

# TIME MANAGEMENT

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Microsoft Encarta (2008) defines **time** as the conscious experience of duration, the period during which an action or event occurs. Time is also a dimension representing a succession of such actions or events. **Management** is the skilful handling or use of resources such as people (human capital), money, materials and time. We may then define time management as the proper use of available time for the accomplishment of set tasks. Time is a limited, non-renewable resource. It is limited since there are only twenty-four hours in a day and it is non-renewable because an hour or even minute wasted cannot be reclaimed. A task that should have been done on Day One might possibly be done at a later date, but only at the expense of the things that should have been done at that later date.

There are several time management tools you can use. They are cheap and easily available

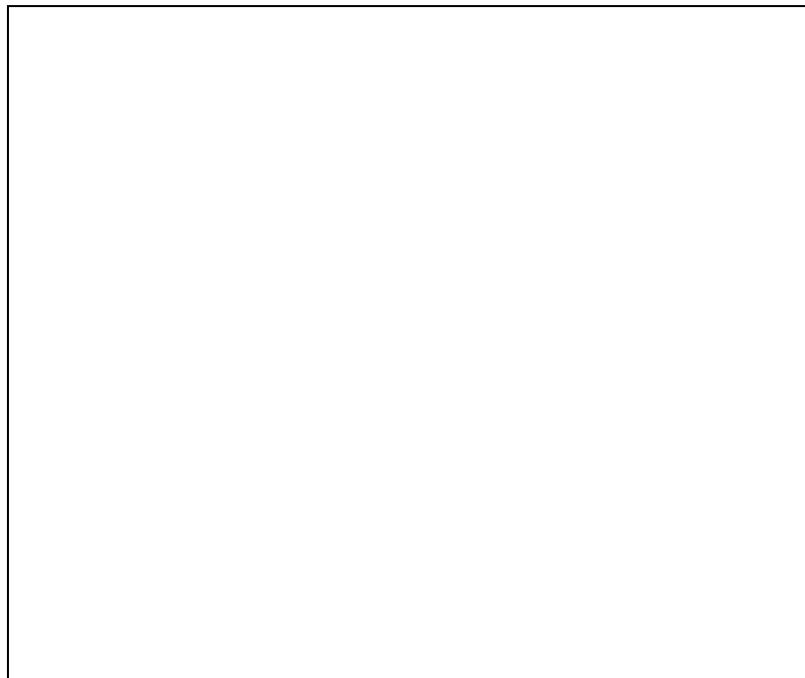
- a. **Timetable:** this is a tabulated list of the times at which certain events or activities are required to occur.
- b. **Organizer:** This is a small portable calendar and datebook used for planning, or a handheld computerized device with a simple database for managing appointments and other information.
- c. **Timepiece:** A timepiece is any instrument for recording or showing the time, especially one that does not strike or chime, e.g. a watch or clock. You may also need an alarm clock which you can preset to wake you up.

Time management is an essential skill in the modern world where several activities have to be crammed into each day. Time management involves several sub-skills seven of which are discussed below.

## 1. Making a things-to-do list

This may seem too obvious but many people face a day without a clear idea of their targets for that day. Apart from routine things like lectures and practical work, you need to list any other activities that may engage your time and for which you need to budget time. You can make your list at night, as part of your plan for the next day, or very early in the day.

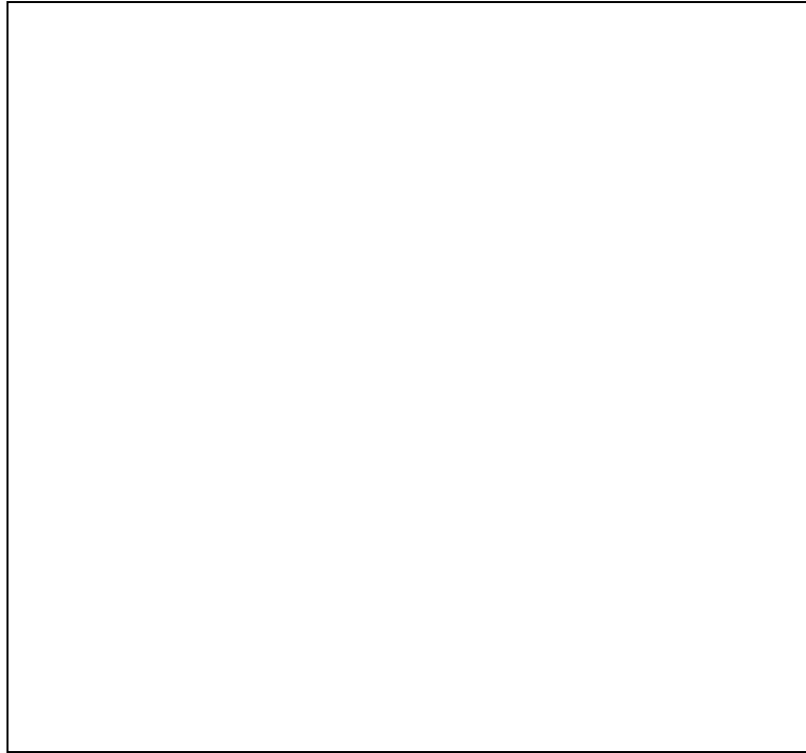
**Task I:** In Box A below, make a rough list of things to do for tomorrow.



## 2. Prioritization

Your list of things to do may not follow any order; you may list tasks as you remember them. However, it is necessary to determine which, of the many items you have penciled down, are absolutely necessary and which must be done as soon as possible. This is what is meant by prioritization, a ranking or ordering of things according to their importance or urgency.

