

Managing Time

As you've no doubt discovered, managing your time is very challenging during college. There are a million things to do!

Time management is a means of asserting greater control over your use of time and energy, rather than allowing tasks and demands to control you. It's a given that you'll never be able to do everything that you think you should. By using time management techniques, you ensure that the activities that you don't do are those of your choice--your lowest priorities.

Time management uses two primary tools:

- · Lists of activities and tasks; and
- Schedules

These tools allow you to analyze, understand, organize and prioritize your use of time--not to make you a schedule and task slave, but to make you the master of your time. Only by adopting a systematic approach to time, can a busy person escape the tyranny of time pressure.

Lists

Lists are a key tool in effective time and task management. People without lists are often plagued by worry over whether they've remembered all their important tasks. You can't possibly hold everything in your head, and you'll drive yourself crazy if you try.

Make lists of everything you need to get done. The most effective time managers have multiple lists: a list of college tasks, a list of work tasks, a list for social activities, a list for today, a list for tomorrow, a list for next week, a list for someday... You get the idea.

Prioritize the tasks and activities on your lists. Mark items H, M, and L for high, medium and low priority. Increase your motivation and get a sense of accomplishment by checking off items as you get things done. Your lists help you decide what to do at the moment, what to schedule for later, what to get someone else to do, and what to put off for later.

If you can't stand to face a particular task or activity at the moment, don't worry over your avoidance. Instead, agree with yourself to tackle the difficult or unpleasant item when you feel stronger. Shift temporarily to another priority item. You can get two or three other items done in the time you might have spent fighting yourself over the difficult item.

Schedules

Schedules allow you to understand and plan your use of time. You won't have to stick to any particular schedule, but having a schedule is important in gaining control over your time. You can vary and alter your schedule as you see fit. The schedule allows you to do so by choice and to understand the consequences of scheduling choices that you make.

The benefits of using a schedule, include:

- Written plans make responsibilities seem more manageable and less overwhelming.
- Scheduled tasks are more likely to be completed.
- If you are current on important tasks, you will avoid worry and last-minute rushing.

The first step is to make a weekly schedule that charts your regular activities. Use a grid style chart. Make multiple blank copies of your chart, so you can create alternate and revised versions.

Mon Tues Wed Thurs Fri Sat Sun

7
8
9
Hi
11
Noon
1
etc.

Include work, commuting/travel, family, volunteer activities, exercise, regularly scheduled functions (clubs, church, etc.), socializing with friends, chores and errands, adequate time for sleep, preparing and eating meals, shopping, leisure activities, personal care, and other regular activities and tasks. Don't forget to schedule time to make and review lists and schedules! Be realistic about how much time you spent on each activity.

If there is very little, or no blank, uncommitted time in your schedule grid, you will need to reevaluate how you are allocating your time. You need uncommitted time to allow flexibility, accommodate unanticipated events, tasks and activities.

Evaluating Your Time Management

Analyze how you are spending your time. Look over your schedule grid and make a list to calculate how much time you spend on each kind of activity. Next each activity, calculate and write in the number of hours per week devoted to that activity. Multiply daily activities by 7 days; workday activities by 5 days to arrive at weekly hours:

Classes	Commuting/travel	Clubs, church, etc.
Study	Family	Socializing with friends
Reading	Volunteer activities	Chores/errands
Work	Exercise	Sleep

Preparing and eating meals Leisure activities etc.
Shopping Personal care

At the bottom of your list, total weekly hours for all regular activities. There are 168 hours in a week. Subtract your total weekly activity hours from 168 to calculate your total uncommitted weekly hours: $168 - \text{activity hours} = \text{uncommitted hours}$

Knowing how you spend your time should aid you in planning and predicting project completion:

- How much time have you set aside to meet your study goals?
- Does your time allocation reflect the priority of your study and other goals?
- Can your uncommitted hours be reallocated to meet your study and other priorities?
- List three activities you would like to do in your uncommitted time.

Further time analysis techniques:

- Monitor your time - Keep a log
- Reflect on how you spend your time
- Know when you are productive
- Be aware of when you are using your time unproductively, but not relaxing either

Using Your Lists and Schedules to Manage Your Time

Now you can use your schedule and lists in order to organize and prioritize your tasks and activities in the context of competing activities of work, family, etc. You'll be able to use time management techniques to avoid becoming swamped.

Use a daily or weekly planner. Write down appointments, activities, and meetings in an appointment book. Always know what's ahead for the day. Go to sleep knowing you're prepared for tomorrow.

You also need a long term planner. Use a monthly chart so that you can always plan ahead. Long term planners also serve to remind you to plan your free time constructively.

Plan for an effective schedule:

- Allow sufficient time for sleep, a well-balanced diet, and leisure activities.
- Prioritize.
- Prepare for activities and tasks ahead of time.
- Plan to use "dead time."
- Schedule a weekly review.
- Be careful not to become a slave to your schedule. Remember, you are in charge of your schedule.
- When you decide to substitute an activity in your schedule, just be sure to reschedule the original activity or task to a new time.

Consider using the following array of schedules to organize your time:

Medium term calendar - This is the overview, don't include too much detail. Enter important dates such as important events, projects, meetings, holidays, breaks, etc. Post this schedule in your office area for referral and review, and to chart your progress

General weekly schedule grid- Plan your activities in blocks of hours throughout the week. Fill in all on going activities.

Actual weekly schedule - Modify and detail, working from your general weekly schedule.

Daily schedule or "To Do List" - Complete the night before or the first thing each morning. Include things you intend to accomplish that day, including tasks, appointments, and errands. Check off items you have completed.

Periodically evaluate your time usage, then modify according to your priorities:

Are you using your time to best achieve your goals?

Are you doing what you planned when you said you would?

Can you identify areas when you can use your time more efficiently?

If all this time management seems like a lot of work, rest assured that it is. But it's even more work to live a hectic life without at least some of these techniques. An investment in time management will pay off for you beginning the very first week.

If you or someone you care about would like more information, come in and speak with a professional counselor in 0203 James Hall. All services are free and confidential.

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