

GOT A MINUTE?

Time Management



As a college student, scheduling and managing time wisely are important for you. Missing important appointments and deadlines can cause complications for you, both academically and socially. This can cause anxiety, frustration, guilt, and other negative feelings. Time management isn't about studying more and socializing less, although in some cases you might want to consider doing either of these things. Instead, time management allows you to make the most of your time and to personalize it to fit your tastes and activities. Being able to set priorities is pertinent for a busy schedule. Because having personal time is crucial to maintaining your health, it's also important for you to know how to save time, as well as enhance the time that you have.

It may seem that there is always something more interesting to do than studying. As a college student, you may struggle with how to manage all of the unstructured time that you now have as opposed to the structure that was provided for you in high school. There was relatively little free time for you during a standard high school day, and time was structured for you to make sure you were in class and on time. In college, you're responsible for managing your own time. For instance, if you live off campus, no one will remind you to go to class. Because you now have considerably more free time, it's important to take control of it by both structuring your schedule and knowing what your priorities are. Structuring your time will allow you to be flexible enough to deal with unexpected occurrences as they happen.

TRACK YOUR TIME

To begin managing your time, you first need a clearer idea of how you currently use your time. You can assess this in several ways, but writing it down is important. One way is to track your time.



You can do this by doing the following:

- Keep track of your time for a week and be fairly specific.
- Note how much work you complete while studying. This will give you a baseline of how much time different courses require.
- Keep track of things that distract you such as email, phone calls, television, or friends. You're more likely to make positive changes if you're first aware of what needs to be changed.
- Estimate weekly time use in various activities.
- Estimate how much study time is needed to get good grades in all of your courses.

Managing your time is important, whether you have too much extra time or you don't have enough time in the week to get everything done. Because it's easy to waste time if you don't have structure or goals, having too much free time can lead to procrastinating. If you have too much extra time, you may want to plan as if you didn't have much time. On the other hand, if you do not have enough time in your schedule, it may mean that you have a negative time balance.

The following are some suggestions on what to do if you have a negative time balance:

- Steal time away from other activities.
- Decide what you can cut back on or eliminate.
- See what you can delegate to others.
- Determine what courses are easier for you. They may not require two hours per week for every hour in class.
- Multi-task! Do two things at once. Combine activities such as socializing and eating, or study while you do laundry.
- Use "waiting" time to study (while standing in line, taking the bus, or waiting for an appointment).



DAILY SCHEDULES

There are a variety of time schedules that can fit your personality. These include planners, electronic planners, a piece of poster board tacked to a wall, or 3x5 cards. Once you decide on the style, the next step is construction. It's best to allow spaces for each hour for a busy schedule. First, put down all of the necessities: classes, work, meals, meetings, and whatever else you think is essential. Now block in your study time, preferably for a time when you are the most energized. Make sure to schedule in study breaks, about 10 minutes each hour. Be realistic on how many courses to take and how difficult each of them may be. To succeed in your courses you need to have the time to study. If you find you don't have time to study and you aren't socializing to an extreme, you might want to consider lightening your academic load.

TIPS FOR SAVING TIME

Now that you know how you spend most of your time, take a look at it. When you think about what activities are most important to you, do you have enough time for all of them? Because it's common for you as a college student to be squeezed for time, several tips have been designed to show you how to schedule and budget your time when it seems you just don't have enough.

- ***Don't be a perfectionist.*** Trying to be a perfect person sets you up for defeat. Nobody can be perfect. Difficult tasks usually result in avoidance and procrastination. You need to set achievable goals, but they should also be challenging. There will always be people both weaker and stronger than you.
- ***Learn to say no.*** For example, an acquaintance of yours would like you to see a movie with him tonight. You made social plans for tomorrow with your friends and tonight you were going to study and do laundry. You really are not interested. You want to say no, but you hate turning people down. Politely saying no should become a habit. Saying no frees up time for the things that are most important.
- ***Prioritize your responsibilities and engagements.*** Those who don't know how to prioritize are doomed to become procrastinators. A "to do list" can place items in the order of their importance. One method is the ABC list. This list is divided into three sections: A, B, or C. Items placed in the A section are those needed to be done that day. The items placed in the B section need completion within the week. The C section items are those things that need to be done within the month. As the B, C



items become more pertinent they are bumped up to the A or B list. Whether it's this method or another that you use, focus on your goals – what is urgent versus what is important.

After scheduling becomes a habit, you can adjust it. It is better to be precise at first. It's always easier to find something to do with your extra time than it is to find extra time to do something. Most importantly, make your scheduling work for you. A time schedule that isn't personalized and honest isn't a time schedule at all. Managing your time allows you to control your time and to be more efficient, and therefore to have more time for leisure activities and enjoy them more when your work is completed.

Time management is a skill that will serve you well in being a successful student. It is an invaluable skill to have throughout life. As you take on the responsibilities of a career and relationships, you will find these skills useful in helping you to live a balanced life and meeting the personal and professional goals you set for yourself.

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