

## **Time Management**

Revised Tuesday, August 24, 2010

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this handout is to provide some concrete information for students on time management. Many students in the Study Skills course commented on course evaluations that this information was highly useful for them (even though we spent relatively little time on this module). In SRL, time management falls squarely in the Planning phase (see, for example, Pintrich, 2004).

### **Intended Implementation**

At the very simplest end of the spectrum, this exercise can be introduced early in the quarter and assigned for homework. You don't have to spend a whole lot of time in class on this (unless you want to), and most students should be able to read it on their own.

### **(Other) Ways to Implement**

- You can assign the exercise once and allow students to utilize the resource throughout the quarter if they feel it's useful.
- Alternatively, you could ask students to regularly revise their master time schedules and submit them for review. This approach could encourage students to reflect on whether or not their time management strategies have worked for them up to that point in the course, and then revise accordingly.

### **Grading Possibilities**

- The assignment can be assigned as homework, participation, etc. These should be relatively easy to grade with minimal effort or time.

### **Things to Keep in Mind**

- The more detail you provide to students about what you expect, the more likely you'll get something substantive from the class as a whole.

**Notes:** (Jot down notes during or after implementation to help improve these resources.)

## Why Actively Manage Your Time?

Students who make a decision to carefully schedule their time are not ones who have decided to spend all their time studying and doing nothing else. Instead, they usually have decided to efficiently use the time they have to spend studying and to "de-sensitize" themselves to the many distractions that are commonly occurring.

What is "desensitizing?" It means reducing the day-to-day and hour-to-hour decisions that you have to make about how to spend your time. Decisions such as whether or not you're going to spend the next hour studying, or whether you will or will not go to Math Path to get work done today, or whether you will or will not go to a movie on impulse, or whether or not to use an hour between classes to get next week's homework assignment out of the way. If you have a plan for how to spend your time, then those decisions are already made for you!

Hence, a reasonable, well-thought-out time schedule can *make decisions for you*, thus desensitizing you to momentary distractions. And, an hour of study in one course is not disturbed by wondering when you will study for another course, or when you'll be able to get out and have some fun, because you've developed a plan, stuck to it, and can feel confident that you're doing what you need to in order to succeed in school. Create a master schedule (see below) and try to stick to it. It may take time, practice, and persistence. However, you'll most likely be amazed at how efficient you can become and how much time for "fun" stuff you might actually find yourself creating for yourself.<sup>1</sup>

Before you do any detailed time management planning, it's useful to get a very general feeling of whether or not you've potentially overextended yourself when it comes to your time resources. One way to do this is by using the "Rule of 60."

### Rule of 60:

How many credits are you taking? \_\_\_\_\_

Multiply this by 2 and write it in the space to the right: -----> \_\_\_\_\_

How many hours per week do you work and/or participate in clubs or sports, on average?

Write this total in the space to the right: -----> \_\_\_\_\_

How many hours per week do you spend on personal activities, family duties, driving, etc.?

Write this total in the space to the right: -----> \_\_\_\_\_

Now, add up these three numbers: ----->

Total:

A university study found that if this number is 60 or higher, you should NOT be surprised if you find yourself having academic difficulties. If you have a total higher than 60, this study found you are much more likely to struggle in school and become overwhelmed. This seems to be a general "magic number" for most students. It does not guarantee anything, but at least gives you an initial realistic idea of whether or not your schedule is manageable. Keep in mind that if you are taking math and/or science, 60 may be too large and you may have to aim for lower hours since math/science courses typically require more time. So, when you register for classes, take this into account. You're better off taking fewer credits now and being successful, as opposed to overloading yourself, failing, and slowing down your progress and momentum.

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<sup>1</sup> Many of the ideas on this handout were taken from or summarized from

<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~acskills/success/time.html>

## 10 Steps to Developing a Master Calendar

One very important aspect of effectively managing your time is to set specific short term and long-term **goals**. You need to know what your goals are on a daily, weekly, and quarterly basis if you are going to be able to prioritize how you spend your time. It is important that you constantly **review** your goals, **evaluate** whether or not you are meeting them, and **revise** them accordingly. If you don't do this, and if you don't do it with honesty to yourself, you will find it more difficult to make good use of your time and attain your educational goals.

