

How to Manage Your Time

Hi, my name is Marie-Ève.

In high school, you were in class 30 hours a week, while in university, it depends on your faculty. You can have between 15 and 25 hours of classes. On the other hand, did you study between two and ten hours a week? In university, expect to spend between one and three hours of work per week on each course. You lived at home and didn't have to worry about housework. You're going to have to get used to your new lifestyle and sometimes you might need some help.

Does it feel like deadlines always come too fast? You never have enough time to get everything done.

Good time management can help you concentrate, get organized, get better grades and, especially, reduce your stress. Managing your time effectively allows you to strike a good balance among the hours you spend on your studies, leisure activities and relaxation. The result: you feel happier. I'm going to tell you about some tricks to improve your time management.

My method has six steps.

Step 1

Get an overview of your session. A monthly calendar will help you. From the start of the year, use your course syllabi to mark down the key deadlines you have to meet during the session. You should also write down other key dates, like the last day to drop a course. This will allow you to see your session at a glance.

Step 2

Every week, make a list of all the coursework you have to do (reading, studying, research...). Next to each task, estimate how much time it will take you to do it. Write this on your list.

Step 3

Write all your other activities down in your calendar (work, volunteering, shopping...).

Step 4

Make yourself a weekly schedule. Put your courses, labs and discussion groups in a grid. Add the time you spend on sleeping, cooking and eating, getting dressed, sports, travel, part-time work and entertainment... Wow... Your goal isn't to fill every spot in your schedule, but to be sure that you actually **do** everything you **have to**. Example.

Transition: Understanding the differences

The key is to maintain a balance between study time, work time, social life and others aspects of your life.

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
7:00							
7:30							
8:00							
8:30	ESP1991				PHI1101		
9:00							
9:30							
10:00	DGD		PHI 1101	ESP 1991			
10:30							
11:00							
11:30			PHI 1101				
12:00			DGD				
12:30							
1:00	ENG1100						
1:30							
2:00							
2:30	SRS 1110			ENG1100	SRS1110		
3:00							
3:30							
4:00				ESP1991			
4:30				LAB			
5:00							
5:30	ESP1991						
6:00	LAB						
6:30							
7:00				HIS 1110			
7:30							
8:00							
8:30							
9:00							
9:30							

Course schedule

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
7:00							
7:30							
8:00	Travel				Travel		
8:30	ESP1991				PHI1101		
9:00							
9:30		Breakfast	Travel	Travel			
10:00	DGD	Reading SRS	PHI 1101	ESP 1991	Break		
10:30					Reading SRS		
11:00						WORK	
11:30	Lunch	Travel	PHI 1101	Reading HIS		Lunch	
12:00	Travel	Review Notes	DGD			Reading ESP	
12:30	Reading SRS				Lunch		
1:00		ENG1100	Lunch				
1:30	Break		Essay ENG	Break	Review Notes		
2:00						Break	
2:30	Reading ENG	SRS 1110		ENG1100	SRS1110	Reading PHI	
3:00							
3:30				Travel			
4:00	Break	Travel	Supper	ESP1991	Travel	Commute	
4:30	Reading and Lab Prep	Reading PHI	Study ESP	LAB	Supper	Supper	
5:00							
5:30	ESP1991				Supper		Study HIS
6:00	LAB	Supper					
6:30			Break				
7:00	Travel	Essay ENG	Study ESP	HIS 1110		Free Time	
7:30	Supper				WORK		
8:00	Lab Report						
8:30							
9:00							
9:30							
10:00				Travel			

In reality



Step 5

You need to keep a to-do list. Write down goals that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely ...be S.M.A.R.T. A list that's too long can be discouraging and ineffective. Write the most important task at the top of the list. Example.

Bad list

- Buy birthday card for mom
- Do my stats problems
- Do my lab report
- Do my reading
- Go to the bank

Good list

- Do my stats problems: chap. 2, pp. 10 to 20, first 3 numbers
- Finish lab exercises
- Skim through physics chap. 3
- Read notes from last chemistry class
- Go to the bank
- Buy birthday card for mom

Step 6

To set goals, you can use this table to prioritize:

	Urgent	Not urgent
Important	<p>Priority 1</p> <p>Priority tasks</p> <p>Assignments, tests, exams— anything with a deadline</p> <p>Problems with family or friends</p>	<p>Priority 2</p> <p>Tasks I can wait to do, but which must be done</p> <p>Readings, group assignments, regular studying</p> <p>Meals, housework, exercise, hobbies</p>
Not important	<p>Priority 3</p> <p>Tasks I must do quickly in limited time</p> <p>texting, email, Facebook</p>	<p>Priority 4</p> <p>Tasks that should be my lowest priority</p> <p>TV, small talk</p>

If you tend to give priority to the tasks in boxes 3 and 4, you should rethink your priorities.

What are the biggest time sinks? Obviously, social media, the Internet, television, poor organization, unnecessary trips, requests from the people around you that can wait... Try to reduce them as much as possible. To help yourself, maybe you need to learn to say no. It's totally reasonable to refuse to go out the night before an exam or to not take on new commitments if you don't have to. Ask your friends to respect your schedule and make them understand that you're not always available to take their calls or have them drop by when you're planning to study. Choose a place where you can be alone and work.

When it comes to time management, remember these two golden rules:

The 30-second rule: You have 30 seconds to start working when you sit down to study. This lets your brain get ready to go into attention mode.

The 5-minute rule: If it's hard for you to do something, force yourself to do it for at least 5 minutes—chances are you'll easily spend a half-hour or more on it before you do something else. The goal of this rule is to overcome your initial obstacle: getting started. If this doesn't work the first time, give yourself more than one chance. This technique is supposed to reduce your stress, so don't worry if you have to start again several times.

Above all, remember to take breaks. A 15-minute break every 45 minutes to an hour of work is essential for you to maintain concentration.

As well, it's important for you to complete the activities that require the most brain power and are the most difficult when you're at your best. Don't leave reviewing your hardest course material for the end.

Finally, think about combining activities, like reviewing notes on the bus or reading in a café.

One of the enemies of time management is procrastination. Procrastination means putting off until tomorrow what you can and must do today. Is that you? Really, be honest! Procrastination always leads to bad work habits.

Here are 10 suggestions to avoid it:

1. Get a good night's sleep. You need between 7 and 8 hours.
2. Divide large assignments into small parts, so you can focus on one step at a time. Here's how to break an assignment down into six steps:
 1. First, make sure you understand the nature of the assignment well, and choose your subject (if you are allowed to).
 2. Collect the material you'll need to write your assignment (books, course notes, electronic sources).
 3. Read the material you've collected.
 4. Make an outline, indicating the resources you'll use for each section.
 5. Write a first draft.
 6. Revise your work.
3. Avoid distractions—forget your Facebook account and email and turn off your cell.
4. Always do your most important task first. If something comes up, you will have at least done one thing you needed to do that day.
5. If you're the kind of person who always procrastinates, use a timer. The 30-10 method could be useful for you. Set the timer for 30 minutes and work during that period. Then, take a 10-minute break, and start working again when the timer goes off. If 30 minutes is asking too much for you, make it the 10-2 method—10 minutes of work and a 2-minute break.
6. Write down 3 priorities every day—the rest should be secondary. Complete your less important tasks during your breaks.
7. Do one thing at a time.
8. Note time wasters, and the time you lose on them.
9. Change material regularly. Variety can increase your productivity and keep away boredom.
10. If you've met your goals for the day, reward yourself.

For more information on study methods, be sure to visit our website:

www.sass.uOttawa.ca/mentoring/undergraduate/study-skills.php