

Time Management

Developing time management skills is a journey

that may begin with this Guide, but needs practice and other guidance along the way. One goal is to help yourself become aware of how you use your time as one resource in organizing, prioritizing, and succeeding in your studies in the context of competing activities of friends, work, family, etc.

First: try our exercise in time management:

How do you spend your time each day?

Strategies on using time:

These applications of time management have proven to be effective as good study habits. As we go through each strategy, jot down an idea of what each will look like for you:

- **Blocks of study time and breaks**

As your school term begins and your course schedule is set, develop and plan for, blocks of study time in a typical week. Blocks ideally are around 50 minutes, but perhaps you become restless after only 30 minutes? Some difficult material may require more frequent breaks. Shorten your study blocks if necessary-but don't forget to return to the task at hand! What you do during your break should give you an opportunity to have a snack, relax, or otherwise refresh or re-energize yourself. For example, place blocks of time when you are most productive: are you a morning person or a night owl?

Jot down one best time block you can study. How long is it? What makes for a good break for you? Can you control the activity and return to your studies?

- **Dedicated study spaces**

Determine a place free from distraction (no cell phone or text messaging!) where you can maximize your concentration and be free of the distractions that friends or hobbies can bring! You should also have a back-up space that you can escape to, like the library, departmental study center, even a coffee shop where you can be anonymous. A change of venue may also bring extra resources.

What is the best study space you can think of? What is another?

- **Weekly reviews**

Weekly reviews and updates are also an important strategy. Each week, like a Sunday night, review your assignments, your notes, your calendar. Be mindful that as deadlines and exams approach, your weekly routine must adapt to them!

What is the best time in a week you can review?

- **Prioritize your assignments**

When studying, get in the habit of beginning with the most difficult subject or task. You'll be fresh, and have more energy to take them on when you are at your best. For more difficult courses of study, try to be flexible: for example, build in reaction time when you can get feedback on assignments before they are due.

What subject has always caused you problems?

- **Achieve "stage one"--get something done!**
 The Chinese adage of the longest journey starting with a single step has a couple of meanings: First, you launch the project! Second, by starting, you may realize that there are some things you have not planned for in your process. Details of an assignment are not always evident until you begin the assignment. Another adage is that "perfection is the enemy of good", especially when it prevents you from starting! Given that you build in review, roughly draft your idea and get going! You will have time to edit and develop later.
 What is a first step you can identify for an assignment to get yourself started?
- **Postpone unnecessary activities until the work is done!**
 Postpone tasks or routines that can be put off until your school work is finished!
 This can be the most difficult challenge of time management. As learners we always meet unexpected opportunities that look appealing, then result in poor performance on a test, on a paper, or in preparation for a task. Distracting activities will be more enjoyable later without the pressure of the test, assignment, etc. hanging over your head. Think in terms of pride of accomplishment. Instead of saying "no" learn to say "later".
 What is one distraction that causes you to stop studying?
- **Identify resources to help you**
 Are there tutors? An expert friend? Have you tried a keyword search on the Internet to get better explanations? Are there specialists in the library that can point you to resources?
 What about professionals and professional organizations. Using outside resources can save you time and energy, and solve problems.
 Write down three examples for that difficult subject above?
 Be as specific as possible.
- **Use your free time wisely**
 Think of times when you can study "bits" as when walking, riding the bus, etc. Perhaps you've got music to listen to for your course in music appreciation, or drills in language learning? If you are walking or biking to school, when best to listen? Perhaps you are in a line waiting? Perfect for routine tasks like flash cards, or if you can concentrate, to read or review a chapter. The bottom line is to put your time to good use.
 What is one example of applying free time to your studies?
- **Review notes and readings just before class**
 This may prompt a question or two about something you don't quite understand, to ask about in class, or after. It also demonstrates to your teacher that you are interested and have prepared.
 How would you make time to review?
 Is there free time you can use?
- **Review lecture notes just after class**
 Then review lecture material immediately after class.
 The first 24 hours are critical. Forgetting is greatest within 24 hours without review!
 How would you do this?
 Is there free time you can use?
- **Create a simple "To Do" list**
 This simple program will help you identify a few items, the reason for doing them, a

timeline for getting them done, and then printing this simple list and posting it for reminders.

- **Daily/weekly planner**

Write down appointments, classes, and meetings on a chronological log book or chart.

If you are more visual, sketch out your schedule

First thing in the morning, check what's ahead for the day

always go to sleep knowing you're prepared for tomorrow

- **Long term planner**

Use a monthly chart so that you can plan ahead.

Long term planners will also serve as a reminder to constructively plan time for yourself