**Task II:** In Box B below, prioritize the activities you have listed in A above, in terms of their relative importance.



### **3. Time budgeting**

A budget is a plan specifying how resources, especially time or money will be allocated or spent during a particular period. As earlier noted, time is a limited resource and there may be many activities competing for the use of a particular stretch of time. You must determine how much time you can afford to invest on an activity but be sure to include all your major activities, including rest and recreation. Your prioritization may be helpful here: you may want to spend more time on activities that you consider more important. A full-time student should certainly spend the better part of his/her day on studying and less on extracurricular activities. Please note, however, that an important activity may not necessarily be time consuming. So, allocate only the time you need.

Factor into your time-plan possible delays and foreseeable problems. In allocating time for a hospital visit, you should consider that there would be other patients. Your visit to a cyber cafe should include a time allowance for connectivity challenges.

**Task III:** The purpose of this task is to help you allocate time to your daily/regular activities, excluding lectures and practical sessions.

- (i) In Column 1 of the table below, list the activities you want to budget for. (Some examples have been provided for you.)
- (ii) In Column II, guess or estimate how much time you may need to complete the tasks listed.
- (iii) Do a few of the tasks, if possible, with a friend and time yourself. Record the actual time you spent in Column III.
- (iv) Compare your estimate with actual time spent. Did you allocate enough or too much time? Did you experience any unexpected delays? Make comments as appropriate.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>'Guestimate' of time spent</b>	<b>Actual time spent</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Walk from Hall of Residence to a bank on campus			
A trip to the Main Market			
Saturday cleaning/washing			

#### 4. Elimination of waste

If time is so precious, one cannot afford to waste it. If at all in the course of a day, you find yourself unoccupied, you should ask: what am I investing this time in? Rest is a legitimate time investment but if you find yourself spending three hours doing nothing, or six hours watching movies or chatting or loafing around in the Students' Centre, something is wrong! Here is a little arithmetic task: if I watch six hours of television every day, how many months in a year would I have spent watching television by the end of that year?

*Answer is:*

Some instances of late or non- submission of assignments can be traced to wasting time on unproductive activities. Time management may therefore involve giving up some less productive activities to buy time for the more important things.

We can also eliminate waste by using time saving devices. Using an automated Teller Machine may save some time spent on queuing at the bank. A telephone call may save you the time cost of a journey, either by helping you make a firm confirmation of the time of a scheduled visit, or by cancelling the need for the journey altogether.

#### *Task IV*

(a): Complete the timetable below, starting with the blue patch (for lectures and practical work). Then fill in all other regular weekday activities. If you have too many blank patches, it may be that you are wasting time that could be better invested or are missing out some other activities.

(b): Swap your timetable with a friend for his/her comments and revise your timetable as may be necessary.

**Comprehensive Timetable**

	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11	11-12	12-1	1-2	2-3	3-4	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10
Mon																
Tue																
Wed																
Thur																
Fri																
Satd																
Sund																

## 5. Task sharing

Some people have time management challenges because they get involved in too many activities. One way of better managing our time is by not biting more than we can chew. Participation in too many clubs, other social and religious/fellowship activities will reduce the amount and quality of time that should be given to priority responsibilities. So, sometimes, you must step back and let someone else do it.

Nevertheless, our priority tasks can also present time management challenges. For example, an assignment for a course might require students to read several books and online material, do site visits and conduct some interviews. At such

times, students can form study groups and share the tasks. This is the idea behind job sharing, the system of dividing up the responsibilities of a single full-time job between two or more part-time workers. In a group of five students, students A and B might do the assigned readings and present summaries to the group; C might download and print the online material for C and D to read and present a summary to the group, D and E can do site visits and E and B can do interviews. A might be the general coordinator of the group. Using this scheme, each student does two activities instead of four.

The right attitude is of prime importance in using task sharing as a time management strategy. There must be total commitment to the group, and each person must take his/her task seriously. The results of their research activities must also be shared in total honesty; no group member should withhold information from the group in the hope of getting better marks than the others.

## **6. Multitasking**

Multitasking is a concept used in computer science and it refers to a mode of operation offered by an operating system in which a computer works on more than one task at a time. It can also mean the simultaneous management of two or more tasks by a person. This concept or a version of it can help us maximize the use of time, especially in the execution of domestic chores. If your Saturday morning 'To Do' list has items like washing bed linen, cooking beans and cleaning the bathroom, it would be possible to soak the bed linen first (letting the detergent do the work), then put the beans on the burner before starting to clean the bathroom. Afterwards, the washing could be done while taking a few seconds off now and then to attend to the cooking. Doing these three activities one after the other is more time consuming than doing them simultaneously.

## 7. Re-scheduling

Despite all efforts to invest time wisely, there may be some activities that cannot be accommodated on a particular day. Such will have to be rescheduled appropriately, i.e. new times will have to be fixed for them. Of course if they are not absolutely important, you might consider leaving them out altogether.

## 8. Micro Time Management

Sometimes we may have to manage a very small amount of time for a compulsory activity. During an examination, tasks are set and the time to be spent is determined by the examiner. But even in such a situation, we must do what may be termed micro time management. For example, you may be given two hours to answer four questions out of five. Let us say the first question is compulsory, carrying 21 marks, while the others carry 13 marks each. It would be wise to allocate more time to question one

**Task V:** In pairs, and in not more than three minutes, do a quick time budget for the situation described above using the table below.

<b>Task</b>	<b>Time allocated</b>
Planning/Outlining	
Compulsory Question	
Other Question A	
Other Question B	
Other Question C	
Revision	
Total	

Good luck with your time management!