

Section 1



TIME MANAGEMENT

Key Points

- 1 The Process for Effective Time Management
- 2 Barriers to Time Management
- 3 SMART Goals
- 4 The POWER Model

In the Army, we speak of resources in terms of the three M's—men, money, and materials. To these three, we must add *time*. However, there is a distinct difference between time and the three other resources. If we do not use our money or materials today, they are available tomorrow. To a lesser degree, this is also true of men. It is not at all true of time, for time is a highly perishable commodity. An hour lost today is lost forever!

GEN Bruce C. Clarke

Introduction

To succeed as a leader, you must competently manage your resources—people, materials, and information. But perhaps the most precious resource you must manage is time. You can't replace time once it's gone.

Time management can also be called “personal management,” since *you* are the only thing you can control. The time-management skills you develop as a Cadet and student will set a pattern for you as a future Army officer. That's why you must cultivate a process for effectively managing time *today*.

As this section points out, you will encounter significant barriers to effective time management. But you can overcome those barriers by setting goals and using systematic techniques.

The Process for Effective Time Management

Time management is a system for getting things done as efficiently and productively as possible. As you assume leadership responsibilities in the Army, your time will become even more valuable and its management more complex. You will need to manage not just your own time, but also the time of those you lead. When you put an efficient time-management system into action, you become a more effective leader because your team members perceive the value you place on both your time and theirs. The respect you show for their time will support everyone's efforts to become more efficient as the unit works toward meeting task deadlines and completing the mission schedule.

But it all starts here in ROTC, where your college studies require significant time-management skills. Your success at cultivating good time-management skills depends on your ability to set aside enough time for each of your classes, sports, and other activities. Doing this efficiently requires that you:

1. Recognize time wasters (black holes)
2. Set goals that will reduce patterns of wasted time
3. Adopt a system like the POWER model.

The POWER model, discussed later in this section, will move you toward your personal, professional, and career goals.

Barriers to Time Management

Have you ever heard of a black hole in astronomy? It's a point in space where a massive object pulls in all light near it. Nothing can escape.

Critical Thinking

Why do you think good time-management skills in an officer foster a productive work ethic among Soldiers in the officer's small Army unit? How does the value you place on time management translate into your team members wasting less time? Is there a trickle-down effect?

Your Calendar

Create your own semester calendar that includes all classes, key assignments, fitness workouts, sports events, extracurricular activities, social events, and any other important times for the coming semester. Use this calendar to determine how much time you still have open and to identify weeks (usually during midterms and finals) when you will need to plan and work ahead to avoid becoming overwhelmed.

Critical Thinking

Pick a goal you have set for yourself: Make enough money to buy a car; graduate with honors; land a summer internship at the state capital; improve your foreign language skills. Now turn it into a SMART goal using the model below. What did you learn about yourself and your goal?

In your schedule, “black holes” are spaces of time that eat into your productivity and prevent you from reaching your goals and the goals of others you work with. Black holes devour productive time and consume your efficiency.

The ability to identify black holes is the first and most important aspect of good time management. To do this, you should conduct an informal inventory of how you use your time. Consider a typical week and, within that week, a typical day. Most people are surprised at how much of their time is unfocused and unstructured—without a specific goal or purpose. Two causes of black holes are *procrastination*—putting things off—and *distracters*—things that take you away from your planned work or activities.

One way to fight procrastination is to realize that it will only make things worse. As George H. Lorimer, editor of the old *Saturday Evening Post*, once put it, “Putting off an easy thing makes it hard, and putting off a hard one makes it impossible.” Distracters are often subtle. They might be talking on the phone with friends or relatives, losing track of time while Instant Messaging or playing video games, or helping other people on their projects. Or you may face an unexpected change in your work schedule. Learning to deal with distracters—saying no when necessary; turning off your cell phone, the IM, or the video game; negotiating your schedule with your supervisor; even finding a different spot to work or study away from distractions—builds the discipline that helps you stay on course.

Trying to overcome these two sources of black holes in your life goes a long way toward improving your use of available time. Additionally, the better you get at completing work on schedule, the better you’ll get at scheduling time for recreation, hobbies, social activities, and other things you enjoy.

SMART Goals

Goal setting is a critical part of managing your time. If you don’t know where you are going, how can you possibly calculate how long it will take you to get there?

