

## TIME MANAGEMENT FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS

Have you ever found yourself bleary-eyed and strung out from too much coffee and too little sleep after pulling an "all nighter" right before the big biology test?



Or did you ever want to kick yourself for putting off that history project your instructor told you about at the beginning of the semester so that you ended up throwing together 15 pages of "garbage" just to get the report in on time?



Or how about the time your computer crashed when you were word-processing your English paper the night before it was due, and your teacher said that your reason was simply a new version of "the dog ate my paper" excuse and gave you an "F"?

If you have done any of the things mentioned on the previous page, you are like most people. We all have the ability to put off until tomorrow the things that we know we should be working on today. It's human nature. Unfortunately, ineffective time management doesn't help us much, in college or outside of college.

In "[Time Management for College Students](#)," we will give you some guidelines to help you better manage your time. On the assumption that people who want help managing their time probably don't HAVE a lot of it, the guidelines will be short and to the point. They aren't "magic pills" that will suddenly make you super efficient and well organized, but if you use them gradually to improve the way you organize you time, you will probably find that your life is a little less stressful and, with any luck, you will have time to do more of the things that you enjoy outside of your college work.

If you are a full-time student, you have a full-time job. You may not think of school as a job but consider this. You typically have 12-15 or more hours of class per week. In addition, you are expected to put in about 2 hours of preparation and production outside of class for each hour in class. This means that your work week is at least 36 to 45 hours long. This is a full-time occupation. If you have a job outside of school and/or family responsibilities, you may feel that there aren't enough hours in the day.

When lack of time is a problem your first consideration should be the "big picture." Everyone should try to have a balanced life. To update a popular saying, "all work and no play makes Jack and Jill dull people." If you don't think that your life is balanced, you may need to make some serious decisions. Should you become a part-time student because you need the money from your full-time job? Could you cut back on your job hours since you want to get your degree now? Whatever your decision, you should also try to allow time for family and friends to keep that important balance.

Now that you have considered the "big picture," it is time to improve your ability to manage your time. This really means managing yourself. Read the series of mini-lessons for information that may help you.

- Have you ever told yourself that if you ignore an assignment that's due, maybe it will go away?
- Have you ever told yourself, "I'll just watch TV (or do something else enjoyable) for just 5 minutes and then get back to my homework?"
- Have you ever underestimated the amount of work or time an assignment was going to take?
- Have you ever done something else "very important" to avoid working on an assignment?
- Have you ever done part of an assignment, the part you were good at, and not done the part you had problems with?
- Have you ever spent so much time deciding what to do (e.g., which topic to write about) for an assignment that you didn't get anything done?

Answering "yes" to any or all of these questions is a good sign that you know how to procrastinate. **Procrastination** means putting things off until a future time, postponing or deferring something. Most people have procrastinated at some time in their lives. There are many reasons for procrastinating. How many of these describe you?

- You are overwhelmed by too many things to do, and we know that we can't get them all done.
- You don't think that you have the skills or knowledge to handle the task.
- You are not clear about what is expected.
- The task seems irrelevant; it has no meaning for you.
- You are not interested the task.
- You are afraid of getting a low grade or of failing.

- You give yourself unreachable goals -- you are a perfectionist.
- You are not clear about what is expected.
- You have problems outside of school that you are having trouble dealing with.  
The list seems to go on and on.

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# Dealing with Procrastination

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There are many ways to deal with procrastination. Here is a list of suggestions or techniques for you to consider.

- **Set realistic goals.** Don't try to do too much and don't try to do everything perfectly.
- **Do school work when your energy level is at its highest.** If you are a morning person, do school work in the morning. If you are a night person, do school work at night.
- **Break large tasks into smaller ones.** You don't want to be overwhelmed by the work you need to do so create smaller tasks from bigger ones. Then focus on completing the smaller tasks one at a time until you are finished.
- **Work for realistic periods of time.** If you work best at 1 hour intervals, don't try to cram in 2 hours of study. Or if 1/2 hour at a time is best for you, then follow your own needs; do not study for long periods just because your friends do.
- **Avoid study marathons (like all-nighters).**
- **Mix activities.** Switch subjects after a while, or try to alternate between doing things you enjoy with things that you find challenging or boring.
- **Create an effective place to do your school work.** Make your work place comfortable but not TOO comfortable. Try to keep distractions to a minimum (like phones, TV, and friends). Don't forget the importance of good lighting and make sure that you have access to the materials and equipment you need.

