

Now, Not Then!

Putting off tasks is often a way of trying to temporarily reduce stress. Unfortunately, this approach only delays and concentrates stress. When you begin a task you leave behind all the worry and anticipation that it is “too big” or “so difficult”. Choose some small aspect of the task and get going right away. You can always identify one achievable step to get you started (even if that step is just: find out where to get help, schedule it, and follow through). Once you’ve done the 1st step, identify the next, and the next... and before you know it, you’ll be done!

Group Study

Teaming up to learn together with fellow students can have huge benefits not only for your time, but also for the quality of your understanding and learning in courses. Choose a partner or develop a group that is committed to success. If you are really “free-time-challenged”, try creating an online group to discuss course material.

How To Keep Improving

Just making a great-looking schedule is not going to solve everything. Pay attention to what works for you, always keep some flexibility in your schedule and be willing to adjust your time management strategies on an ongoing basis. Be realistic. Track your use of time and your planning techniques to re-evaluate your progress weekly. Did you accomplish everything you’d hoped for? What worked and what didn’t? Why or why not? Where could you make a few key adjustments? Asking yourself these questions and following up on the answers will lead to better results.

It’s About You Managing You!

Some people want to squeeze more things into their time; others want to ensure that they get good value from their time. Either way, good time management is about good self-management. It is about making good decisions about which tasks to do in order to reach your desired goals.

For further information

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TIME MANAGEMENT

Taking Aim At Your Goals

Time management is all about finding ways to reach your goals. To effectively manage your time, you first need to specify your goals. Write out your goals, including: long-range goals concerning your degree, career, and life; goals for the immediate school year; and short-range goals related to your individual courses and daily commitments. Keeping your list of goals handy can help you to make decisions that will lead to the achievement of your goals and can really help you stay motivated.

Setting Priorities

Which of your goals is most important? Most urgent? The trick to prioritizing effectively is to allot time to the goals you find most important and urgent. Assign a priority value to every item on your “To Do” list and try to work from the most important to the least important.

Knowing Where Your Time Goes

Once you see how much time you actually spend on various tasks, you’ll know better how to direct your time for maximum gain. To really figure out where your time goes, track it daily over the course of a week. You’ll find that you typically use half of the hours in a week (that’s a whopping 84 hours!) on sleeping, eating, commuting, and personal hygiene. All your other tasks – classes, homework, part-time job, relaxation, social time, exercise, etc. – must be completed in the remaining 84 hours. Increasing your time awareness will improve your time management!

Reality Check

Be realistic about planning your time and the amount of time you take for each activity. On days where you have 6 hours of class, 4 hours of a part-time job, and 2 hours of commuting, you are probably not going to be able to stick to a plan of doing another 3 hours of “solid” homework. Setting only 2 hours for a task that you know will take you longer to complete will not improve your speed and will only cause you frustration. Making a plan that you can actually follow will help you be more productive and successful.

Take On The Big Nasty Tasks First

Although it is very tempting to start with the easiest and smallest tasks, such tasks are not normally the ones worth big grades in a course or that move you significantly towards completing your goals. Get in the habit of beginning with small parts of the more difficult and important tasks.

Break It Down!

When you are faced with large tasks such as writing a term paper or studying for a final exam, one of the most effective ways of succeeding is to break large tasks up into small, more manageable tasks. The smaller, concrete tasks will be easier to start and finish than the original large, vaguely stated tasks. In order to keep yourself on track with these smaller tasks, set interim deadlines and link these to appointments with other people whenever possible: supportive peers, counsellors, academic advisors, or instructors.

Get It Outta Your Head!

A written plan can help you make better use of your time. You may find it helpful to colour code your plans to differentiate tasks. Use a monthly calendar to plan out your course goals and to show exams, projects, tests and assignments. Consult your calendar frequently to remind yourself of upcoming deadlines. Use a daily or weekly planner to keep track of your important short-range tasks and appointments. Associating specific tasks to specific times may help you to get them done.

A Few Minutes Here And There

Make use of little bursts of free time, such as the time between classes, on commutes, or while waiting in line. Doing so can help you to recover many hours each week, freeing up time for you to use in other ways. Over the course of a year, small blocks of time multiply into weeks of productive working time. Make use of short lengths of time by reviewing your lecture notes, doing some reading, jotting down some thoughts, or finishing off any tasks that you can.

100% Attention

Give 100% attention to whichever task you have at hand! Contrary to popular belief, multi-tasking is not always a better approach. Sometimes, you’ll improve your efficiency, your sense of productivity, and the quality of your work if you focus singularly on one task at a time.