

THE SKILLS OF TIME MANAGEMENT

Managing Time

What does time mean to you?

***“I never seem to have enough time”
“I leave my assignments until the last minute”***

If you relate to the above, then you need to consider managing your time. Time management is the managing of your day so that your time is used effectively. The clearer your understanding of time the better you will manage it.

Studying in Higher Education, you will have freedom to spend your time how you think best. How wisely you use your time, therefore, is very important. Coping with assignment deadlines, exams and other claims on your time can be overwhelming especially if you consider the demands of everyday living and possibly working to generate income. Managing your time effectively is even more important.

Planning your time

Time management starts with identifying what you want to achieve. You can do this by setting up a planner or using a calendar supplemented with daily lists so that you have a clear idea of what needs to be done. Possibly the most difficult part of this process is sticking to your plan.

Start by:

- Putting important dates, major exams, meetings and anything else on a calendar or a diary.
- Keeping a pocket diary noting key activities such as tutorials. Study times could be planned at a ratio of two hours of study per hour of class.
- Compiling a daily ‘things to do’ list – will help you clarify your objectives and increases your commitment to achieving them.

The most important part of time management is using your planner each day and learning to say “no” to anything that is not on the planner.

Making a plan:

- Use a pencil and rubber;
- Be specific not vague;
- Be realistic so your goals are achievable;
- Plan all your time - even travel time;
- Review your lecture notes each week highlighting important or difficult areas;
- Include breaks;
- Plan the most difficult tasks at times when you are more alert.

To plan your time:

- Eliminate time wasters;
- Clarify your objectives;
- Focus your attention on objectives not activities;
- Analyse how you use your time;
- Plan regular fixed blocks of study time;
- Set clear start and finish times;
- Include time for everyday living and leisure;
- Set realistic, achievable goals;
- Rest a few minutes in every hour of study;
- Plan study periods close to the related lecture.

Monitoring time wasters

Monitoring your time will enable you to see how much time you waste each day. Time wasters prevent you from accomplishing your goal. Once you have identified some time wasters you can then do something about them. The following exercise should help you to identify and eliminate time wasting, you will then have more time in the day to pursue other activities. Mark each activity in hours on the right. You can add more activities if you wish.

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Hours spent on the activity</i>
Sleeping	
Eating	
Travelling	
Errands	
Leisure activities	
Part-time job	
Lectures	
Relaxation	
Other activities	
Total time allocated	

Deduct the 'total time allocated' from 168 (this is a working week in hours).

Tips to manage your time better

- ***Commit*** yourself to managing your time more effectively;
- Identify the times in the day when you feel 'at your best' and study then;
- Plan your day by setting your priorities
- Study difficult/boring areas first;
- Think critically to keep focused and remain actively involved whatever you are doing;
- Focus and concentrate on one thing at a time;
- Record your notes – play these while travelling or exercising etc.;
- Use a known study area, this will focus your attention quickly;
- Choose a place with good lighting, low noise and no distractions;
- Produce cards with facts, formulas etc, then you can revise them anywhere and anytime;
- ***Learn to say "no"***;
- Limit your time on the phone or texting;

- Reward yourself when you get things done and celebrate;
- **Balance study and relaxation;**
- Instead of trying to get it perfect – just do it!
- Do NOT procrastinate.

What is procrastination?

“I work best under pressure”

“It won’t matter if I’m a few minutes late for my lecture”

Procrastination is the avoidance of doing a task, which needs to be accomplished. This can lead to feelings of guilt, inadequacy, depression and self-doubt which can affect areas of your life including academic and personal success.

Why do students procrastinate?

Time wasters can include:

- Poor time management;
- No clear priorities, goals and objectives;
- Task too overwhelming;
- Too much socialising;
- Worrying about outstanding assignments or forthcoming exams;
- Poor concentration which impedes getting the task completed;
- Study environment noisy and distracting ;
- Taking continuous breaks.

Time wasters can turn into frustration and ultimately depression.

Other reasons why students often procrastinate:

- fear of failure which in turn can lead onto anxiety and panic attacks;
- afraid of getting a low grade;
- negative thoughts – “I can’t do anything right”;
- Personal problems;
- Task too boring;
- Fear of failure;
- Unrealistic expectations;
- Perfectionism.

Overcoming procrastination

- Identify self-defeating areas of fear and anxiety so that something can be done;
- Improve concentration by studying regularly in the same quiet area;
- Use time management techniques;
- Remain focussed by identifying personal goals, strengths, values and priorities;
- Set priorities and produce a plan;
- Study in small but frequent blocks of time instead of long periods;
- Take big jobs and break them down into a series of small ones;
- Set yourself realistic goals;

- Eliminate or minimise noise and distraction where possible;
- Ensure adequate lighting;
- Remember not to get too comfortable;
- Ensure study area is neat so that your concentration is focussed.

Planning for your finals

Creating a plan will help you feel more confident when preparing for your finals.

List all of the courses you have to sit a final exam in	Indicate your average grade	Final grade you want to obtain

Explore each course separately and then think of the things you need to do to obtain that grade.

Course	Action required

In conclusion ask yourself the following questions

- Am I happy with my time management skills?
- Can I improve my time management skills by using the above techniques?
- Do I need more help in making a plan?

If your answer is 'yes' to the last question then why not make an appointment to see the Institute's Study Skills Facilitator or HE Mentor