

## **TIME MANAGEMENT**

### **What is Time Management?**

Have you ever felt overwhelmed because you had too much to do and too little time? Have you ever missed a deadline because there just was not enough time to complete the task? Are you notoriously late for appointments or classes? If you answered yes to any of these questions, you may be in need of some time management. Essentially, *time management* is implementing techniques that allow you to utilize your time more effectively. In addition, there needs to be an awareness of how effectively you use your time in order to make a change (Poser, 2003). To help you determine how you are spending your time, complete the Time Management Checklist.

### **Test Yourself**

[Time Management Checklist](#)

### **How to Set Goals**

To set your goals, you must first ask yourself what it is that you want to achieve. After you have a general idea, it is helpful to see if it can fit into the SMART Goals (Blanchard & Johnson, 1982) grid. Your goal should be Specific. For example, "I want to be a better student" is too vague. A more specific goal might be, "I want to graduate as an 'A' student". Once you have a specific goal, you need to be sure that it is Measurable (i.e., "I only got a C on my biology test"). You are better able to see your progress toward achieving your goal when it is measurable. Critical, too, is whether or not the goal is Achievable; if not, there is no point embarking on the endeavor. Afterwards, you can ask yourself, "Is my goal Relevant?" Regarding the goal of being an 'A' student, it may be relevant especially if you want to get into graduate school. Finally, you want to make sure

your goal is Trackable over time. For example, you can track your GPA each semester to see if you are maintaining your goals.

After you have determined that your goals are worth the effort, it is helpful to then break them down into smaller steps. For example, being an ‘A’ student is your long-term goal. To achieve this goal it is best to break it down into the steps leading up to it. Short-term goals might be to keep up with class readings and do homework ahead of time. Mid-term goals might be to get ‘A’s on quizzes and exams this semester. So, creating a task list for your short-term goals will help you achieve your mid-term goals, which will help you achieve your long-term goals.

***SMART Goals Grid (Blanchard & Johnson, 1982)***

	<b>SPECIFIC</b>	<b>MEASURABLE</b>	<b>ACHEIVALBE</b>	<b>RELEVANT</b>	<b>TRACKABLE</b>
GOAL 1	Graduate with an “A” average	Grades earned on exams and assignments	Used to be an “A” student	“A” average will help get into graduate school	Keep track of GPA each semester
GOAL 2					
GOAL 3					

[\(Back To Top\)](#)

## **How to Get Organized**

One of the most important things to do when trying to manage your time is to get organized. To do so you must first create a task list of what you do and what you need to do to accomplish your goals. Then, estimate how you currently spend your time doing these things and how much time it would take to achieve your goals. This can be accomplished by keeping a log of your daily activities (Poser, 2003). It is recommended to keep this log for at least one week. Once you have assessed your usage of time, you need to then evaluate your task list and determine what is important and what is urgent. In his book, *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey (1989) explains the difference between what is important and what is urgent in his Time Management Matrix. He explained that what is important is something that holds value to you, but may not necessarily be something that needs immediate attention. On the other hand, something that is urgent needs immediate attention, but it may not necessarily be something of value to you. It is important to review your task list and assess each item for its degree of urgency and importance. This will allow you to more effectively prioritize and manage your time.

***Time Management Matrix (Covey, 1989)***

	<b>URGENT</b>	<b>NOT URGENT</b>
<b>IMPORTANT</b>	<p><b>DO NOW</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Past due papers</li> <li>▪ Exam tomorrow and you haven't studied</li> </ul>	<p><b>PLAN TO DO</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Term paper assigned at beginning of semester</li> <li>▪ Group project assigned at beginning of semester</li> </ul>
<b>NOT IMPORTANT</b>	<p><b>REJECT AND EXPLAIN</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Trivial phone calls</li> <li>▪ Friends stopping by to say "Hi"</li> </ul>	<p><b>RESIST AND CEASE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Surfing the Internet</li> <li>▪ Watching TV</li> </ul>

[\(Back To Top\)](#)

### **Time Management Tips**

*Adapted from Study Guides and Strategies (Landsberger, 2006)*

- ❖ Develop blocks of time to study. This can be determined based on how long you can stay focused and how much time you can afford at one sitting.
- ❖ Schedule weekly reviews and updates

