



Today's Collegian



Mr. Breitsprecher's Edition

June 13, 2005

FREE!



Time Management

One of the reasons that getting started in college can require adjustments is that in high school, time management is not much of an issue. Often, high school classes do not really challenge students – especially the ones that excel in typical high school classes.

In college, everyone is admitted because they have strong academic skills. A full-range of grades will be applied to these students based on the expectations of the college or university. It is not uncommon to see an “A” or “B” student go to a “C” or “D” student because of this change.

In college, the difference between an “A” student and a “C” student (or even a “D” or “F” student) is often the result of difference in study habits and time management – not the ability of the students. To more fully ensure success in college, it is important to look at both of these factors. This edition of Today's Collegian will look at time management.

There are many different ways to manage time – no one way is best for everyone. Like many things in life, the key is self-knowledge or self-understanding. Once a person knows and accepts their needs, it is possible to develop a time management plan that will help them work more efficiently – to get things done. We all have 168 hours each week, are we ready to make the most of that time?

Let's look at 4 strategies that can be used to manage time effectively in college. They include:

- Create a semester schedule
- Assess and plan the workload for each week
- Adjust the plan, based on needs, each day
- Evaluate the schedule – keep what is working and adjust areas that are problems.

Creating a Semester Schedule

At the beginning of the semester, using the course syllabus, record each known assignment including quizzes, tests, projects, and papers. Keeping an organized schedule of ALL class assignments from the beginning of the semester creates some structure for the entire semester.

It also makes clear the higher academic demands of college and identifies parts of the semester where we will have to “**get down to business**” and any parts of the semester that will allow for more flexibility and leisure time.

Getting the most out of college means **GETTING INVOLVED!** Record co-curricular activities including work hours, meetings, social commitments, and out-of-town weekends. These are important activities that provide balance in our lives – they deserve to be part of the semester schedule too.

This schedule is not “set in stone.” Update and revise the semester schedule regularly. This schedule will be of no value if it does not reflect up-to-date demands and activities. Things will change: assignment due dates, assignments are added, other activities and commitments change. Keeping the semester schedule current gets us ready for next step in time management, assessing and planning your weekly schedule.

Assessing and Planning Your Weekly Schedule

Once we have the “big picture,” we create a plan to keep us moving towards success by looking at our commitments and progress each week. At the end of each week, make a list of things to accomplish in the upcoming week. Friday afternoons or evenings, before starting the weekend, can be a great time to do this. Our weekly schedule should include class assignments and class attendance.

To do this in a meaningful way, we need to be absolutely honest with ourselves – the weekly plan will do us no good if it doesn't accurately reflect the things we need to accomplish and the work that will need to be done to get these tasks accomplished. Be sure to include **EVERYTHING**.

Include co-curricular activities, work hours, errands, exercise, meals, and time with friends. Daily

Check It Out!



Time Management: Getting Started

Study Guides and Strategies (<http://www.studygs.net>) maintains a comprehensive set of links to help students achieve success, including resources for time management. Want to review how you spend time, prioritize objectives, or compare these 2 aspects of time management? See these links: <http://www.studygs.net/schedule/> or <http://www.studygs.net/schedule/index2.htm> (non-flash version)

living activities and co-curricular activities are important, provide balance, but take time away from studying. Preparing dinner and cleaning up or attending student organization meetings can take as much time as reading a chapter in a textbook. Make sure that the schedule is complete and comprehensive.

Then, estimate how long each task will take. If creating this type of schedule is new to you, this part of weekly planning might present a challenge. Activities take different amounts of time – estimate how much time you will need and make this estimate part of each activity in the weekly plan. At this time, it is probably better to use longer estimates if we are not sure how long something will take.

Identify the day on which you will accomplish each task, keeping in mind the amount of time that task will take and other things that must be done that day. Be sure to look at the whole week so that everything that needs to be accomplished is included – the whole point is to avoid “surprises” or missing deadlines. Many college professors will not accept late work.

Next, prioritize all the activities on the schedule – what absolutely must be done and which are the least important. Rating each as an A, B, or C works well:

- “A” represents items that absolutely need to be done that day.

- “B” represents items that need to be completed, but not if they take away from tasks assigned an “A”
- “C” represents items that we want to accomplish, but that can be considered optional or perhaps even responsibly put off until another time.

Like all aspects of time management, being honest with ourselves and developing a good self-understanding of our needs is the key. This is especially true when setting the priorities for each item on our schedule and this leads us to the next step, **adjusting the plan each day.**

Adjusting the Plan Each Day

After we have a weekly schedule, at the start of each day, create a daily schedule. This should include the items identified on the weekly schedule, any tasks from the previous day that are not fully accomplished, as well as any new tasks. An index card or a daily planner works great for this – use something that is easy to keep track of and take with you.

To get maximum use of the daily schedule, keep it with you throughout the day. Use it as a

reference tool and cross out tasks as they are completed – this is an important step as it provides a sense of accomplishment.

When writing out the daily schedule, be sure to assess the priorities of each item – things may have changed since the time the weekly schedule was completed, especially if some items from the previous day were not accomplished. Prioritize each item on the daily schedule with the same A, B, C rating system we used for the weekly schedule.

The daily schedule is what makes things actually happen – we will need to have enough self-discipline and honesty to work on each task until its completion based on the priority we have assigned. This leads us to the last step of effective time management, evaluating the schedule.

Evaluating the Schedule

Each day, before starting the activities on the daily schedule, review your plans for the day and ask yourself if they are realistic given the amount of time each task will take.

If something will take longer than the plan indicates, remove some of the “C” or even “B” priority items to clear some time and keep the schedule manageable. Then, at the end of each day, evaluate the schedule. Did everything on the schedule get done? Why or why not?

Be sure to identify if things were left undone because time estimates were wrong/unrealistic or if failure to complete a task is the result of not sticking to the schedule.

This step will take rigorous honesty! The whole point of a schedule is to provide organization, structure, and “*keep us on-track.*” If something did not work out as planned, identify what can be done to make the schedule work in the future – build on successes and try different approaches.

This step provides the feedback we need to review and adjust our semester schedule, weekly schedule, and the daily schedule to keep us moving towards our main goal: **SUCCESS IN COLLEGE!**



How Much Time To Plan on Studying?



Most universities recommend that students study at least **2 hours** outside of class for every hour spent in class. Many students take 12-15 credit hours per semester. This is a commitment of 12-15 hours in class and at least 24-30 additional hours studying outside of class. How much time should YOU plan on spending? That is up to you.

The *University of Minnesota Libraries* in collaboration with the *CLA Student Writing Center*, *Center for Teaching and Learning Services* and the *Center for Interdisciplinary Studies of Writing*; has developed an online **Assignment Calculator** to provide suggestions as to the planning that goes into completing an assignment. **CHECK IT OUT!**

<http://www.lib.umn.edu/help/calculator>

Simply enter the date you plan on starting the assignment and the due date. You can also enter the subject area of the assignment. While not required, entering a subject area might generate a set of unique resources that the *Research QuickStart* automatically tracks down for you!

Based on when the assignment is due, this Website will suggest strategies for getting started, provide suggested dates to complete various tasks, and even offer you the option to sign up for an email reminder to help you keep on task!