

## Time Management

The goal of effective time management is to make you aware of how you're spending your time and to help you make purposeful decisions as you balance class, study, work, and leisure time. The good news is that you can learn to better manage your time and avoid procrastination. The bad news is that it is going to take some time and discipline as you work to change old habits.

### Step One: Where My Time Goes

The first step is to determine how you are currently using your time. Make a schedule for each day of the week, broken down into 24, one-hour increments. Over the next seven days record how you spent your time. At the end of the week, total your time spent in the following activities to the nearest hour.

Sleeping

Eating

Personal Hygiene (dressing, showering, etc.)

Traveling (to work, class, home, etc.)

Attending class

Studying

Leisure activities (TV, video games, internet, social life, etc.)

Household chores

Working

Exercising

With seven days in a week and 24 hours in a day, by week's end you should total no more than 168 hours. Take a look at these weekly totals. Are they what you expected? Can you be more efficient? Can you make better use of left over time? Can you reapportion your time to better meet your academic goals?

### Step Two: Schedule Your Time

Now that you're aware of where your time goes, you need to start making "informed decisions" about how you use your time. If you don't already have a daily planner, get one. If you do have one, be sure to use it. A planner is an absolute must if you intend to use time efficiently and effectively.

With planner in hand, the first thing you need to do is create a month-by-month, semester long schedule. This schedule should include school-wide information such as the

beginning and ending of classes, holidays, registration dates, drop and add deadlines, final exam week, and other events important to you. Next, use your instructors' syllabi to record the various exam and assignment due dates. Then you should be sure to include personal activities and events, such as trips home, weddings, concerts, and the like. Once these important activities have been recorded, you will have an overview of the entire semester. This overview allows you to plan ahead for activities and insures that you can find the preparation time needed to do your best work.

Second, you need to create a weekly schedule (printable weekly schedule). The weekly schedule provides you with a day-by-day overview of your commitments. These daily calendars can be as detailed as you like, but should be sure to include time designated for classes, exams, study sessions, work, daily review sessions, and other fixed responsibilities. It is important to schedule time for studying. Without setting time aside, it becomes too easy to procrastinate or convince yourself you'll "do it later". Alternately, it is OK to schedule time for recreational activities. Remember, balance among class, study, work, and leisure is important.

Third, you need to keep a daily list of things to do. Everyone has appointments to keep, errands to run, and work they want to complete. A list helps you keep track of what needs to be done and reminds you to prioritize and organize your activities efficiently. It can be a real help in combating procrastination, as well. Make your list a fluid instrument adding new tasks as they arise and crossing-off other items as they are completed.

### Step Three: Attend to the Little Things

What follows are some hints to help you make the most of your time:

Be sure to utilize those "in-between" times. These 10-50 minute breaks are easy to waste.

Make a conscious effort to review class notes, charts, diagrams, flashcards, tables, etc. This is also a good time to get started on a long reading or complete a short assignment. The point is, use the time.

Understand that your energy will fluctuate from day to day; allow for these changes.

Try to establish consistent, daily patterns across class, leisure, and study times.

Take short breaks during long study periods.

Spend time on every subject everyday; it promotes retention

Have a definite place to study; free of distractions.

Be firm with yourself and friends; learn to say no to conversations, telephones, TV, computers, games, etc.

Reward yourself for a good effort.

### Controlling Procrastination

Everyone procrastinates from time-to-time, and sometimes with little consequence. We often therefore, underestimate the effect procrastination can have on our classroom performance. When tasks seem difficult, lengthy, or boring, we are more likely to put them off. Unfortunately, these are exactly the assignments that need our best effort, most preparation time, and greatest attention. When we put our assignments off until the last minute, we are insuring that we won't have the time to give them our best effort. As a result, we earn grades that don't reflect our true abilities.

Try these tips as a means of breaking the procrastination cycle:

Focus on the advantages of completing the assignment early (better grades, less stress, more free-time, etc., etc.), rather than on the reasons you are putting it off.

Use your semester and weekly schedules to anticipate and dedicate the time necessary to do your best work.

When you start early, you have time to break the task down in to more manageable and less unpleasant pieces.

Get organized and have the materials you need at hand.

If you are having trouble getting started, talk to your instructors; they can often boost your confidence and point you in the right direction.

Reward yourself. After you have worked hard, do something you enjoy.