

Time Management

Wilfrid Laurier University
Study Skills & Supplemental Instruction Centre

Welcome to Time Management in 10 minutes, your starting point to developing the study skills that will help you succeed in your university career.

Goal Setting

What makes an ideal goal?

- ◇ Concrete.
- ◇ Specific.
- ◇ Measureable.
- ◇ Realistic.
- ◇ Balance with your academic and personal life.

For more assistance, visit our Perhaps the most important factor in developing strong time management skills is goal setting and monitoring.

A good goal is concrete, specific, measureable and realistic while maintaining your personal and academic life. For example, instead of saying “I would like to get an A+ in my advanced Calculus course”, set smaller goals that you can monitor throughout the course of the term “I would like to finish reading the first 3 chapters of the text, and make study aids by Thursday night”.

One of the most important factors for good goal setting is actually getting into the habit of setting goals for yourself, and reviewing those goals on a regular and ongoing basis. Next, lets examine the different ways of actually managing your time in the form of term schedules and weekly schedules.

Term Schedule

- ◇ Consider the big picture:
 - major events.
 - academic due dates.
 - important milestones.
- ◇ Allows you to anticipate the unfolding of your time weeks in advance.
- ◇ Allows you to spot busy periods and spread out the workload in advance.

The term schedule is a very useful tool for you as a student, as it will help you to plan ahead and get a sense of where you will need to work harder to plan your time effectively. By seeing, when all your assignments are due, for example, you can begin to work ahead, so that you aren't scrambling at the last minute to finish each of your assignments.

Your term schedule should include all important academic dates, such as the dates of labs and midterms, as well as other major events, such as significant birthdays, or trips home.

Weekly Schedule

- ◇ Break up your time by the hour and schedule in when you are going to get everything done
- ◇ Be specific about the time you will spend on each task
- ◇ Try to use daylight hours to get your work done
- ◇ Use all the small chunks of time in your day
 - Example: 10-30 min intervals between classes

Another helpful time management tool is the weekly schedule. The weekly schedule allows you to schedule your time in more detail than a monthly or term schedule might. For example, in your weekly schedule, you can include when and for how many hours you plan to study for your Economics midterm the following week.

Some tips for making the most out of your weekly schedule: include the small chunks of your day, such as the time you'll be on the bus getting to work-a great time to review some of the cue cards you made the evening before.

Try and schedule the majority of your work for daylight hours, as this is when most of us are at our mental peak.

And don't forget to be very specific about the time you will spend on a particular task. Don't say you will study for 2 hours on Monday, instead, record that you will spend from 4:15 to 5:20 reading this weeks chapter for your DE English class.

The Weekly Schedule



Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9:00					
10:00	CS 101	Swim at AC	CS 101	Swim at AC	CS 101 (tutorial)
11:00	Study	Study	Study		Study
12:00	Lunch		Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
1:00	CS 100	Lunch	CS 100	PO 110 (tutorial)	CS 100 (tutorial)
2:00	Study	2:30 – HI 118	Study	2:30 – HI 118	Study
3:00					
4:00	PO 110	Study	PO 110	Study	
5:00	Dinner	Dinner			
6:00	Yoga Class		Dinner	Dinner	Dinner
7:00		PY 100	Study	Intramural Volleyball	
8:00	Study			Grey's Anatomy	
9:00				Study	
10:00			'CSI:NY'		

Here is one example of how your weekly schedule might look once you've completed it.

Notice that all activities are slotted in....classes, meals, workouts, part time jobs, recreation, and of course- time to study!

Make note of all the little time slots in between activities and include these short breaks in your planning – you'll find that you have a lot of unused time that you didn't even know about!

Assessing Your Schedule

- ◇ A schedule is only as good as your ability to stick to it.
- ◇ Evaluate your time management:
 - *How much time did you schedule to complete a task?*
 - *How long did it actually take you to complete the task?*

Having a schedule, be it a term schedule or a weekly to-do list, simply isn't enough to keep you on track with your time management. It's important to assess your schedule to see where you have room for improvement. This is especially true if you find you are having difficulty completing all of your weekly goals.

