

TWU Counseling Center

Efficient Time Scheduling

Being successful at the university level will probably require a more careful and effective utilization of time than you have ever achieved before. Using time efficiently involves setting little goals to achieve your big ones. This handout will give you steps to look at the “big picture” and then narrow down your requirements into smaller and more manageable tasks. Follow these five steps and learn how to really control your life using: 1) Assignment List; 2) Semester Calendar; 3) Master Weekly Schedule; 4) Weekly Schedule; 5) Daily “To Do” List.

Step 1. Prepare an Assignment List for all of your courses for the entire semester.

1. List all of your course work for the semester including readings, projects, papers, tests, test preparation time. etc.
2. Look at each assignment. You will want to break each one into small units which will fit as closely as possible into a 50 minute block of time by breaking big assignments and long-term assignments, like papers, into sub-parts which are listed separately. (e.g., 1) develop topic; 2) library search; 3) outline; 4) first draft; 5) second draft; 6) type). List all readings.
3. Estimate how long you expect each activity to take then double it. As you improve your time management, you will probably improve your estimate of how long tasks will take.
4. List the dates when assignments (or sub-parts of assignments) should be completed. Helpful tip - Consider working backward from the due date to help you estimate how much time you will need for each part.

WHY: Completing the Assignment List provides you with the specific things which you need to do during the semester and a timetable for completing them.

Step 2. Make a Semester Calendar.

On a calendar for the entire semester, place all of the items from Step 1 onto the calendar.

Add other events you know will be occurring (for your particular situation) – e.g. trips, visits by friends or family, concerts, movies, children’s sports events, birthdays, etc.

WHY: This is a valuable method of visualizing upcoming events and responsibilities (i.e., exam dates, project dates and meeting dates, etc.). Keep it in a visible place. Don’t be tempted to overfill it.

Step 3. Create a Master Weekly Schedule that contains all of the fixed or regular activities which you expect to remain the same from week to week for the entire semester.

1. Enter your course schedule.
2. Enter other routine meetings and responsibilities (e.g., work, church, sports practice, etc.)
3. Enter routine mealtime, travel time, sleep, exercise, laundry, shopping, cleaning, etc.
4. Enter regular times for recreation (social hobbies, athletics, private time.)

WHY: By programming your time you will gain more time. This can be done in two ways; first, by doing a job in a focused and concentrated way you use less time than in the past, and second, by using leftover blocks of time that are normally wasted. By recording your fixed activities, you can visualize available blocks of time.

Step 4. Construct a Weekly Schedule. You are now ready to use your Master Schedule as a base for your weekly schedule. (Be sure you make enough copies for the whole semester.)

1. Plan your activities in time blocks of 50 minutes, followed by a 10 minute break.
2. Plug your study times into your schedule using your most alert times of the day for studying.
3. For a lecture-type class, use study time blocks immediately after the class to keep material fresh in your mind.
4. For a recitation-type class (i.e., a foreign language) use study time blocks immediately before the class to keep material fresh in your mind.
5. Prioritize your most important activities into your schedule first to enable you to get them done on time. Start early.
6. Use your schedule to allow for 8 hours of sleep a night, and adequate time for eating a well-balanced diet. Both are vital for maximum efficiency during the day.
7. Start by allowing at least 2 hours of study for every hour of class time. Then adjust accordingly to master your material, not just cover it.
8. After trying your schedule, make the necessary adjustments to create the best and most workable schedule for you. Some students do best with a detailed weekly schedule, or a more simplified list of things to do, or one in between. Your revision is your key to an effective schedule of living. Fit this idea to your personal style.

Step 5. Make a daily "To Do" List. This list can be the real secret to your success if you do it every day. Some people end the day by listing tasks to do the next day, while others prefer to make a "to do" list in the morning. A 3 x 5" card that fits into a pocket for easy and frequent reference works very well. Mark the activities that have a high priority today and will require some special attention. Cross each item off as it is completed during the day. Pay more attention to those marked as a higher priority. Don't go for the higher percentage of tasks (that usually require less time) because you may end with a lower effectiveness level by accomplishing only your lower priorities. Remember, completing your list is not as important as making the best use of your time during the day.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS THAT STUDENTS HAVE FOUND USEFUL:

1. **STUDY AT THE SAME TIME EVERY DAY.** In so far as possible, you should schedule certain hours which are used for studying almost every day in a habitual, systematic way. Having regular hours at least five days a week will make it easier to habitually follow the schedule and to maintain an active approach to study.
2. **MAKE USE OF THE FREE HOURS DURING THE SCHOOL DAY.** The hours between classes may be your most valuable study time yet, ironically, the most frequently misused. You can use this time effectively by reviewing the material and editing the notes of the preceding class and/or studying the material to be discussed in the following class.
3. **SPACE STUDY PERIODS.** Fifty to ninety minutes of study at a time for each course works best. Relaxation periods of ten or fifteen minutes should be scheduled between study periods. It is more efficient to study hard for a definite period of time and then stop for a few minutes, than to attempt to study on indefinitely.
4. **PLAN FOR WEEKLY REVIEWS.** At least one hour each week for each class (distinct from study time) should be scheduled. The weekend is a good time for review.
5. **LEAVE SOME UNSCHEDULED TIME FOR FLEXIBILITY.** This is important. Lack of flexibility is the major reason why schedules fail. Students tend to over-schedule themselves.
6. **ALLOT TIME FOR RECREATION, CAMPUS AND CHURCH ACTIVITIES, ETC.**
7. When forced to deviate from your planned schedule (and that will invariably occur), you should trade time rather than steal it from your schedule. Thus, if you have an unexpected visitor at a time reserved for study, you can substitute an equal amount of study time for the period you set aside for recreation (or use some of the time you left unscheduled).

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