

Student Success Tools

Time Management

Learning how to manage your time so that you can accomplish what you set out to accomplish is a skill that will help you throughout your life. It is particularly helpful when you are a college student as you have deadlines and many competing priorities that need your attention. It's natural to feel overwhelmed and anxious at times, but having a plan to help you get organized and set priorities will help ease the tension. Everyone develops their own approach to better manage time, and here are a few tips to help you:

Anticipate and plan. Every student needs to have some kind of tool to keep track of his/her busy life. This could be a day planner, a cell phone, or a legal pad. Whatever the tool, it needs to be something you can carry with you, and you also need to be able to see at least a week at a time so that projects or tests don't sneak up on you. Most tasks take longer than we think they will, so if you think about things in advance and plan for the certainties, you will have enough flexibility in your schedule to handle the unexpected things that come up. Put everything on your calendar...tests and projects, study time, social engagements etc.

Break tasks down. Whether you are faced with a big task, such as graduating in four years, or smaller tasks, such as studying for a final, it helps if you break the task down into smaller, more manageable parts. Students who procrastinate often comment that when they wait to the last minute to complete a project, they often feel overwhelmed, and the task seems insurmountable. By setting priorities and breaking the bigger project into smaller tasks, the work is more manageable and less intimidating. Here's how to break tasks down:

1. Look at the big picture; make sure you understand what the end product should look like. Ask the professor to show you examples from previous classes.
2. Look at the parts. What pieces will enable you to get to the whole? Figure out step-by-step what you need to do. It's not going to happen through magic.
3. Think about the logical order of completing the pieces. What should you do first?



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4. Create a timeline for completing your tasks.
5. Have a plan to help you stay on track. Put the time you will spend on the project into your study schedule so that you can set aside the time for it. Stick with this plan. A plan is only good if you see it through.
6. Complete it early enough to have some time left for a final review.

Cross things off. Making a to-do list is an essential part of effective time management. Making these lists helps you see all that has to be done, and it is a memory jogger to remind you of what has to be done. You can make immediate to-do lists and longer term to-do lists. Putting a date when tasks are due is helpful. Once you make a list, make sure you have it in a convenient place...somewhere you will see it easily and often!

Here is an example:

1. Write outline for psychology class by Friday.
2. Do laundry Saturday.
3. Meet with study group Sunday afternoon.
4. Call MOM Sunday night.

Don't procrastinate. If most of your life you have followed the belief of “don't do today what you can put off until tomorrow,” then most likely you brought this mindset with you to college. Procrastination can lead to many sleepless nights (literally) and can contribute to academic and personal difficulties. Procrastination can simply be a way of life for many students, and this can be stressful for them as well as others around them. It might be hard to do, but take care of business first, and then do fun things. There are resources on campus that can help you learn how to deal with procrastination so that you can get your work done in a more productive way.

