

Time Management

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One of the best metaphors for a student's life is that of a circus performer who balances many plates in the air at once. The plates twirl precariously atop poles as the harried performer works frantically to keep them in motion and aloft. Patience, perseverance, practice and planning are all necessary for performing the trick successfully.

Consider the following suggestions — or habits — that can help you balance your semester and your workload effectively.

Habit 1: Be Proactive

Being proactive means taking initiative, rather than waiting for others to act first or to make decisions for you. The opposite of proactive is **reactive**; reactive people tend to react to whatever is going on around them. Proactive people, on the other hand, act based on principles and purpose.

Habit 2: Begin with the End in Mind

Remember the carpenter's rule: "Measure twice, cut once." Applied to a student's life, this means thinking things through, planning your work, and setting realistic goals.

Habit 3: Put First Things First

Make sure to distinguish the goals that are **truly important** (e.g. completing a research project) from those that may **seem** urgent but are really not important (e.g. organizing a softball game with your friends). Don't spend too much time doing busy work, or work that appears productive but in reality only keeps you occupied.

Habit 4: Look Ahead

An essential part of being proactive — as opposed to reactive — is looking ahead. One way to effectively accomplish this goal is to keep a calendar for each month of the semester. Fill out each calendar carefully and make note of the times of the semester that will likely be difficult for you.

Keeping a weekly schedule can also be very helpful. First, enter all your fixed activities. This means classes, labs, meetings, meals, chores, and sleep. Also be sure to read your class syllabi carefully and enter all test dates, deadlines, due dates, etc. Use this as a master schedule, and make a copy for each week of the semester.

Then at the end of each week, enter necessary tasks and shifting activities on the **following week's schedule**. That way, you'll be able to take a look ahead to the coming week and see not only what you must do, but also any available blocks of free time.

SCHEDULING YOUR TIME

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TIME MANAGEMENT MATRIX

Every activity can be classified in one of the four quadrants ...

	urgent 1	not urgent 2
important	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • crises • pressing problems • deadline-driven projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • planning and preparation • long-term projects • true recreation/relaxation • relationship-building
not important	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • many interruptions • some phone calls • some email or paper mail • many popular activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • trivial tasks • busy work • some phone calls • junk mail or spam

Now consider everything you do over the course of a week.
Classify activities in the matrix below:

	urgent 1	not urgent 2
important	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • • •
not important	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • •

SCHEDULING YOUR TIME

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24 hours per day x 7 days per week = 168 hours total per week

fixed activity	# of hours per day	total hours per week
sleeping	8 hrs.	56 hrs.
eating	3 hrs.	21 hrs.
attending class/labs	4 hrs.	20 hrs.
total time for fixed activities		97 hrs.

168 available hours – 97 fixed hours = **71 FREE HOURS**

so ... it's up to YOU to manage about 10 hours per day

CONSIDER MAKING A SCHEDULE

Some people believe carefully planned schedules will turn them into robots. But the opposite is actually true! Schedules can help you clearly visualize and better understand what you need to accomplish each day, and so they allow you to make the best use of your time.

Begin by recording your fixed activities. These include classes, labs, meals, sleep, workouts, regular meetings, etc. and will remain the same for each week. When you've entered your fixed activities into your weekly schedule, make enough copies for the entire semester.

Then add information on a weekly basis. Each week record class assignments, due dates, exams, etc. Also include estimated study time for each activity.

KEEP THESE SUGGESTIONS IN MIND

- Try planning your day at a regular time. Spend 5 or 10 minutes in the morning or before you go to bed.
- Reserve large blocks of time — such as an hour or more — for working with new material or learning complex concepts. Then figure out how long you're able to concentrate, and divide the large blocks into smaller blocks of that length.
- As you begin work on each block of time, jot down the time you plan to finish. When you reach your goal, reward yourself with a brief break: move around, talk to a friend, check your email, eat a snack. Do something you enjoy for a few minutes.
- Use short periods of time — 15 to 30 minutes — for review. It's especially wise to spend a few minutes reviewing immediately BEFORE a class involving discussion or recitation. Immediately AFTER a lecture class, spend a few minutes reviewing your notes.
- Do something daily. It's hard to catch up once you fall behind.
- Plan to really learn the first time so you can spend the rest of your study time to reviewing the material instead of re-learning it.
- Don't overdo it; leave some blank space on your schedule for spontaneity.

