

TIME MANAGEMENT

Academic success is not simply achieved through constant studying, rather it is achieved by keeping a sensible balance between academic and non-academic interests. On the one hand, you will not want to feel a slave to a rigid timetable, but on the other, if you fall behind with your studies you will have to work even harder than usual to catch up.

A number of time-management techniques are described below. As different people have different time clocks and prefer different time-management strategies, what works for another student will not necessarily work for you.

The idea is to experiment with a variety of techniques and discover the ones that suit you best. You can also test and modify a particular plan or compile your own.

The first step is to monitor how you can use your time, and then work on planning it.

Monitor how you use your time during the week

First, calculate how much time (in hours) you spent on the following activities during the last week: sleeping, eating, self-care, travelling, errands, hobbies, exercise, lectures, homework, study, socialising.

Then consider the following questions:

- Which of these do you need to spend more time on?
- Which do you need to spend less time on?
- Were you surprised at the activities you spent so much time on?
- Were you surprised at the ones you spent so little time on? How to plan your time Use a List of Things to Do This is a short-term planner, covering a 24 hour period.
- It is better to prepare this the night before.
- Prioritise the various tasks: A - very important, B - important, C - fairly important.
- Tick off items when you complete them

Use a Timetable

- Schedule fixed blocks of time. Start with class time and work time. These time periods are usually determined in advance. Other activities must be scheduled around them. Then schedule essential daily activities such as eating and sleeping

- Include time for shopping, doing laundry, etc.
- Schedule time for fun. Fun is important. Brains that are constantly stimulated by new ideas and new challenges need time off to digest them.
- Set realistic goals: don't set yourself up for failure by telling yourself you can do a four-hour job in two hours!
- Allow flexibility in your schedule: recognise that unexpected things will happen and allow for them. Perhaps set aside some 'open time' each week.
- Avoid scheduling marathon study sessions. When possible, study in shorter sessions. If/when you study in long sessions, stop and rest for a few minutes every hour. Also, work on several subjects and avoid studying similar subjects back to back.
- Set clear starting and stopping times for specific tasks and stick to them. Use a "Things to do" list for the Week The same principles as compiling a timetable apply here.

In addition:

- Set study goals for the week, and include some time for recall and review.
- Monitor your schedule at the end of the day and decide if it needs to be changed for the next day.
How to get the most out of time
- Study difficult subjects first (or at least second) as we are often more alert and receptive earlier on. Also, you may feel more motivated to continue with your work after completing a difficult task.
- You can use waiting time, such as waiting for a bus, commuting, waiting for the dentist, etc. to complete short tasks. For example, learn or revise formulae and definitions, or listen to tape-recorded summaries and notes.
- Use a regular study area or the library
- In most situations we study where we are alert. Therefore, avoid sofas, beds or easy chairs as your body will be getting the wrong signal. Good lighting and low noise levels are also essential features you need to consider for your study environment.
- Monitor your attention and concentration. If extraneous thoughts impinge on your studying you may decide whether to deal with them now or make a note to do so later. Also, consider the use of concentration strategies.

Concentration Strategies

- Discuss your schedule with your housemates and secure agreement on suitable studying times.
- Get off the phone. Simply say "I can't talk too long, I'm up to my eyes in a project" or use an answering machine.

- Prepare certain tasks the night before: references, books, telephone numbers etc. This tactic helps you get in gear faster the next day.
- Try not to be self-critical. Instead, acknowledge your efforts and accomplishments in taking on this study.
- Make time for other things that are important, that sustain you and keep your energy levels high. Exercise regularly, cook nutritious meals and spend time with family and friends.