

# Time Management for College Students



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## Introduction

[last updated: March 26, 2000]



Have you ever found yourself bleary-eyed and strung out from too much coffee and too little sleep after pulling an "all nighter" right before the big biology test?



Or did you ever want to kick yourself for putting off start NOW that history project your instructor told you about at the beginning of the semester so that you ended up throwing together 15 pages of "garbage" just to get the report in on time?



Or how about the time your computer crashed when you were word-processing your English paper the night before it was due, and your teacher said that your reason was simply a new version of "the dog ate my paper" excuse and gave you an "F"?

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# Student as a Job

[last updated: March 17, 2000]

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If you are a full-time student, you have a full-time job. You may not think of school as a job but consider this. You typically have 12-15 or more hours of class per week. In addition, you are expected to put in about 2 hours of preparation and production outside of class for each hour in class. This means that your work week is at least 36 to 45 hours long. This is a full-time occupation. If you have a job outside of school and/or family responsibilities, you may feel that there aren't enough hours in the day.

When lack of time is a problem your first consideration should be the "big picture." Everyone should try to have a balanced life. To update a popular saying, "all work and no play makes Jack and Jill dull people." If you don't think that your life is balanced, you may need to make some serious decisions. Should you become a part-time student because you need the money from your full-time job? Could you cut back on your job hours since you want to get your degree now? Whatever your decision, you should also try to allow time for family and friends to keep that important balance.

Now that you have considered the "big picture," it is time to improve your ability to manage your time. This really means managing yourself. Read the series of mini-lessons for information that may help you.

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# Procrastination

[last updated: March 26, 2000]

**NOTE:** Before you read about procrastination, link to the "[Procrastination Self-test](#)" to see if you are a procrastinator.

- Have you ever told yourself that if you ignore an assignment that's due, maybe it will go away?
- Have you ever told yourself, "I'll just watch TV (or do something else enjoyable) for just 5 minutes and then get back to my homework?"
- Have you ever underestimated the amount of work or time an assignment was going to take?
- Have you ever done something else "very important" to avoid working on an assignment?
- Have you ever done part of an assignment, the part you were good at, and not done the part you had problems with?
- Have you ever spent so much time deciding what to do (e.g., which topic to write about) for an assignment that you didn't get anything done?

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# Dealing with Procrastination

[last updated: March 19, 2000]

There are many ways to deal with procrastination. Here is a list of suggestions or techniques for you to consider.

- **Set realistic goals.** Don't try to do too much and don't try to do everything perfectly.
- **Do school work when your energy level is at its highest.** If you are a morning person, do school work in the morning. If you are a night person, do school work at night.
- **Break large tasks into smaller ones.** You don't want to be overwhelmed by the work you need to do so create smaller tasks from bigger ones. Then focus on completing the smaller tasks one at a time until you are finished.
- **Work for realistic periods of time.** If you work best at 1 hour intervals, don't try to cram in 2 hours of study. Or if 1/2 hour at a time is best for you, then follow your own needs; do not study for long periods just because your friends do.
- **Avoid study marathons (like all-nighters).**
- **Mix activities.** Switch subjects after a while, or try to alternate between doing things you enjoy with things that you find challenging or boring.
- **Create an effective place to do your school work.** Make your work place comfortable but not TOO comfortable. Try to keep distractions to a minimum (like phones, TV, and friends). Don't forget the importance of good lighting and make sure that you have access to the materials and equipment you need.
- **Allow extra time for unexpected things.** The "unexpected" can be discovering that you really need at least 5 hours to write your English composition when you had only planned for 3 hours. And you don't want to wait until the last minute to do an important assignment only to get sick or have your computer crash.
- **Schedule time for yourself -- for exercise, relaxation, and**

**socializing.** Don't forget that "all work and no play makes Jack and Jill dull people," not to mention frustrated, bored, and stressed out.

- **Use your free time wisely.** Make effective use of the time between classes or while you are waiting -- for buses or friends, at the doctor's office, etc.
- **Reward yourself when you have finished tasks on time.** Make sure that the reward is suitable for the difficulty of the task and the time you spent on it.
- **Start NOW!**

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# Getting Organized

(creating a week's plan)

[last updated: Jan. 7, 2001]

STEP 1: [List Your Activities](#)

STEP 2: [Create a Week's Plan](#)

STEP 3: [When in doubt, prioritize](#)

**NOTE:** Use the steps listed here to create a schedule for a typical week.

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## Time Management for College Students

# List Your Activities

[last updated: Jan. 7, 2001]

Make a list of everything you need to do during a typical week. Include **ALL** activities (not just school assignments).

- List activities that come at fixed times and cannot be changed (e.g., classes, work responsibilities, doctor's appointment).
- List class assignments and meetings (e.g., study groups, meeting with your advisor, etc.).
- List recreation and social activities.

