



TUTORING SERVICES

Managing Time for Success in College

Time is one of our most important resources. Effective time management is a skill most people need to make the most out of their personal and professional lives. To a college student, it can make the difference between a mediocre and a superior performance.

To manage time effectively, you must control it. When you do not consciously control time, your old habits will control your time and set limits on your achievements.

The first two crucial steps in taking control of time are establishing goals and following a schedule. You can use the assignment deadlines and examination dates predetermined for you by your instructors as semester goals. But you must create a schedule that will enable you to reach those goals successfully. This handout presents a method of scheduling and time management that will help you achieve your goals and manage your time effectively.

A Month-at-a-Glance Calendar

Write all important dates on a month-at-a-glance calendar. Note when assignments, themes, reports, and research papers are due. Record dates for quizzes, tests, mid-terms, final examinations, and presentations. These dates are your goals and referring often to your calendar will help you keep focused on your goals.

A Weekly Priority List

Before each school week begins, prepare a weekly priority list that takes into account both short and long-term assignments. List those things that you both need and want to accomplish during the week. First, identify what needs to be read, reviewed, or written for each course. List specific chapters and pages. Then review test schedules and long-term assignments and specify time for preparation. For example, include library time for research if a semester paper is assigned. Use your weekly priority list to break down long-term assignments into manageable pieces and to monitor progress toward your goals.

A Semester Plan

You need to construct a plan for achieving your semester goals that is flexible enough to adjust to your weekly priorities. By planning how you will use all the hours in each day of your week, you can program your time effectively. A semester plan is an effective program for reaching your goals. It is a detailed, weekly schedule of activities. The schedule allots time for classes, studying, personal care, eating, sleeping, recreation, etc. If you construct and conscientiously follow a semester plan, you will establish good time management habits and program yourself for success.

In order to create an efficient schedule for yourself follow these five steps:

- **Identify committed time.** Record those things you must do and/or will do and record the times attached to each activity. Include your class and work times, church and family activities, exercise times, commuting, etc.
- **Identify personal time.** Record the time you need for sleeping, eating, grooming, doing household chores, etc.
- **Estimate study time.** Estimate how much study time you will need for each class. Begin by following the two-for-one rule. Plan to spend two hours studying outside of the classroom for every one hour of class each week. If you spend a total of 12 hours in classes each week, plan at least 24 hours of study time in your schedule. Allot more time to difficult classes and less time to easier classes. Eventually, you will discover how much study time you will need in order to succeed in each class.
- **Establish a study plan.** Set specific times for studying. When possible, incorporate the following time management principles:
 - **Plan for peak periods of concentration.** Determine when your high and low periods of concentration occur. Reserve peak times for intensive study. Use less efficient times for less intensive tasks like rewriting notes and recopying or typing assignments.
 - **Schedule study times according to class periods and course formats.** Study close to the time you are in class. Some classes take more preparation before class. Others require review after class. For a class in which you discuss and recite, plan to study just before class begins. For a lecture course, plan to study soon after the class ends.
 - **Study in time blocks.** Plan 50 minute blocks of study time separated by 10 minute rest periods. Your study time will be more focused when you know when a break will occur.
 - **Study difficult subjects first.** When you begin studying, your mind is alert and fresh and your concentration is better. Do not give in to the temptation to get easy things and little assignments out of the way first.
 - **Practice distributed learning.** Learning occurs more effectively if it is spaced over several study sessions. Study a

subject one hour each of three nights rather than three hours in one evening. You will master the material more easily if you follow this method.

- **Use daylight hours productively.** Research shows that each hour used for study during the day is equal to one and one-half hours used at night.
- **Make your semester plan livable.** Allow adequate time for eating well-balanced meals, sleeping eight hours a night, resting quietly, and relaxing with friends. Your physical health and mental attitude contribute significantly to your success as a student. Leave enough time in your schedule for your physical, social, and recreational needs.
- **Revise your plan.** You probably will not construct the best plan for your needs the first time you try. You will discover what kind of plan will work best as you live with your plan and revise it. Remember that sticking to a sensible, well-balanced plan will make your life easier and help you succeed in college.

