential test questions.

Finally, know when to quit studying.

Conclusion

- Am I happy with my time management style?
- Do I need to plan with more structure or less structure?
- What are the problems with my time management style?
- Can I incorporate the planning tips to improve my time management strategies?
- Do I need more help in making a schedule that will work for me?

Hopefully you can answer positively to all, or at least almost all, of the above questions. When managing time, the overall goal is personal effectiveness rather than the time management strategy you have chosen as your own. If you have a style for managing time that is different from any one else's than more power to you for being original. Hopefully the ideas presented in this packet, have supplemented or greatly improved your time management skills.

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