- ❖ Prioritize assignments. The Time Management Matrix will help in determining this.
- ❖ Use a “To Do” list. Get it down on paper and then decide what is important and what is a priority. This can be done either daily or weekly.
- ❖ Use a daily/weekly planner. View your planner either the night before or the morning of your day’s events.
- ❖ Use a calendar for long-term planning. It is best if your planner has a 12-month calendar included.
- ❖ Develop alternative study places free from distractions.
- ❖ Review homework and class readings just before class.
- ❖ Review lecture material immediately after class.
- ❖ Schedule time for any academic emergency (i.e., catching up with missed class readings, homework, or studies)

[\(Back To Top\)](#)

### **Managing Time Online**

Time management with online courses provides an additional challenge for some people. Outside of the regular demands of a person’s schedule, managing time while online can be difficult. It is important to make sure that you have already taken steps to organize other areas in your life before tackling your online schedule. Once you have accomplished that, you then need to distinguish between online leisure (personal email, IM, blogs, shopping, etc.) and online work (anything related to an online course/work, including online research). What is classified as leisure should be undertaken at a different time from online work. For example, once you have set your mind to work online, you should not wander to personal email or instant messaging. For some, time available for any online activity is limited, so, both work and leisure have to be accomplished in one sitting. If that is the case, you need to refrain from leisure activities until you have completed the work you have designated for yourself. You can view your leisure

activities as your reward for sticking to your work schedule. Review the following tips for making your time online more efficient.

*Online Time Management Tips:*

- ❖ Print out syllabus so that you know what is expected of you and keep it next to the computer.
- ❖ Print out any handouts or materials that might help you when completing online assignments.
- ❖ Set a time frame for online work per day/per week and put it both in your day planner and on a schedule next to the computer.
- ❖ If you can afford to be online multiple times per day, set up a schedule that outlines leisure time and work time at different times of the day.
- ❖ If you can only be online once a day, allot enough time for both work and leisure. Remember, online work is to be completed first.
- ❖ Set your instant messenger to “away” status.
- ❖ If you deviate from your schedule, don’t give up...start again the next day.
- ❖ Familiarize yourself with your web browser and the software that is necessary for your class work.
- ❖ Most online courses are offered through either Blackboard or WebCT. You don’t want your time for online work taken up with figuring out these systems.
- ❖ It is best to contact your school’s technology department for assistance ahead of time if you are not familiar with either of these course systems.
- ❖ It is essential that you are comfortable maneuvering in online courses before the semester starts, so practice, practice, practice!
- ❖ If you are lost, do not wait until the middle of the semester to let the course instructor know. Notify the instructor immediately. The instructor might even be able to help you.
- ❖ Your study time for online courses should be weighed as equally as your on-land courses.

- ❖ Take advantage of your online community. Meet in chatrooms or post on the discussion board if you have questions. You will be more motivated to do your coursework.

[\(Back To Top\)](#)

## **Procrastination**

### *What is Procrastination?*

Essentially, *procrastination* is delaying an act or putting something off until another time. To follow this definition literally will classify us all as procrastinators. Yet, there are some who fit the mold more so than others. The important thing is to be able to recognize when it becomes a problem.

### *How Do I know it's a Problem?*

Usually when you tell yourself "I'll do it later" it is relatively harmless (Tullier, 2000). When there are negative consequences associated with an action or lack of action, then there might be a problem (Burka & Yuen, 1983). In other words, when procrastination leads to failing a class, the electricity being cut off or losing a job, then it's a problem.

### *Why Do I Procrastinate?*

There could be a number of reasons why a person might procrastinate. A person may have difficulty paying attention, so when they begin doing something they get distracted easily (Burka & Yuen, 1983). Another reason for procrastination could be a lack of interest in particular activities. Also, a person could just have poor time management skills. Finally, it could merely be a habit that has formed from early on in life. No matter what the reason, there are steps that you can take to help alleviate the problem.

### *Tips to Stop Procrastination:*

- ❖ Make a list of what you procrastinate. If it is limited to specific activities (i.e., school work), then you need to analyze what is preventing you from staying on task (e.g., lack of motivation, not enough time, etc.).
- ❖ If your procrastination is related to time management, follow the tips offered in this workshop.
- ❖ If your procrastination is related to poor motivation and lack of interest, focus on the positive consequences that will result from staying on task. For example, if you keep putting off homework because “it’s boring”, think of the positives that will result when you accomplish it (i.e., being guilt-free, having a higher GPA, having less stress, having more time to do other things).
- ❖ If you are easily distracted, create a safe space that is free from TV, phone calls and the internet. When you enter that space, you should only be there to accomplish your task. Once completed, you should leave. Once you have associated that space as a distraction-free zone, you should get more accomplished.
- ❖ Remember to start small. Set small and easy deadlines to meet and then slowly increase in difficulty.

## **References**

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