Timesaving Tips

Once you have constructed a realistic schedule of activities, you will want to find other ways to become a more efficient student. If you adopt the following timesaving tips, you probably can increase your efficiency.

Look critically at your habits and methods. Improve your skills. Learn how to read your textbooks, take class notes, and organize material more efficiently. Learn how to take tests more effectively. Pick up handouts, attend workshops, and enroll in courses that will improve your study and test taking skills. Improving your skills will help you get more value from your study time.

Form the habit of studying in one place that is conducive to study. Study in a quiet well-lighted place, free from distractions. Study in the same place as a matter of routine. A routine of study in one place establishes an association between the studying habit and the place. Eventually, being in your place of study will make it easier for you to begin. Be sure not to select a place to study that you already associate with another activity. Do not study on your bed or in your favorite TV chair.

Use spare moments. Always carry pocket work so you can study while waiting in lines, eating alone, etc. While walking from class, recall the main points of the lecture you just heard. While walking to class, recall the main points of the the previous lecture. While exercising, think up topics for a paper or work out a topical outline in your head. Use spare moments for memorizing, reviewing, organizing, reflecting, etc.

Use lists to keep yourself organized and save time. Keep lists of errands to run, purchases to make, books to borrow at the library, ideas to remember, etc. Look over your lists daily and see where you can combine activities. You may find that you can stop at the post office on the way to the library or that you can outline a chapter of history while waiting for your wash to finish at the laundromat. Keeping lists and combining activities can reduce the time you need to do things.

Give Yourself Every Chance to Succeed

Realize that most people let their attitudes and behaviors set limits on their accomplishments. But you can accomplish your goals if you let your goals shape your attitudes and behaviors. If you focus on your goals and adopt the following attitudes and behaviors, you will help yourself succeed.

Be tough on yourself. Make a habit of setting an alarm and obeying it. Try not to play games with yourself. Realize that laziness, procrastination, distractibility, and daydreaming are self-defeating behaviors. Avoid making excuses for yourself and exceptions in your study schedule and routines.

Recognize when you are trying to do too much. If life becomes too pressured, hectic, and unmanageable, consider dropping a course. Do not worry about getting behind schedule for graduation. The majority of college students take longer than four years to earn their degrees. Time pressures often are the cause of failures in college. So, do not try to do too much. Relieve yourself of some pressure before your performance in all courses is affected. You need to find your optimum workload by managing your time well and by trying not to do more than you can realistically accomplish.

Be determined and courageous. Realize that you will be successful if you focus on your goals. Be aware that following a time schedule and dedicating yourself to your studies takes courage. You will leave average students behind, even those who are your friends. At times when you feel lonely, you will need to visualize yourself graduated from college. This vision of success will put your temporary loneliness in proper perspective.

Sources: Walter Pauk, *How to Study in College* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.) 1984; and Kathleen McWhorter, *Study and Thinking Skills in College* (Glenview: Scott, Foresman/Little, Brown College Division) 1988.

How do you organize your time?

- Do you set aside time for studying each course that you're taking?
- Do you study only when you are "in the mood?"
- Whenever you study, do you spend some time reviewing?
- Do you schedule time for starting early on a long-term project?
- Do you have a regular time each day for studying particular subjects?
- When you study, do you take a break every thirty to forty minutes?
- Do you study only when you have nothing else to do?
- Do you take time soon after class for revising lecture notes?

- To help estimate time needed for a reading assignment in a particular course, do you know how many textbook pages you can read in ten minutes?
- Before you study, do you estimate the amount of time needed for doing the assignment?
- Do you know what is the best time of the day for you to study?
- Do you prepare a weekly schedule to help you become efficient?
- Do you review regularly even if there is no immediate test?
- Do you set aside time for fun and recreation?

This material has been taken from:

Kathleen T. McWhorter. *Study and Thinking Skills in College*.

Glenview, Illinois: Scott Foresman/Little Brown College Division, 1988 Handouts\Outline