

Managing Your Time

“HOW AM I GOING TO GET EVERYTHING DONE?”

As a college student who juggles academic, job, extracurricular, social, and personal demands, this question describes the continual challenge you will face during your college experience. Time can be your ally or your foe, depending on how skilled you are at managing it. As a result, time management will be one of the most important skills you will need and use during your college experience.

This Idea Sheet will concentrate on one element of time management: the planning process. Other Idea Sheets concentrate on additional important aspects of time management, such as assessing your values (so you are spending your time on what is most important to you), setting goals, and eliminating procrastination.



PLANNING PROCESS

1. **Devote at least 10 minutes a day to planning.** This involves sitting down in a quiet environment, comparing what you planned to do with what you accomplished for that day. Look ahead on your planning calendars to see what activities or projects are scheduled for the next few days or weeks. A daily review allows you to make schedule adjustments and to prepare mentally, physically, and emotionally for the demands on your time.
2. **Write out a priority task list - “To Do” list.** A “To Do” list is a daily or weekly list that identifies what specific tasks you must accomplish to reach the goals you have set for yourself. It serves as a visual reminder and helps you to prioritize your tasks. A “To Do” list can also help you eliminate unnecessary tasks or delegate those that don’t really require your individual attention.

Example:

If you have set a goal to get an “A” in Math 1050, your “To Do” list would include activities that help you accomplish this goal.

1. Go to free math tutoring today 12:00-2:00 at the Math/Stats Tutoring Center, TSC 225A.
 2. Do homework on quadratic equations pgs. 124-127.
 3. Pick up copy of last year’s Math 1050 final from Academic Resource Center, TSC 305.
3. **Prepare and use a daily/weekly planning calendar.** A daily/weekly calendar will help you monitor where you are spending time, to determine if you are spending time on those activities most important to you. It will visually tell you how much of your time is committed to activities over which you may have minimal control (classes, labs, work, etc.) It will also visually tell you whether you have a reasonable amount of unscheduled time to accomplish what you need for your various activities.

You try it! Use the daily/weekly planning calendar form at www.usu.edu/arc/idea_sheets and follow these steps:

Step 1:

Schedule fixed blocks of time first. Start with classes, labs, meetings, and study time. Other activities such as work hours, social/extracurricular activities, and errands need to be scheduled around these. **Remember:** The standard advice for study time is two hours of study for every hour in class. Avoid scheduling marathon study sessions. Shorter sessions with brief breaks, two to three hours maximum, tend to be more productive.

Step 2:

Schedule essential daily activities like sleeping and eating. Be realistic; schedule healthy time periods for these activities.

Step 3:

Make 10 photocopies after entering information from Steps 1 and 2. This will save you time in writing your fixed schedule over and over.

Step 4:

Date the calendar copies (e.g. week of May 19-25) and enter your variable activities for each week. Consider setting aside "flex" time each week for unexpected emergencies, activities, and catching up. Put one copy in your room in a clearly visible place, next to your monthly planning calendar. Keep a second copy with you.

4. **Prepare and use a monthly or semester planner.** Obtain a course syllabus from each of your instructors. All examinations and due dates of major assignments, projects, and papers need to be entered on your semester calendar. This will give you an overview of your semester at a glance and assist you in preparing and planning your activities throughout the semester.

You try it! Use the semester planning calendar at www.usu.edu/arc/idea_sheets to enter all important dates for the semester. Remember to include dates for exams, due dates for papers and projects, appointments and meetings, last day to add/drop classes, vacations and holidays, etc. Make two copies. Keep one in your room in a clearly visible place, next to your weekly calendar, and keep the other copy with you.

IMPORTANT: Planning calendars are meant to help you manage your time. Use them in whatever way facilitates that goal. This Idea Sheet is just that - a presentation of ideas you can try or adapt to meet your individual situation.