REMEMBER: IT'S HOW YOU USE YOUR TIME THAT COUNTS!

Setting SMART Goals

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Hour	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
7-8							
8-9							
9-10							
10-11							
11-12							
12-1							
1-2							
2-3							
3-4							
4-5							
5-6							
6-7							
7-8							
8-9							
9-10							
10-11							
11-12							
enter total number of hours below							
sleeping							
eating							
class/lab							
other							

Setting SMART Goals

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It's very easy for students to focus on the details of their everyday lives and lose sight of their larger, long-term goals. But the process of setting goals allows you to take charge of your life as a student, to recognize your accomplishments, and to appreciate your achievements.

Why Set Goals?

Studies have shown that people who set goals for themselves are more likely to

- experience less stress and anxiety.
- concentrate and remember more effectively.
- demonstrate greater self-confidence.
- perform better and achieve more.
- be happier and more satisfied.

What are SMART goals?

SMART stands for the five components of a goal: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ction-Oriented, **R**ealistic, and **T**ime-Bound.

The act of thinking carefully about what you want to achieve and determining a clear course of action will give you a better understanding of what your goals are and how you can achieve them.

SPECIFIC. Do you need to finish a particular assignment? Can you break a larger task down into smaller items? Specific goals are goals that state exactly **what** you want to achieve.

MEASURABLE. How many pages? Questions? Laps? Establish clear definitions to help you know if you're reaching (or have reached) your goal. If you're confused about how to measure your goal, you'll be less likely to achieve it.

ACTION-ORIENTED. How many verbs are associated: reading, typing, writing, making? This is the **how** part of goal setting. Describe your goals using action verbs, and outline the exact steps you will take to accomplish your goal.

REALISTIC. Can you do this in the time given? Give yourself the opportunity to succeed by setting goals you'll be able to accomplish. Strive to reach a good middle-ground: goals set too high could discourage you, but goals set too low will fail to challenge and motivate you.

TIME-BOUND. When will you know that you're finished? Decide exactly **when** you'll start and finish your goal. Knowing exactly how long you have to reach your goal is an excellent way to stay motivated and focused.

Setting SMART Goals

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Example of a SMART Goal

General goal: get an 'A' in _____ (specific class)

SMART goal:

- S** I will read and understand the process of osmosis in Chapter 5.
- M** I will answer all the study questions at the end of Chapter 5.
- A** I will Preview, Read, Recall the entire chapter and make flashcards
- R** I will focus on for this assignment from 7 to 9 pm on Wednesday. I have all of the necessary resources.
- T** I'll finish the assignment by 10pm so I can watch The Simpsons.

Now, *you* try a SMART goal:

S _____

M _____

A _____

R _____

T _____

Additional Goal Setting Tips

- Figure out an organizational system for setting and keeping track of your goals. Remember: this sort of thing is highly personal, so what works for someone else might not work well for you.
- Set hierarchies. Be sure to express your goals in order of importance, with the most important goal first on the list. Try arranging by *must do*, *should do*, *could do*.
- Avoid using the word **try** when you set your goals. Be positive! And believe you can succeed without hedging your bets from the start.
- Write your goals on paper, in your PDA, or create a computer document for them. The process of choosing words to express your goals allows you to personalize them and commit yourself to them. It will also help you to stay on top of them.
- Post your goals somewhere you'll see them several time each day.
-

**Things I Have
To Do This Week**

MUST DO!

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

SHOULD DO

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

COULD DO

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____