

Time Management

How do you use the 168 hours you have in one week? Some students are very good at recording tasks in a day planner and preparing elaborate to-do lists. However, planning does not always translate into completed activities. For some students the act of planning becomes the goal rather than completion of tasks. Like goal setting (see the *Goal Setting* tipsheet), commit yourself to what you schedule and follow through on your intentions.

Benefits of Time Management

Being an effective time manager has several benefits:

- **Reduce Procrastination.** If you schedule specific periods of time to complete activities, you will be less likely to put tasks off until tomorrow.
- **Gain More Control, Less Stress.** Good time management means not waiting until the last minute and rushing to complete assignments. Always feeling behind increases anxiety.
- **Complete More Tasks.** Being a good time manager means that you can complete more tasks and be more successful in what you do. Setting priorities and reassessing your progress can ensure that you spend sufficient time on your academic activities.
- **Enjoy Your Free Time.** Knowing that you have completed your assignments and met your deadlines can make you feel less guilty about taking off some time for yourself.

Time Management Strategies

It is important to **plan your week ahead of time**. The equipment you will need is a day-timer (paper or electronic), a pencil and some alone time to focus on your priorities for the coming week. Slot in all of your **committed activities**: classes, labs, tutorials, part-time job, regular meetings. Slot in those activities that are important for your **well-being**, such as exercise, lunches, breaks, social activities, etc. Then assign time for your **academic work**. A good rule of thumb is to fit in *2-3 hours of study time for every hour you spend in lecture*. Don't forget to account for the time you need to plan and organize group projects; the preparation time for researching papers, and so on. *The Daily Task Planner and Journal* tipsheet is a useful tool to help you plan your week ahead of time and chart your progress.

When planning your schedule it is important to **be flexible**. That's why you use a pencil when you're planning out your week's activities. Sometimes assignments will take longer to complete than you planned; the books you need to start your essay may not be in the library that week; or an emergency may arise. But, since you have been a good time manager, you have allowed for the unexpected by not leaving everything until the last minute.

Using a semester planner is also an efficient way to keep track of projects and appointments for an entire semester. You can purchase one of these wipe-off calendars at the bookstore or business supply store. Using your course outlines, write down all assignments, tests and exams for the semester, giving you an at-a-glance view of the coming months.

Make 'to do' lists. Writing down tasks that you want to complete achieves three important goals:

1. You track what has to be done.
2. Itemizing what has to be done to complete a project helps you to come up with a more accurate estimate of how long the project will take to complete.
3. As in goal setting, by writing down what has to be done, you are making a firm commitment to get the work done.

Planning is important, but unless you **follow through** on your goals, your planning efforts have been in vain! It is normal to expect your motivation to occasionally dip as you progress through the semester. One way to stay motivated and follow through on your goals is to **reward yourself** for accomplishments. You can plan small rewards (such as a half-hour of guilt-free TV-watching after reading your assigned chapters) or a large reward (an evening out with friends after handing in a big paper).

Sometimes **procrastination** can be a major obstacle to developing good time management skills.

Procrastination is defined as delaying tasks for no good reason. If you procrastinate on academic tasks, it's important to notice your internal dialogue. Do you automatically think "I'll do it later" when beginning to work on a specific task? Chances are, now is the best time to get that project started! See our *Procrastination* tipsheet for more information.

It is very important to **evaluate your progress**. Are your strategies working? If things are not going as planned, evaluating your progress on a regular basis will give you the information that you need to modify your time management strategies.

Self-Assessment Exercise

		Yes	No
1.	I have specific times set aside each day to study.		
2.	I have a term planner indicating all of the due dates for my classes.		
3.	I make a 'to do' list for each day of the week.		
4.	I check my 'to do' list at the end of the day to see if I have completed all of the tasks listed.		
5.	I know how much time I spend on school work, part-time work, recreational activities, etc.		
6.	I do not usually feel that I have more work to do than I can handle.		
7.	I do not feel anxious when I spend an evening with my friends because I know that my work is caught up.		
8.	I begin tasks well in advance of due dates rather than leaving them until the week that they are due.		
9.	I am able to plan my time so that I can concentrate on one course at a time.		
10.	I am able to set priorities so that the most immediate and/or important tasks get completed first.		

Your strengths, as a time manager, are indicated by those items to which your response was **yes**. If your answer to an item was **no** you may want to develop more effective strategies in that time management area.

Resources Available at the Academic Advising & Career Centre

You will find more information on time management in some of the study skills books in the Academic Advising & Career Centre (AA&CC). Some books to begin with include: *Manage Your Time*, *Power Over Time*, *Student Time Manager*, and *Learning for Success*.