**DIRECTIONS:** Read all of these directions before you make up your weekly schedule.

**1st** Record **Class Times** in appropriate day/hour blocks.

**2nd** Record **Work** hours and **Commute** times.

**Rule of 60:** As a general guideline,  
 $2 \times \text{class/lab hours} + \text{work hours} +$   
commute hours should be **less than 60!**

**3rd** Record all **Regular Personal Activities** such as meals, family duties, volunteer work, etc.

**4th** Record any **Special Activities** you need to do or want to do on a regular basis.

**5th** Schedule a **Preview Time** (5-30 minutes) immediately before each class whenever possible. During the preview time, review all or some of your notes in preparation for the upcoming class. Finish any reading assignments, if necessary. If you have two or three classes in a row, preview from last to first class. Use a **P** to indicate Preview. For example: **P Math** might mean you preview for your math class; **P Math/English** means you are previewing two back-to-back classes.

**6th** Schedule a **Review Time** immediately after your classes (5-30 minutes) whenever possible. Use this time to edit and rework your notes, especially if you're using the 3-column method. For the schedule described above, you might write **R: Math**. You could also look over any assignments that were given and begin to plan when and how you will do them. Sketch those new assignments into your calendar if necessary.

**7th** Schedule your **Intensive Study Time** for each class. Try to schedule some study time each day for each class. Learning is more effectively and efficiently accomplished in shorter, regular sessions than in longer irregular sessions. When you schedule study time, be task-oriented rather than time-oriented. In other words, focused on what needs to get done for your classes (homework, reading, labs, WAMAP, etc.) Think in terms of "blocks of time" and what specifically needs to be accomplished, not hours of study time. Try to study the same subjects at the same time each study day. Although this seems to be a mechanical way of scheduling, you will find that such a routine can help you develop a pattern for efficient and effective learning.

**8th** Schedule a **Weekly Review (WR)** for each course at the end of the week. Look at all of the past week's notes and assignments to see what you have been learning in the past week. Review your goals as well. You can also look ahead to plan the next week and determine how much to adjust your schedule to get it all done.

**9th** Keep open some time for regular **Physical Activity**. Research shows regular exercise gives you a general sense of well-being, and can reduce tension and help you accomplish a tough class, study, and work schedule. Also, label some empty blocks of time as **Open** for academic or personal needs.

**10th** Schedule some time during Friday, Saturday, and Sunday for **Free Time**. Play, relax, or do whatever you want to do. This is your reward for sticking to your schedule. In addition, you'll enjoy your free time more.

# Master Weekly Calendar

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
6-7 AM							
7-8 AM							
8-9 AM							
9-10 AM							
10-11 AM							
11-12 PM							
12-1 PM							
1-2 PM							
2-3 PM							
3-4 PM							
4-5 PM							
5-6 PM							
6-7 PM							
7-8 PM							
8-9 PM							
9-10 PM							
10-11 PM							
11-12 AM							

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## 20 Tips for Managing Your Time

1. Create and maintain a Master Time Schedule. Give it a prominent place (binder cover) where you can see it easily and often. Revise it weekly during your Weekly Review time (see above).
2. Put up reminders in your home or office about your goals. Always keep your short and long-term goals in mind. Let them help you prioritize how you use your time.
3. Examine and revise your goals on a regular basis. Be sure to record progress towards those goals when you make it.
4. Count all your time as time to be used and make every attempt to get satisfaction out of every moment.
5. Find something to enjoy in whatever you do.
6. Remind yourself, "There is always enough time for the important things." If it is important, you should be able to make time to do it.
7. Continually look at ways of freeing up your time.
8. Examine your old habits and search for ways to change or eliminate them.
9. Try to use waiting time by review or reworking notes, reviewing flash cards, or doing practice problems.
10. Keep paper or a calendar with you to jot down the things you have to do or notes to yourself.
11. Plan your day each morning or the night before and set priorities for yourself.
12. Maintain and develop a list of specific things to be done each day, set your priorities and get the most important ones done as soon in the day as you can. Evaluate your progress at the end of the day briefly.
13. Try rewarding yourself when you get things done as you had planned, especially the important ones.
14. When you catch yourself procrastinating-ask yourself, "What am I avoiding?" Deal with that head on.
15. Concentrate on one thing at a time.
16. Push yourself and be persistent, especially when you know you are doing well. In the end, you only have you to do this for you.
17. Be sure and set deadlines for yourself whenever possible.
18. Ask for advice when needed.
19. Try to find locations or environments where you can study effectively and therefore use your time efficiently. Experiment with different places to see what works best for you.
20. Stop regretting your failures and start learning from your mistakes. Mistakes are not an indication of personal failure but beginning points of understanding. Take time to reflect on them and think of ways to adopt new study strategies and habits that will avoid and reduce those mistakes over time. (Remember, this is a process!)