**Some Time Management Tips**

Excerpted From, The Master Student, by David Ellis

1. **Plan two hours of study time for every hour you spend in class.**

Therefore, if you are in 15 credit hours this semester, you should be looking at an AVERAGE of 30 hours of studying and/or preparation per week. This total will vary depending upon the type of classes you have, and when exams and quizzes fall during the semester. But more often than not, you will see that successful students are doing course work about 4-6 hours a day.

This might seem like an overwhelming amount of time, but it is really only about an hour per course per day!

2. **Study difficult (or boring) subjects when you have the most energy, and are the most focused on studying.**

This requires that you PRIORITIZE your studying, on a weekly (or even a daily) basis. If the math is much harder than the Rhetoric, it deserves more of your time and energy. You have to force yourself to resist the temptation to put the math off because it is harder. That's when things fall apart.

3. **Avoid scheduling marathon study sessions.**

Spread out your studying. Instead of attempting one long day, try two or three shorter days, so you can stay focused and keep the quality of your studying at a high level. Also, spread out the studying *during your day*. If you cannot sit for four hours at a time, try studying for 1.5 hours three times a day.

Cramming (or all-nighters) is a bad idea, since fatigue affects your ability to retain information. However, if you are forced to do marathon sessions, give yourself regular breaks (every hour for five minutes); it is also a good idea to work on several subjects that day, to get some variety and to keep yourself sharp.

4. **Be aware of your best time of day.**

Are you a morning person? Or are you a night owl? Use this knowledge to plan your studying. If the morning is the most productive time for you, then don't waste it by watching TV or talking to friends.

Those of you who aren't in either category need to train yourself to use your waking time effectively. It may be hard to get yourself up every morning at 7:30 if you do not have a class until 10:30, but that is a great time for reading, studying, or doing math problems. You have to train your body to get up, but it will respond.

5. **Use your waiting time.**

Those little pieces of time that you have between finishing lunch and your next class, or between classes, can be spent thinking about the lecture you just had, reviewing flash cards, or taking a walk to clear your head. Those chunks of waiting time can add up to some serious “down time”, when looked at together.

**WHERE TO STUDY**

6 & 7. **Use a regular study area.**

This should be a place that your body knows is a study place, and not a sleeping place. Do not study in bed, or on a comfortable couch or chair. Those places are for relaxing or sleeping.

In many cases, **students find that it is best if they do not study at home**, because the stress that can get associated with studying becomes attached to their living space, and that can be bad. Also, most people living with roommates find it impossible to get TRULY quality work done in the residence hall, or in the house. The next time you are studying in your room, keep track of how often you find yourself "off task". I bet it's more than you think…

8. **With this in mind,** **try using the library, or a quiet space that is away from home.**

Libraries are places designed for learning. Train your brain to turn on when you go to your study space. As a general rule, living space is not a great study space.

**HOW TO HANDLE THE REST OF THE WORLD**

9. **Pay attention to your attention.**

Do you find your thoughts straying after concentrating for a period of time? Take note of the circumstances under which this occurs, and let the thoughts go.

10. **Agree with living mates about study time.**

Make the rules clear, and be sure to follow them yourself. If there are problems with establishing the rules, don't make a big issue out of it...study someplace else. Make it a non-issue.

11. **Avoid noise distractions.**

This includes the television, phone, and stereo...if you try to compromise with others about their use of these things and it doesn't work, don't waste energy being angry. Study somewhere else. Get into the routine of going elsewhere and it won't be such a pain after a while.

12. **Notice how others misuse your time.**

Be aware of repeat offenders. Are there certain people who continually interrupt what you are doing, even when it is obvious that you do not want to be bothered? A gentle reminder should do it.

13. **Turn off the cell phone when you are studying. Better yet…leave it at home!**

Think about the interruptions your cell phone causes in your attention, and how much time you spend on your phone in a typical day…

14. **Learn to say NO.**

This can be tough! It is hard to refuse a request to go somewhere fun for dinner or walk around downtown, watch some TV, or hit the REC. When you tell people that you can't do something because you are busy studying, 99% will understand. If they don't, then that’s their problem, not yours.

This is why it is a good idea to study outside of the residence hall. That way, you are not around to be distracted or have to deal with pressure from friends to do something different. When you are in your room, you are there specifically to relax and socialize rather than study…and people eventually will realize this pattern.

