

TIME MANAGEMENT

People waste enormous amounts of time, and students are no exception. The information provided will help you develop time management strategies and a time management system that will serve you throughout college.

TIME MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

- A. **Plan two hours of study time for every hour you spend in class.** There are exceptions, but this is a good general rule (Ellis, 1984).
- B. **Study the subjects first that are difficult or boring for you.** Do not do the easy or short assignments first. When you start studying, your mind is fresh and alert, and you are more able to concentrate. Leave routine and more mechanical tasks for last. For example, recopying papers and alphabetizing a bibliography do not require a high level of concentration, so do them last (McWhorter, 1992).
- C. **Learn to use spare moments or waiting time effectively.** The time spent waiting for a bus, commuting, or between classes can be used for study or review. Three-by-five cards with key formulas, definitions, facts, and so on, are an excellent way to use spare moments (Schmitt, 1992).
- D. **Avoid scheduling marathon study sessions.** When possible, study in shorter sessions. Three, two-hour sessions are far more productive for most people than one six-hour session (Ellis, 1984).
- E. **Schedule study sessions at times when you know you are usually alert and feel like studying.** Do not schedule a study time for Saturday morning if you are a person who sleeps until noon (McWhorter, 1992).
- F. Parkinson's Law states that **work will expand to fill the time allowed for its completion.** You need to try to repeal this law by working as quickly and efficiently as possible. Working slower or daydreaming just because you still have plenty of time allotted for a particular task is not desirable. When you finish a task before the time has expired, reward yourself by doing something you enjoy or getting a head start on another assignment (Lakein, 1973).

MAKING YOUR OWN SCHEDULE

A "study-time schedule" is a weekly plan of when and what you will study. It identifies specific times for studying particular subjects, as well as times for writing papers, conducting library research, and completing homework assignments for each course (McWhorter, 1992). Use the guidelines that follow, combined with the previously mentioned time-management strategies, to produce a schedule.

- A. **Schedule fixed blocks of time first.** Start with class time or work time, for instance. These time periods are usually determined in advance. Other activities must be scheduled around them. Then schedule essential daily activities like sleeping and eating (Ellis, 1984).
- B. **Include time for errands.** Time we spend buying toothpaste, paying bills, and doing laundry is easy to ignore. These little errands, which are easy to overlook, can destroy a tight schedule and make us feel rushed all week. Plan for them (Ellis, 1984).
- C. **Schedule reasonable amounts of time,** especially on weekends, for having fun and relaxing (McWhorter, 1992).
- D. **Set realistic goals.** Do not set yourself up for failure by telling yourself you can do a four-hour job in two hours. There are only 168 hours in a week. If you schedule 169 hours, you lose before you begin (Ellis, 1984).
- E. **Allow flexibility in your schedule.** Recognize that unexpected events will occur, so plan for the unexpected. Do not schedule every hour. Give yourself time to get between places, etc. (Ellis, 1984).
- F. **Make a "To Do" list every day;** keep it visible, and use it as a guide throughout the day. In making your list, use the ABC priority system. Write a letter "A" to the left of those items on the list that have a high value, a "B" next to those of medium value, and a "C" next to those with low value. You do not need to list routine items but do list items that have priority today and may not get completed without special attention (Lakein, 1973).

TO DO LIST

- A. Purchase materials needed for math project
- B. Begin reading *Wuthering Heights*, pp. 1-25
- A. Prepare financial aid forms
- A. Grocery store: milk, bread, detergent
- C. Do laundry
- B. Birthday card for Grandma
- C. Balance checkbook

PROCRASTINATION

Putting off tasks that need to be completed is a perfectly human trait; even successful people must learn techniques to avoid procrastination. Procrastination can be avoided through a number of simple techniques (Schmitt, 1992). The following suggestions can help you overcome or control a tendency to procrastinate and put you on track for success.

- A. **Getting started may be the most difficult part, but do it anyway.** If you are having difficulty getting started, do something rather than sit and stare, regardless of how trivial it seems. Sometimes it takes 10 to 20 minutes to develop concentration on a subject (McWhorter, 1992).
- B. **Break down the task into manageable segments.** This approach is known as the "Swiss Cheese" approach because you begin "poking holes" in an overwhelming task. These "holes" are called "instant tasks" and require five minutes or less of your time. Maybe the idea of a 10-page term paper is frightening, but compiling a bibliography, reading one article, or talking to your instructor about your ideas for the project will seem less formidable. The underlying assumption of the Swiss Cheese approach is that it is indeed possible to get something started in five minutes (Lakein, 1973).
- C. **Use the power of habit.** Force of habit saves us from wondering about what we should be doing or from being tempted away from completing the task. For example, if you have two hours between classes, simply go to the library every time that interval occurs and work. Having a specific area of the library where you always study and never waste time is a good idea (Schmitt, 1992).
- D. **Recognize and avoid escape routes.** Some students escape work by claiming they do not have enough time to get everything done. Close analysis of their time often reveals they are wasting valuable time by following one or more escape routes. One route is to spend time away from your desk running needless errands. Another escape route is to overdo routine tasks like cleaning your room or arranging your closet. Television is the greatest escape and is to be avoided during your scheduled study time (McWhorter, 1992).

REFERENCES

- Ellis, D.R. (1984). *Becoming a master student*. Rapid City: College Survival, Inc.
- Lakein, A. (1973). *How to get control of your time and your life*. New York: David McKay.
- McWhorter, K.T. (1992). *College reading and study skills*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Schmitt, D.E. (1992). *The winning edge*. New York: Harper Collins.