**NOTE:** Do **NOT** send your final list to your instructor.

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## Sample List

<b>history class</b>	<b>Mon., Wed., Fri: 10-11 a.m.</b> <b>Monday - read ch 2</b> <b>Wed. - read ch 3</b> <b>Thursday - study group 8 p.m.</b> <b>Friday - test on ch 2-3</b> <b>Next Monday - read ch 4</b>
<b>biology class</b>	<b>Tuesday &amp; Thursday: 12-3 p.m.</b> <b>Tuesday - read ch 2-3</b> <b>Thursday - lab report due</b>
<b>English class</b>	<b>Mon., Wed., Fri.: 11-12 p.m.</b> <b>Friday - paper due at 11 a.m.</b> <b>Next Monday - ch 5-7</b> <b>Next Friday - research paper topic due</b>
<b>sociology class</b>	<b>Wednesday: 7-10 p.m.</b> <b>Wednesday - ch 5 &amp; 5 questions</b>
<b>dentist appointment</b>	<b>Friday, 1 p.m.</b>
<b>job</b>	<b>Mon. &amp; Tues. 7-10 p.m.; Sat. 7-11 p.m.</b>

picnic at Jane's house	Sunday noon
tennis with Tim	Saturday 9 a.m.

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# Create a Week's Plan

[last updated: Jan. 5, 2001]

1. Take the list you made of your activities and the day & time.
2. Write these activities down on a week's calendar. [Link to the [blank calendar](#) provided for you.]
3. Write down any related activities, for example, reading 2 chapters for history or writing a biology lab report.

**NOTE:** Your calendar should be for a typical week. Send your calendar to your instructor as an e-mail attachment.

## Sample Week's Plan

	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
7 a.m.							
8 a.m.	<b>HIS</b> read ch 2		<b>HIS</b> read ch 3		study <b>HIS</b> test		
9 a.m.		<b>ENG</b> write intro		<b>ENG fin.</b> body		tennis w/ Tim	
10 a.m.	history class	↓	history class	& write concl.	history class test	↓	
11 a.m.	English class		English class		<b>ENG</b> paper due		
noon		biology		biology			picnic at Jane's

# Time Management Skills

L-3

1 p.m.	Read BIO ch 2-3	↓	SOC read ch 5	↓	dentist appt.	library for ENG	↓
2 p.m.	↓	↓	SOC write 5 quest.	↓	↓	research info	↓
3 p.m.	↓						↓
4 p.m.		ENG write body	Do BIO lab rept	ENG go over paper			↓
5 p.m.		↓		↓			
6 p.m.							HIS read ch 4
7 p.m.	JOB	JOB	sociology class		?	JOB	
8 p.m.	↓	↓	↓	HIS study group	?	↓	ENG read ch 5-7
9 p.m.	↓	↓	↓	↓	?	↓	
10 p.m.					?	↓	
11 p.m.					?		
midnight							

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# Prioritize Your Activities

(arrange in order of importance & urgency)

[last updated: March 17, 2000]

What do you do if you find that you have less time than you had anticipated for your activities? Should you just not do some of the things? Or should you cut out a little time from each activity?

What you need to do is **PRIORITIZE**. In other words, you need to determine the importance and urgency of each activity and use this information to revise your schedule (week's plan). In some cases, you may decide to postpone an activity that is not urgent, or perhaps you will spend less time on an activity that is not so important.

To help you prioritize your schedule, use the table below. Write the appropriate number (1, 2, 3 or 4) after each activity.

[**Note:** "**Urgent**" means that the deadline or due date is coming up very soon; "**Not Urgent**" means that the deadline is a while away.]

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>2</b> Important but Not Urgent</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1</b> Important and Urgent</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>4</b> Not Important or Urgent</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>3</b> Not important but Urgent</p>

- You should focus on activities with a #1, giving them the time and attention that their importance and urgency requires.
- You may need to make a decision about activities with a #2. If they are important but not urgent, you may be able to spend less time on them or postpone them temporarily. But you don't want to forget about them.

- For activities with a #3, you may decide to eliminate them because, even though they are coming up very soon, they aren't really that important.
- Finally, if you really are short on time, you will probably want to eliminate activities with a #4.

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# Wrap-up

[last updated: March 17, 2000]

# Congratulations!

You have taken the first step toward getting yourself better organized and doing better in your classes. Now that you have made a schedule and prioritized what you need to do, it would be a good idea to carry your schedule with you. Make sure that you update your schedule as new things come along. For next week and the weeks after that, you just need to repeat the process:

**STEP 1:** List Your Activities

**STEP 2:** Create a Week's Plan

**STEP 3:** When in doubt, prioritize

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## Guidelines for Self-Evaluation

[last updated: Jan. 5, 2001]

**NOTE:** You do **NOT** need to send the self-evaluation to the instructor.

Now take this opportunity to evaluate the success of your time management plan (listing your activities & creating a week's calendar). To keep the self-evaluation simple, just do the following:

- List the **strengths** of your time management plan. Write down what you did that helped you get better organized.
- List the **weaknesses** of your time management plan? Write down any problems that you had getting organized.
- Write a brief narrative (a paragraph or two) telling why your time management plan was successful or how it could be improved. Include suggestions for ways to manage your time more effectively in the future.

**NOTE:** Refer to "Dealing with Procrastination" for suggestions or techniques to help you.

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## Additional Resources

[last updated: March 13, 2000]



Learning Strategies Database - <http://www.muskingum.edu/~cal/database/time.html>



Study Skills Self-help Information - <http://www.ucc.vt.edu/stdysk/stdyhlp.html>



Time Management - UIUC Counseling Center - <http://www.couns.uiuc.edu/time.htm>



Procrastination & Time Management - <http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~counsel/procras.html>

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