15. **Try hanging a "DO NOT DISTURB" sign on your door.**

It works, more often than not. Try it!

**THINGS YOU CAN ASK YOURSELF WHEN YOU GET STUCK**

16. **Ask: What is one task I can accomplish toward my goal?**

Break down big tasks, such as papers or complicated class assignments, into smaller, more manageable parts. You will be able to do a better job on these parts, and you’ll get the satisfaction of moving forward toward your goal.

17. **Ask: Am I beating myself up?**

If you find yourself getting frustrated with complicated reading, or you notice that your attention wanders repeatedly, or you are falling behind in your work because you can't seem to get started or stay focused, ask yourself how you feel about those feelings. Are you judging yourself too harshly? Don't add to the problem by berating yourself. Try to maintain a positive attitude…

18. **Ask: Is this a piano?**

Carpenters who build rough frames for buildings have a saying they use when they bend a nail, or hack a chunk out of a two by four. They say,"Well, this ain't no piano." It means that perfection is not necessary. Ask yourself if what you are doing has to be perfect. If you can complete a job 95% perfect in 2 hours, and 100% perfect in 4 hours, ask yourself if it is worth the extra two hours to get it perfect, or if the time can be spent doing other important assignments for other classes. For example, do you have to apply the same standards of grammar to rewriting class notes as you do to a final draft of a term paper?

Sometimes it IS a piano. A tiny mistake can ruin an entire lab experiment. Be willing, however, to accept lower standards, when appropriate.

19. **Ask: How did I just waste time?**

If you notice that time has passed, and you haven't accomplished what you needed to do, take a few minutes to monitor the situation. Note the specific way that you wasted time, and the context in which it occurred. When you have noticed things you do to kill your time, you are more likely to catch yourself in the act the next time. It could save you several hours a day!

20. **Ask: Would I pay myself for what I'm doing right now?**

If you were employed as a student, would you be earning your wages? Remember -- SCHOOL IS YOUR FULL-TIME JOB AT THIS POINT IN YOUR LIFE. TREAT IT THAT WAY, AND YOU WILL BE REWARDED IN THE END! You are investing in your own future, and you have to realize what doing a mediocre job in your coursework will cost you in the long run.

**REMEMBER: Your GPA is set, give or take a few tenths of a point, after the first year.** If you screw around and blow your first semester, you will end up playing catch up for the next two or three years, and you may ruin your chance to reach many of your long-term goals.

21. **Ask: Can I do just one more thing?**

Ask this at the end of a long day. Most of the time you have the energy to do *one more* short task. If you get in the habit of completing "just one more thing", they will add up in the long run, and save you time and energy later. The overall increase in productivity will surprise you.

**SOME FINAL TIPS**

***Be flexible.*** Try different techniques with different courses and different activities. You can't approach a class in literature or history in the same fashion as you approach math or the sciences. If a particular style or method of study works well for you then stick with it, but if you find that you try something in a class and it does not work, CHANGE WHAT YOU ARE DOING…and be a creator of your own success!

***Become an expert at self-monitoring.*** Always evaluate your performance. Are you happy with a B on a paper when you know you could have done better? Be honest with yourself! Rather than simply saying that you could have done better, take the time to evaluate in detail what was sub-par about the experience. Always be on the lookout for ways to improve your overall approach to academics. This is being a creator, rather than a victim.

***Be yourself.*** Just because something works for someone else (procrastinating/cramming, being a night owl, keeping a compulsive calendar of workloads) does not mean that it will work for you. Have the inner strength to be your own person, and do your own thing. You will find, in the long run, that you will not lose your true friends because you put school first. In fact, most people are secretly in awe of their peers who do well in school and have an active social life. It’s all about finding balance, and the concept of the "nerd" just doesn't fly here.

***Give yourself time to adapt to the new demands of college life.*** As you progress through your first semester of college, keep in mind that you are adapting to a LOT of change that has been forced on you all at once; you are adapting to new academic standards, learning how to negotiate new relationships, and figuring out how to handle being fully responsible for the choices you make. Your first semester of college is all about managing this transition, and it takes time and experience to figure everything out…so give yourself that opportunity, and don’t put too much pressure on yourself. With time, things will fall into place!