

By Daina Saib

For most of you, college is your first real taste of freedom. Of course, this freedom comes with certain responsibilities – particularly in regard to your use of time. From reading, researching, papers, exams, jobs, not to mention your social life. At times, you may feel like you’re scrambling to fit it all in. However, if you learn how to manage your time effectively, you will find that you can get through the day and still have time for fun.

To become a more effective manager of your time, consider these simple steps:

Track Your Time

A good way to start managing your time is to first see how you actually spend your time. Write down your daily activities and how much time you spend on each for a few days. Note how you feel – are you alert, tired, energetic, stressed? People function at different levels of effectiveness during different times of the day. It’s useful to determine when you perform at your best. Identify wasted time in your daily routine.

Develop a Schedule

Scheduling will help you make the best use of the time you have available and allow enough time for the most important things you need to do.

Start with a term calendar of events. Get a large calendar like a desk calendar and write in all of your vacations and holidays, exam dates and assignment deadlines for each class and other events such as extracurricular activities or upcoming visitors. Use different colored pens or highlighters to distinguish between different classes and activities. Make notes on the calendar about the number of hours (or days) it will take to complete all of the tasks and activities you listed.

Take this a step further and also create a weekly plan. Resolve conflicts by eliminating less important tasks and allow room for unscheduled activities or events. You can make up this time later in the day if you stay flexible. Go into detail with each item and block out chunks of time to complete each task.

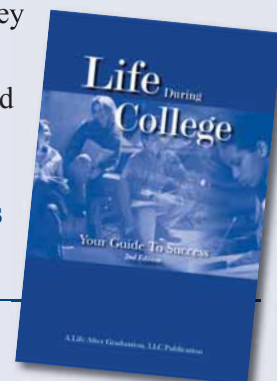
If you know you are the type of person who needs frequent breaks, give yourself a block of one hour at a time. Difficult material demands more energy and may also require more frequent breaks to complete. Prioritize your assignments starting with the most difficult material first. You can review class material and readings just before class and lecture material just after class, when you’re more likely to retain the information. Work in a place without distractions like T.V., phones, or other people. Organize a study area with all of the materials you need to work and stash these materials in a backpack if you change study locations.

Minimize Procrastination

Even with the best time management tools, procrastination seems to find its way into the day. Most people put off tasks for one of two reasons - the work is unpleasant or it’s overwhelming. If it’s the first, try rewarding yourself with something you enjoy for completing the task. You can also have someone check up on you, which can help to keep yourself accountable for finishing. If you find the work overwhelming, break up the project into small, bite-sized tasks that are more manageable, develop a schedule and stick to it. Start with small tasks even if they aren’t the most important to get yourself going and feeling like you’re achieving something.

In college and in life, managing your time is vital to your success. If you stay positive, organized and flexible, you *can* succeed in making the most of each day.

For more information about managing time and other vital college success tools, read *Life During College: Your Guide To Success*.



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