TABLE 1.1**The SMART Model**

S pecific	make the goal concrete and clear
M easurable	decide how you will measure success in reaching the goal
A chievable	keep goals reasonable—milestones are helpful
R ealistic	consider other factors that may affect the goal
T ime-bound	make yourself accountable for a specific date

TABLE 1.2

The **POWER** Model

P repare	set SMART goals
O rganize	keep a calendar to know where you are, where you've been, and what's ahead
W ork	work on establishing boundaries for your time—prioritize activities, avoid procrastinating, learn when to say no, and keep track of how long important tasks take
E valuate	review how you're spending your time
R ethink	explore better and better ways of managing your time—identify what you need to change

The SMART model for goal setting, spelled out in Table 1.1, is a useful starting point for filling up black holes with useful activities—activities that get you where you want to go on your mission, in your career, and in your life.

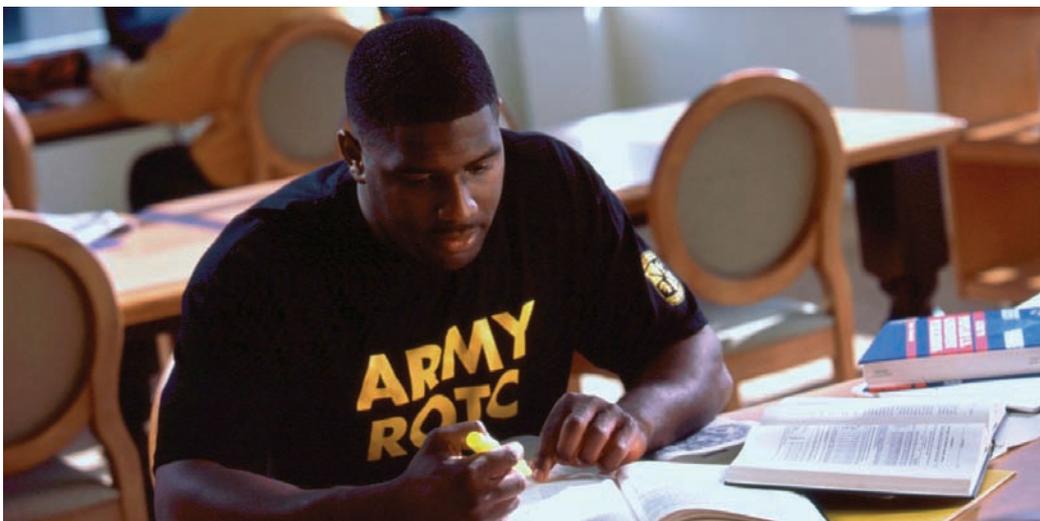
The POWER Model

Once you have established your goals, you need to apply an effective time-management system to reach them. The POWER model outlined in the table above provides you with such a system. Practice techniques of good time management, such as completing tasks before moving to the next item or limiting distractions when doing exercise or homework. Some useful tools include a calendar, a weekly schedule, and a To-Do list. You can find sophisticated time-management aids at an office-supply store or perhaps your student bookstore. Your personal computer may also have useful time-management software.

In applying any time-management strategy, it's a good idea to keep in mind that you must be flexible. Since no one can foresee the future, you need to be willing to modify your plans to accommodate events and even a few surprises.

Tools for Productive Time Management:

1. Calendar
2. Weekly Schedule
3. To-Do List.



Time management is a system for getting things done as efficiently and productively as possible.



CONCLUSION

Successful leaders such as GEN Bruce Clarke recognize that using time more efficiently than the enemy is the first requirement for victory. They also realize that successful time management is a never-ending process.

As a Cadet and future Army leader, you must adopt time-management systems that allow you to envision how to achieve goals and objectives, plan to reach those goals, organize your time, and continue to improve.

It's time to take control of your time using the SMART technique and POWER model you've learned. Start today!

Learning Assessment

1. Trade one of your personal goals for this semester with a fellow Cadet in the class. How specific is his or her goal? Is it measurable? Achievable? Realistic? What is the timetable for achieving the goal? Brief your partner on your SMART observations about his or her goal.
2. Describe the POWER model for effective time management. List some of the barriers you might encounter and how you would plan to overcome them.

References

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