- **Allow extra time for unexpected things.** The "unexpected" can be discovering that you really need at least 5 hours to write your English composition when you had only planned for 3 hours. And you don't want to wait until the last minute to do an important assignment only to get sick or have your computer crash.
- **Schedule time for yourself -- for exercise, relaxation, and socializing.** Don't forget that "all work and no play makes Jack and Jill dull people," not to mention frustrated, bored, and stressed out.
- **Use your free time wisely.** Make effective use of the time between classes or while you are waiting -- for buses or friends, at the doctor's office, etc.
- **Reward yourself when you have finished tasks on time.** Make sure that the reward is suitable for the difficulty of the task and the time you spent on it.
- **Start NOW!**

# Getting Organized

## (creating a week's plan)

STEP 1: List Your Activities

STEP 2: Create a Week's Plan

STEP 3: When in doubt, prioritize

**NOTE:** Use the steps listed here to create a schedule for a typical week.

# List Your Activities

Make a list of everything you need to do during a typical week. Include **ALL** activities (not just school assignments).

- List activities that come at fixed times and cannot be changed (e.g., classes, work responsibilities, doctor's appointment).
- List class assignments and meetings (e.g., study groups, meeting with your advisor, etc.).
- List recreation and social activities.

## Create a Week's Plan

1. Take the list you made of your activities and the day & time.
2. Write these activities down on a week's calendar.
3. Write down any related activities, for example, reading 2 chapters for history or writing a biology lab report.

## Prioritize Your Activities

(arrange in order of importance & urgency)

What do you do if you find that you have less time than you had anticipated for your activities? Should you just not do some of the things? Or should you cut out a little time from each activity?

What you need to do is **PRIORITIZE**. In other words, you need to determine the importance and urgency of each activity and use this information to revise your schedule (week's plan). In some cases, you may decide to postpone an activity that is not urgent, or perhaps you will spend less time on an activity that is not so important.

To help you prioritize your schedule, use the table below. Write the appropriate number (1, 2, 3 or 4) after each activity.

[Note: "Urgent" means that the deadline or due date is coming

up very soon; "Not Urgent" means that the deadline is a while away.]

<b>2</b> Important but Not Urgent	<b>1</b> Important and Urgent
<b>4</b> Not Important or Urgent	<b>3</b> Not important but Urgent

- You should focus on activities with a #1, giving them the time and attention that their importance and urgency requires.
- You may need to make a decision about activities with a #2. If they are important but not urgent, you may be able to spend less time on them or postpone them temporarily. But you don't want to forget about them.
- For activities with a #3, you may decide to eliminate them because, even though they are coming up very soon, they aren't really that important.
- Finally, if you really are short on time, you will probably want to eliminate activities with a #4.

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**Blank Calendar - Week**



	<b>MON</b>	<b>TUE</b>	<b>WED</b>	<b>THU</b>	<b>FRI</b>	<b>SAT</b>	<b>SUN</b>
<b>DATE</b>							
<b>7 a.m.</b>							
<b>8 a.m.</b>							
<b>9 a.m.</b>							
<b>10 a.m.</b>							
<b>11 a.m.</b>							
<b>noon</b>							
<b>1 p.m.</b>							
<b>2 p.m.</b>							
<b>3 p.m.</b>							
<b>4 p.m.</b>							
<b>5 p.m.</b>							
<b>6 p.m.</b>							
<b>7 p.m.</b>							
<b>8 p.m.</b>							
<b>9 p.m.</b>							
<b>10 p.m.</b>							
<b>11 p.m.</b>							
<b>midnight</b>							

**Wrap-up**



# Congratulations!

You have taken the first step toward getting yourself better organized and doing better in your classes. Now that you have made a schedule and prioritized what you need to do, it would be a good idea to carry your schedule with you. Make sure that you update your schedule as new things come along. For next week and the weeks after that, you just need to repeat the process:

**STEP 1:** List Your Activities

**STEP 2:** Create a Week's Plan

**STEP 3:** When in doubt, prioritize

Time Management *for* College Students

## Procrastination Self-test

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Read each statement and choose the word below ("never," "occasionally," "often," or "always") that best describes your behavior. Write the corresponding number in the blank space before each statement.

Never	Occasionally	Often	Always
1	2	3	4

1. \_\_\_ I feel I have to "cram" before an exam.
2. \_\_\_ My homework is turned in on time.
3. \_\_\_ I think I get enough sleep.
4. \_\_\_ I pull all-nighters before mid-terms and finals.
5. \_\_\_ I plan activities with friends or family for a couple of nights a week and spend the amount of time with them that I planned.
6. \_\_\_ When I'm working on a paper, I put off writing until a few days before it's due.
7. \_\_\_ I cancel social activities because I feel I don't have enough time.
8. \_\_\_ I get my papers in on time.
9. \_\_\_ I find myself making a lot of excuses to my instructors about why my work isn't done.
10. \_\_\_ I feel comfortable about how I use time now.
11. \_\_\_ I feel that something is hanging over my head, that I'll never have enough time to do the work assigned.
12. \_\_\_ I feel tired.

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**Score A:** Add up the numbers for questions 1, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, and 12.

**Score B:** Add up the numbers for questions 2, 3, 5, 8, and 10.

If **Score A** is greater than **Score B**, you are probably a procrastinator. If **Score A** is less than **Score B**, you manage your time well. If the scores are equal, you may procrastinate at times, but procrastination is not a habit.

# Time Management for College Students

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