**Student Success Tips**

Sierra Pacific Community College District

Student Success Tips

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Student Success Tips

# Time Management

## Introduction

There's no such thing as time management! So why should you read the rest of this handout? Because there is such a thing as self-management and that's the key to making time your ally rather than your enemy. There are only 24 hours in your day, just the same as everybody else's. So how do you end up frustrated, angry, behind in your work, and dead on your feet? Maybe because you don't know how to use those 24 hours to your advantage (Navarro).

## Track Your Time

If using your time wisely is a problem for you, you probably don't have a very good idea of where it all goes. It just seems to go! A good place to start, then, is to keep track of how you use your time. Get a Weekly Schedule[[1]](#footnote-1) and faithfully keep track of how you use your waking hours for one week. The results will probably surprise you.

## Schedule Your Time

The next step is to pick up several more of these Weekly Schedules and do some planning. You'll discover, among other things, that if you get seven hours sleep a night, you have 119 hours per week to do everything you need to do. That, of course, includes going to class, eating, athletic events, social activities, personal hygiene, time-in-transit, studying, student organizations, telephone and TV time, etc. Be sure to schedule time for all these in your 119 hours.[[2]](#footnote-2) Then try sticking to your schedule for a week. This should give you a good idea of where your real priorities are!

## Procrastination

If you have trouble, chances are there's a culprit lurking somewhere. Chances are this culprit's name is “*Procrastination*.” Procrastination masquerades in a million disguises. Among the more common of these are:

* "One more day won't make any difference; I'll just put that off until tomorrow."
* "It won't matter if I'm a few minutes late; no one else will be on time."
* "I work best under pressure."
* "I'll watch just 15 more minutes of TV."

## Interruptions

Learn to say NO once your priorities are set. Turning down an invitation doesn't mean you'll never be asked to do something again. Weigh the consequences. Making a decision based on what you know is best for you at the time leads to greater respect from your friends, not to a reputation as a party-pooper.

* Stay away from the telephone when you're trying to get work done.
* Turn off your cell phone or pager. If it's important, they'll call back.
* Stay away from email and instant messaging. Limit how often you check these things.

## Schedule and Plan Ahead

* Use a monthly calendar to help you allocate your study time on the Weekly Schedule. At the beginning of each quarter, spend an hour with your calendar to enter all important dates. As you receive course syllabi, enter the dates for quizzes, papers, etc., on your calendar. Then estimate the time needed to prepare for each of these. The rule-of-thumb is "Plan ahead by working backwards."
* By counting backwards like this, you'll be surprised how well you're using your time and how much better your grade will be when you're not under pressure. And, by being honest with yourself and taking account of all your priorities, you'll be able to go to the football game and not feel guilty.
* At the start of each week, transfer important items from your calendar to your Weekly Schedule. This helps you to avoid things that might otherwise sneak up on you.
* An alternative to a paper calendar is to use an electronic calendar. You could use the one on your desktop computer (e.g., Microsoft Outlook) or smart phone.
* Be sure to schedule time for your fitness routine and for study breaks. Your brain works best when it has sufficient oxygen. Your concentration is enhanced when you go hard at a task until you feel yourself fading. Then Break! A good rule-of-thumb is to work for 45 minutes and then break for 15. But watch yourself! More than 15 minutes is more than a break!

## Conclusion

Suggestions such as these don't lead to enslavement by a calendar. But, it leads to a greater sense of freedom and accomplishment because you're in control. That's all self-management is—managing your life more effectively. By following these suggestions, you'll be happier, more satisfied, and more productive.

# Minimizing Test Anxiety

## Test Anxiety

Most students experience some level of anxiety during an exam. However, when anxiety begins to affect exam performance it has become a problem (Sierra Pacific Community College District).

## What Causes Test Anxiety

* Lack of preparation as indicated by:
  + Cramming the night before the exam
  + Poor time management
  + Failure to organize text information
  + Poor study habits
* Worrying about the following:
  + Past performance on exams
  + How friends and other students are doing
  + The negative consequences of failure

## Physical Signs of Test Anxiety

During an exam, as in any stressful situations, a student may experience any of the following bodily changes:

* Perspiration
* Sweaty palms
* Headache
* Upset stomach
* Rapid heart beat
* Tense muscles

## Effects of Test Anxiety

* Nervousness:
  + Having difficulty reading and understanding the questions on the exam paper
  + Having difficulty organizing your thoughts
  + Having difficulty retrieving key words and concepts when answering essay questions
  + Doing poorly on an exam even though you know the material
* Mental Blocking:
  + Going blank on questions
  + Remembering the correct answers as soon as the exam is over

## How to Reduce Test Anxiety

* Study and know the material well enough so that you can recall it even if you are under stress.
* Learn and practice good time management and avoid:
  + Laziness
  + Procrastination
  + Day dreaming
* Build confidence by studying throughout the semester and avoid cramming the night before the exam.
* Learn to concentrate on the material you are studying by:
  + Generating questions from your textbooks and lecture notes
  + Focusing on key words, concepts and examples in your textbooks and lecture notes
  + Making charts and outlines which organize the information in your notes and textbooks
  + Using relaxation techniques, for example, taking long deep breaths to relax the body and reduce stress

## The Immediate Environment

The environment in which you study can have a big effect on how efficient your study time is. Check your place of study for the following conditions:

* Noise
* Interruptions
* Lighting
* Temperature
* Neatness
* Comfort
* Equipment

## Minimize Distracting Noise

Some people need some sound and some like silence. Find what works for you.

* Culprits are family and friends. Consider a "do not disturb sign" and turning on your answering machine. You can catch up with folks later.
* Better cool than warm.
* Have plenty of room to work; don't be cramped. Your study time will go better if you take a few minutes at the start to straighten things up.
* A desk and straight-backed chair is usually best. Don't get too comfortable—a bed is a place to sleep, not study.
* Have everything (book, pencils, paper, coffee, dictionary, typewriter, calculator, tape recorder, etc.) close at hand. Don't spend your time jumping up and down to get things.

# Goal Setting

To achieve goals, you must set goals. Below are some helpful guidelines for setting and achieving your goals (Navarro).

## Set Attainable Goals

* Be sure your goals are your own. It's your life. Self-set goals are better motivators than those imposed by others.
* Make your goals challenging but attainable. Good goals are neither too easy nor impossible. They should cause you to stretch and grow. A challenging, attainable goal will hold your interest and keep you motivated.
* Check your major goals for compatibility. Don't fall into the trap of setting major goals where the achievement of one will prevent the attainment of another.

## Set Specific Goals

* Put goals in writing. This will lessen the odds of losing sight of your goals in the shuffle of daily activity. Writing goals also increases your commitment.
* Goals should be as specific and measurable as possible. Don't say, "I want a better job." Ask yourself: What kind of job? Making how much money? In what industry? Living where? Requiring what kind of skill? By when? Specify clearly what you want, and you will save an enormous amount of time and effort.
* Every goal should have a target date. Never think of a goal as a goal until you set a deadline for accomplishment.

## Revise Goals

* Frequently revise and update your goals. As a growing person your needs will change over time, and this means goals will have to be modified, discarded and added from time to time.
* Plan flexibly. Don't think of your goals as carved in stone.

# Works Cited

Navarro, Tessa C. *Study Skills for College Students*. Chicago: McGraw-Hill, 2018.

Sierra Pacific Community College District. "Tips for Student Success." 2 February 2020. *spccd.edu.* <http://www.spccd.edu/tips4success.pdf>.

1. Weekly Schedules are available from your counselor or in the college bookstore. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Be sure to schedule recreational time in your 119 hours. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)