

TIME SCHEDULING

WHY SCHEDULE YOUR TIME?

If you decide to schedule your time, you will be removing yourself from constant day-to-day, hour-to-hour decisions about how to spend your time. A workable time schedule can desensitize you to momentary distractions. And an hour well begun with study on one course is not disturbed by wondering when you will study for another course or when you'll be able to get out and have some fun. An adequate schedule includes time for every aspect of your life: academic, social, personal. The drop-out rate among college students, particularly freshmen, is due primarily to the fact that the entering students have no experience in planning their use of time.

THERE ARE FOUR MAJOR CONTRIBUTORS TO POOR TIME MANAGEMENT:

1. Disorganization – Many people set out to do a task without completing any preliminary steps, such as gathering necessary materials. Frequent interruptions, to get paper, pencil, calculator, etc., or to make a quick trip to the library, may interfere with any momentum you already have.
2. Perfectionism – When you put a lot of time and effort into a project, you often want every detail to be perfect. However, most people rarely stop to think about it in terms of cost and payoff.
3. Parkinson's Law – Work will expand to fill the time allowed for its completion. Some people claim that they work better or more efficiently under pressure; it is highly likely that Parkinson's Law is operating when they are not under strict time constraints. For example, how long does it take you to clean your apartment when you have set aside all Saturday morning as opposed to the length of time it takes when you are expecting guests to arrive in an hour?
4. Lack of Assertion – Many people spend time doing favors for others that could be better spent on their own tasks. In an effort to please others, we often take time out of our own busy schedules to spend time on their priorities and later resent them when our own work piles up. Being assertive about your own priorities can save you both time and friends in the long run.

CREATE A SCHEDULE

Having a schedule can reduce on tension, worry and daydream. Far from making a robot of you, a time schedule frees you from making top-level decisions constantly; thus, allowing you to make the best use of your time.

Follow these steps when creating your schedule:

1. Write down all your class hours onto the schedule. (Ask a counselor for a "SLAC Daily Schedule.")
2. Write down all other fixed time commitments. (e.g., work, practice time, organization meetings, favorite TV shows, etc.)

3. Write down study times.
 - a. There should be from 1-1/2 to 2 hours of study for each hour of class. A typical 15-credit hour schedule will have 25-30 study hours.
 - b. Identify study hours by class--for example, "study biology" not just "study." You will be amazed at the amount of time you save by knowing what you are going to study, what materials you will need, etc., rather than having to make those decisions each time.
 - c. Do not put more than 2-1/2 hours of study time in one slot.
 - d. Use time between classes and other small bits of time effectively.
 - e. When is your best time of day? Put as much of your studying as possible at that time but do not kid yourself--most students study best during the daytime hours, not three o'clock in the morning.

Keep your schedule where you can see it. It should be conspicuous, so put it on top of your desk or pin it to the wall. The following can be used as a general guideline when creating your schedule:

168 hours in a week
 -56 hours of sleep (8 hours a day)
 -21 hours of eating (3 hours a day)
 -20 hours of attending class and labs

10 of every 24 hours
 are hours in which
 you'll have to make
 DECISIONS about what
 to do.

71 hours/week or 10 hours/day for
 study, recreation, and everything else.

SOME GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR TIME SCHEDULING

Many effective schedulers habitually plan their day at a regular time--5 to 10 minutes in the morning or before going to bed.

Allow larger blocks of time for learning new material, grasping concepts, drafting a theme, etc. Divide these larger blocks of time into definite subparts the length of your concentration span (20 minutes? 30? 10?)

Meeting the demands of each subject - Some classes require more outside work than do others, and some subjects are simply more difficult for some students than for others. You will have to determine what is expected for each class and how that expectation relates to your particular skills and background. If you really work at it, you can usually gain a rather accurate assessment of how much time the class will require within the first week or two.

Creating regular habits - It is very important that you establish regular study habits. To do this, you should study at a REGULAR TIME and in a REGULAR PLACE.

Making use of odd hours - Don't try to schedule all of your studying in the evening and weekends. It is easy to simply waste those scattered one or two hours of free time between classes. Using these times for study will result in more free time in the evenings and weekends for recreation, etc.

Concentrating while studying - This varies from individual to individual, but fatigue is a reality for everyone. When you begin to tire, your ability to concentrate decreases quickly. In general, you should not continue studying for more than TWO HOURS ON ANY ONE COURSE. Take a break and go to a different course. It will pay off in improving your efficiency.

Reviewing information - Reviewing lecture notes, returned quizzes, etc. is an extremely important, but often neglected type of study. Too many students spend almost all their study time in preparation: reading assignments, writing papers, working problems to be turned in, etc., but don't look at them once they are turned in.

Review for a lecture should be done as soon as possible after the lecture. Get after those notes while they are still fresh in your mind. A short, immediate review is vastly superior to many hours of deferred review.

Above all--don't "cram" your reviewing into long, last-minute sessions. It doesn't work and it will make you anxious when you go to a test in confused desperation.

Use short periods of time (15 to 45 minutes) to review. It's especially wise to spend a few minutes reviewing BEFORE a class involving discussion or recitation. Immediately AFTER a lecture class spend a few minutes reviewing your notes.

THERE ARE SOME WAYS IN WHICH YOU CAN HANDLE YOUR TIME MORE EFFECTIVELY:

1. Priorities: Label the tasks of your list A, B, or C, depending on their priority for that particular day (A-high priority, B-medium priority, and C-low priority). The priority level of a given task will likely change from day to day. Watering your plants may be a C priority today, but it will probably become an A priority in two weeks when the leaves begin to turn brown. The most effective use of your time is that spent working on your A priorities.
2. Energy Level - Adjust your schedule to your energy level. If you are an early riser, try to get some work requiring mental effort out of the way before others wake up. If you become sleepy in the afternoon (and can't afford to take a nap) concentrate on tasks requiring physical, rather than mental, exertion; physical activity will increase your energy level as well as get active tasks completed.
3. Self-reinforcement - Set up rewards for yourself for completing tasks. Rewards might include such things as watching your favorite television program after reading tomorrow's assignment, dinner with a friend after a long afternoon spent in the library, or a weekend camping when your English paper is completed. Be sure to reward yourself only if you have done the amount of work specified; allowing yourself to watch the television program even though you still have a chapter left to read defeats the purpose of a reward system.

Effective use of your time may enable you to free time from work tasks and allow you to spend time on activities that you enjoy. The way you spend your time is up to you. Keeping to a schedule is not a matter of "will power," but the development of a habit of referring to the schedule and following its outline. This habit development may take weeks of practice.