



6 Time Management

Improve your time management in 3 steps.

College life is busy. There will be lots of things competing for your time: going to lectures, studying, doing project work / assignments, socialising, relaxing and perhaps a part-time job. In college you have a large amount of freedom to choose how to spend your time. If you don't plan and organise how you use your time, the weeks are likely to slip by before you realise the amount of work that you need to complete. It is important to try to make the best use of your time and get the right balance between the activities that are important to you.

Step 1. The Big Picture i.e. Semester Schedule.

Record all your class assignments, including assignment due dates, tests, projects, lab work, essays and the exam period. This lets you know when you are likely to have high academic demands and when you will have more flexibility for scheduling pleasurable events.

Also, record your co-curricular activities e.g. sports training, club events, meetings, social commitments, weekends away and work hours. This will give you a more accurate picture of how full or open your schedule will be throughout the semester.

Review and update your semester schedule regularly to take account of changes in assignment due dates, new activities etc. Keeping an accurate semester schedule facilitates the next step of the process – assessing and planning your weekly workload.

Step 2. Planning - Weekly Schedule

Make a list of what you have to accomplish for the coming week, including class assignments and class attendance. Everything takes time whether it is reading a chapter, working out a problem or writing an outline for a project.

List your co-curricular activities include exercise, meals, time with friends, sport / club commitments and work hours. Preparing dinner and cleaning up afterwards or attending a student club meeting can take as much time as reading a chapter.

Review and update. Review your previous week's schedule to see if there is anything you need bring forward to this week. Update your schedule during the



week if you need to take account of unexpected events or other factors that affect your time.

Estimate how long each task will take. To use your time effectively this is an essential, but overlooked step in the scheduling process. Be conservative with time estimates if you don't know how long something will take. If you finish early you can use the time to do other things you like, but if you haven't allocated enough time you will have to take time away from another task.

Identify the day on which you will accomplish the each task, keeping in mind the amount of time the task will take and other things you must also do that day. This will facilitate the next step of the process, making a daily schedule. Having an overview of the week will help you to realise what needs to be done and you are more likely to avoid missing deadlines.

Use this type of grid as a basis for your weekly timetable. Use different colours for the different activities e.g. blue- college related work, red – social activities, green – for regular day-to-day activities e.g. meals, laundry

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
9-10							
10-11							

Step 3. Daily organiser

Plan each day. Write out a daily schedule each morning or the night before. Use your weekly schedule to identify and set priorities and goals for yourself and try to achieve them. Use an index card or a daily planner. Carry the schedule with you so you can refer to it as needed and cross off items once they are completed. This last step provides a sense of accomplishment.

Assess your priorities. Some activities must be done on a particular day, while others might be optional for that day. You can use the A, B, C system of prioritizing your tasks. A= must be done that day, B= important but not as important as A's and C= optional. Try to accomplish all your A tasks before moving onto the B tasks and then the C tasks.

Check if your schedule realistic. Given the amount of time for each task, is the schedule realistic? If not remove some of the B and C priority items to make the schedule more manageable.



Did you accomplish everything on your list? If not, why not? Was your schedule unrealistic or was your time management ineffective? What adjustments can you make to make your schedule work better.

Ineffective time management – all time can be useful. Identify your main time wasting habits – e.g. watching TV, mobile phone, extended coffee / lunch breaks. When you are aware of them you will be able to take control of them.

Reward yourself when you get things done as you had planned, especially the important ones.