

Time Management

Questions to Ask Yourself about Time Management:

How can I balance conflicting priorities?

How can I deal with surprises in time scheduling?

What level of commitments can I handle?

“Our costliest expenditure is time...” - Theophrastus

3 Steps to effective Time Management:



- Effective Time Scheduling
 - Good Goal Setting
- Motivation to follow through with Scheduling and Goal Setting

Each of these areas is inter-related and fundamentally important to individuals' ability to manage their time effectively.

Good Goal Setting:

A goal is a specific outcome that is desired.

Goals should be:

- Specific: Be specific about the task at hand; i.e. instead of saying 'study biology', write down specific objectives such as, 'I will read pg. 129 - 145', or, 'I will write out study questions for chapter 1.'
- Measurable: There should be some tangible evidence of success.
- Achievable: Be realistic about the task to be completed in a time frame you have set. Based on your knowledge of your strengths and weaknesses, use this information to maximize your chances of successfully completing the tasks you have planned.
- Realistic: Setting goals for every minute of the day is unrealistic. Different people will need to plan in varying degrees of detail. You may need to plan on the hour, the half hour, by fifteen-minute blocks, or smaller amounts if you have an extremely busy schedule.
- Time frame: Specify when you plan to work and how long you anticipate it will take you to achieve each goal. Try to stick to your plans for time, but recognize that some things may take longer than initially planned for.

While these strategies for goals are related directly to Time Management efforts, the same basic truths hold true of any goal setting efforts. To truly be effective they must be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and have a time frame in which they must be accomplished.

Motivation:

- Managing your time will give you more free time. If this isn't motivation to manage your time actively, nothing will be!
- Find something that will motivate you to accomplish your goals in the allocated time.
- Reward yourself for accomplishing your goals.

One of the most difficult parts of time management is motivating yourself to follow your scheduled plan.

Time Scheduling:

- Consider a time log to find out how you spend your time. Write down every task, including eating, sleeping, leisure time, etc, and the amount of time it took. Then analyze how you spend your time and where you could have made your time usage more efficient.
- Make a list of everything you have to do in a week and the amount of time that you need to accomplish this, include everything (sleeping, eating, studying, working, relax time, movies, class, exercise, going out with friends, travel time, etc.) Then total the amount of time for these activities. A week only has 168 hours in it (7 days X 24 hours). Most individuals will find that they are committed to more hours of week than there are actual hours. This requires the individual to prioritize the activities in their life.
- Make a “to-do list” everyday, and make it a goal to accomplish everything on your list.
- Use a daily/weekly planner to keep track of what you need to accomplish.
- Use a long-term calendar to record test dates, important due dates, things that you need to plan ahead for.

General Principles of Time Management:

- Many effective schedulers take 5-10 minutes, either in the morning or before they go to bed, to plan their day.
- Allow larger blocks of time for grasping new and/or difficult concepts.
- Keep up with your schedule daily. Letting yourself get behind allows work to build up and it may take longer periods of time to get the work done if this happens.
- Concentrate on learning material the first time around. Then work on reviewing and refreshing material. This will allow you to determine where you need to do more studying instead of reviewing material you are already strong in.
- Avoid marathon study sessions. Most individuals' attention spans range from 20-50 minutes in length depending on the subject matter. Be willing to take short breaks in order to refresh your attention span and recognize your own attention span.
- Use waiting time effectively! Many times you can accomplish a great deal of work in the short bits of time you have before or after class, while you wait for appointments, etc. This is valuable study time that allows you to distribute information over time.
- Divide and conquer. Divide large projects into manageable sections and prepare a schedule for each section.

Keys to Effective Time Management:

- Know how to evaluate and complete tasks in order of importance.
- Recognize your time 'bandits':
 - What are the things that keep you from doing what you planned (T.V., phone, friends)? Avoid them during planned study sessions and use one of them as reward when finished.
 - Find a good study area. Control your study environment (shut off the T.V., don't answer the phone, close your dorm room/bedroom door, ask people not to bother you for a few hours, study elsewhere if this isn't working.)
- Learn to say NO. Protect your planned time and don't spread yourself too thin with extracurricular activities. Over time you will learn what is a manageable work/study load that you can handle.

Tips for Procrastinators:

- Get to work right away. (Do a rough outline, start on the middle if you get stuck in starting or ending)
- Study everyday - Make it a routine! Spending time everyday on each course will prevent pile up. For some, it works best to simply plan study time like it was another class. It can then be a daily scheduled event that you will do.
- Use rewards after study sessions to encourage you to work again the next day. There's no better feeling than accomplishment!

General Time Management Tips:

- Tools that can be used: Planners, digital assistants, computerized schedules, pieces of paper, calendars, time logs, etc.
- Don't forget relaxation time.
- Get enough sleep. Proper sleep will allow you to be more efficient in your usage of time.
- Task diversity may be necessary to avoid boredom.
- 80% of a student's semester can be planned out within the first 2 weeks.
- Ask yourself what you NEED to do.
- Know how to get work done efficiently and quickly without sacrificing quality.
- Keep long- and short-term views in mind.