Often, students find that they have difficulty sticking to their schedules as task they thought would only take a couple of hours are, in fact, taking much longer. As a general rule, if you think it will take you one hour to read a chapter in your text, it will more likely take you two hours. Take this discrepancy into account as your planning your schedule to ensure that you're allowing yourself enough time to complete all your tasks.

If you're still finding that your schedule isn't matching your actions, try keeping a record of how long it is actually taking you to complete tasks versus how much time you allowed yourself to complete your tasks.

It can also be helpful to record all of the distractions you experienced during a particular study session- it is possible that you're losing a lot of valuable time thinking about what to pick up the next time you go to the grocery store.

Motivation

One of the biggest hurdles to effective time management is simply getting started.

Tips for self-motivation:

- ◇ Reward system
- ◇ Small steps

A common complaint that students have when it comes to managing their time is that they simply can't get motivated to begin their work. Procrastination is a challenging obstacle for many students, and one that is important to overcome as early in your life as possible.

So how do you actually sit down and start on your list of tasks to accomplish for the day? One trick that can work is to develop a reward system to motivate yourself. You can do this by setting up a small reward that you will yourself to once you have finished a particular task. This size of the rewards should be proportionate to the size of the task that you need to accomplish. For example, a relatively small task like making a list of possible resources for your upcoming term paper could be rewarded with allowing yourself to rent a movie, or to make a long distance phone call to a friend home.

A larger goal, such as finishing the final draft of that term paper could give you an even bigger reward- a night out on the town with friends, for example.

Keeping on Track

Falling Behind? Getting Distracted? Try...

- ✧ Making note of each of your distractions
- ✧ Ensure that you're working in a space with minimal distractions
- ✧ Schedule time to complete tasks that are acting as a distraction

Even with a good schedule in place, it can be difficult to accomplish all of the tasks you have laid out for yourself in a day. Distractions can quickly creep in from every angle- worries about a sick loved one, to the laundry that is accumulating on the floor. It may seem nearly impossible to rid yourself of all of these distractions, but there are ways to combat those things that are keeping you from sticking to your schedule.

While studying or reading, make a small tick on a piece of paper each time you noticed that your thoughts have wandered. Sometimes minimizing distractions can be as easy as realizing just how distracted you are. Also, by making the small gesture each time you notice that you are thinking about something else, you can consciously redirect your thoughts back to the task at hand. This will take time, but hopefully as you continually redirect your thoughts, you will be making fewer and fewer distraction marks on that page.

Along the same line, it can be helpful to make a brief list of the things that are distracting you. If you find that you suddenly can't stop thinking of cleaning the bathroom once you sit down to do research, make a note of that task on our weekly schedule, and during your next study break, find time in your schedule to complete the task. By recognizing that you do have other tasks and fitting them into your schedule, you can free yourself to focus on the task at hand.

Finally, it is essential that you find a study space for yourself that minimizes the potential for distractions. This may mean turning off your phone, staying in a room that doesn't have a television, and not signing in to online messaging accounts. It's also essential to have all the material you'll need at your fingertips-pencils, paper, a bottle of water, text books...this way you'll have no reason to get up!

Practice

- ✧ Active reading is a challenging technique that takes some practice.
- ✧ In order to make the most of the information here, it is essential that you continually practice new skills.
- ✧ Changing formed habits is not easy, so don't be discouraged if it seems challenging at first—don't give up!

It is not easy to simply start using new study strategies, even when it comes to managing your time. At first, it may seem tedious to record a detailed schedule of all your weekly activities, and you may feel like the time you're spending on that task could be put to better use. Rest assured that it takes time to develop all new habits, after a few weeks of creating schedules you'll find it becomes easier and less of a burden with each passing week.
Don't give up!

Still Have Questions?

For even more help with improving your time management skills, or for advice on other ways to improve your study habits, visit our website:

www.wlu.ca/study

Call to book an appointment: 519.884.0710 ext. 2220

As mentioned earlier, time management is one of the biggest hurdles for student to overcome. It is also an essential life skill for both your academic and your professional life, so it is essential that you develop these skills early on.

For more assistance in creating a time management regime that is best for you, visit our website, stop by the Study Skills Office, or call to book an appointment with an Academic Mentor-you'll be glad you did!