



TIME MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Often the most successful college students are those individuals who manage their time efficiently and are adept at squeezing the highest productivity out of each day. The following pointers provide ideas for effective time management. College students should consider at least one of the following methods (or a combination of two or more methods) for keeping accurate track of their time demands:

- ▶ a small, spiral-bound college planner ▶ daily “to do” lists
- ▶ monthly calendar (available at the CAE) ▶ weekly planning sheets (available at the CAE)

Time Management Tips

- 1) **At the start of each new semester**, prepare a neat schedule of all the fixed activities and obligations that you must attend to at the same time each week. Try to use different color ink for each permanent activity. For instance:
 - a) mark off the blocks of time you have class and labs;
 - b) if your work schedule remains the same week after week, block off those permanent time frames;
 - c) if you are an athlete, indicate fixed practice sessions;
 - d) next, reserve fixed time frames each day for homework, which includes reading, studying, and research, times before classes if they meet later in the day, between classes if there are gaps in your schedule, evenings, weekdays when you have no classes, and weekends; and
 - e) do not forget to leave ample time for meals, exercise, and a little free time each day.
- 2) **In your spiral-bound college planner and/or on a monthly calendar:**
 - a) record all the upcoming due dates for larger, more time-intensive assignments;
 - b) plan all test and exam dates as well as due dates for paper submissions, debates, oral presentations, etc.; and
 - c) assign a different color ink for each course.
- 3) **Review your upcoming obligations weekly.** In those time frames reserved for homework, make sure you:
 - a) address any assignments or important obligations that are due that week;
 - b) know exactly what is due that week; and
 - c) understand your instructors’ recommendations for addressing assignments.
- 4) **Keep focused and task-oriented.** Consider filling out a short “to do” list each day.

Strive to Use External Time Savers – Manage Your Place and Space for Study

Always be certain that the **location** you select for reading and studying is quiet, well lit, and comfortable (not too comfortable, though, because you do not want to fall asleep!). Your study location should also provide easy access to all relevant materials needed for the planned objectives. If your dorm room does not provide such control of external study distractions, relocate to the library or a vacant classroom. If your room at home cannot close out the noise and activity of other family members, try to stay on campus for a period of time each day. Make use of the quiet facilities in the library and elsewhere on campus.

How Much Time Should You Expect to Spend on Your Studies?

You should expect to spend an average of two hours out-of-class preparation time for each hour spent in class. Thus, if you are taking five, three-credit courses, you will be spending 15 hours in class and should devote 30 hours per week to independent course preparations. Such preparations include the weekly readings, annotating and outlining texts, compiling index cards, and so forth. The above estimate of 30 hours probably will not provide sufficient time for other labor and time-intensive course work such as research papers, major projects, study groups, and so on. Also, note that some courses will require less time per week, but those courses that are reading and/or writing intensive will likely increase the 30-hour total. You can see that reservation of sufficient out-of-class preparation time can equal a full-time job. If you are a full-time student, succeeding at your studies will demand the time and effort of a full-time position.

Learn to be Effective Over the Long Term

Consider how the following suggestions can assist you in achieving higher productivity:

1. **Review the course syllabus frequently** to be certain that you understand the instructor's objectives. Know the purpose of all reading assignments.
2. **Compile a stack of index cards** that cover course terms, theories, and other relevant information for which you know you will be tested. You should compile and revise your study cards progressively throughout the semester, perhaps once weekly. Use the glossaries of your texts to develop thorough definitions. Your index cards should also include notes about practical examples.
3. **You should actively interact with the course material.** You can do this by recording telescopic lecture notes, keeping your lab workbooks neat and organized, annotating texts before the material is due in class, writing down any questions you have as you do the assigned reading, looking for and thinking about practical examples for what you are reading, and so on.
4. **Flag sections in your notebook** by using plastic divider tabs (the kind that are used in three ring, loose-leaf binders) or by affixing "Post-it" notes. Label the flags with a brief heading or title to denote the topic and the chapter or page numbers in the book where corresponding material is located. Also flag sections in your texts; label them according to the date you recorded notes in your notebook.
5. **Write down key words and phrases** from course readings into a journal. It will provide a good study guide for upcoming tests.

Some Closing Reminders

1. **Have realistic expectations** for how you spend your time. By trying to meet unrealistic expectations, you risk setting yourself up for failure rather than for success.
2. **Avoid monotony and distraction** by varying the study activities and processes you undertake. Keep the work fresh and engaging by alternating courses when you sense you are losing concentration and interest.
3. **Make necessary changes in your routine** if old methods are not working. Try to distinguish between what is important and what is urgent, and plan accordingly.
4. **Divide all major** labor and time-intensive tasks into manageable segments whereby you can enjoy periodic success at attaining a smaller goal within the larger, complex assignment.