THE TIME IS NOW
EFFECTIVE TIME MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES
WHAT IS TIME MANAGEMENT?

“Time management” is the process of organizing and planning how to divide your time between specific activities. Good time management enables you to work smarter – not harder – so that you get more done in less time, even when time is tight and pressures are high.
YOUR TIME IS VALUABLE

You may often wish for more time, but you only get 24 hours, 1,440 minutes, or 86,400 seconds each day. How you use that time depends on skills learned through self-analysis, planning, evaluation, and self-control. Much like money, time is both valuable and limited. It must be protected, used wisely, and budgeted.

People who practice good time management techniques often find that they:

- Are more productive.
- Have more energy for things they need to accomplish.
- Feel less stressed.
- Have more free time to do the things they want.
- Get more things done.
- Relate more positively to others.

Finding a time management strategy that works best for you depends on your personality, ability to self-motivate, and level of self-discipline.
KNOW HOW TO SPEND YOUR TIME

A time log is a helpful way to determine how you use your time. Record what you are doing in 15-minute intervals for a week or two. Evaluate the results:

- Did everything you needed to do get done?
- Which tasks require the most time?
- What time of day when you are most productive?
- Where is most of your time is devoted (i.e. class, studying, personal, recreation)?

Identifying your most time-consuming tasks and determining whether you are investing your time in the most important activities can help you to determine a course of action. Having a good sense of the time required for routine tasks can help you be more realistic in planning and estimating how much time is available for other activities.
SET PRIORITIES

Creating a “to do” list is an easy way to prioritize. Whether you need a daily, weekly, or monthly list depends on your lifestyle. Be careful to keep list-making from getting out of control. List manageable tasks rather than goals or multi-step plans. Rank the items on your “to do” list in order of priority (both important and urgent).

You may choose to group items in categories such as high priority, medium priority, or low priority; number them in order of priority; or use a color-coding system. The goal is not to mark off the most items, but to mark off the highest priority items (MacKenzie, 1990). A prioritized “to do” list allows you to set boundaries so you can say “no” to activities that may be interesting or provide a sense of achievement but do not fit your basic priorities.
USE A PLANNING TOOL

Time management experts recommend using a personal planning tool to improve your productivity. Personal planning tools include planners, calendars, phone apps, wall charts, index cards, pocket diaries, and notebooks. Writing down your tasks, schedules, and items to remember can free your mind to focus on your priorities. The key is to find one planning tool that works for you and use that tool consistently.

When using a planning tool:
- Always record your information on the tool itself. Jotting notes elsewhere that must be transferred later is inefficient and wastes more time.
- Review your planning tool daily.
- Keep a list of your priorities in your planning tool and refer to it often.
- Keep planning tools synchronized. If you keep more than one, make sure your phone, computer, and paper planning tools match.
- Keep a back-up system.
SCHEDULE APPROPRIATELY

Scheduling is more than just recording what must be done (e.g., classes, meetings and appointments). Be sure to build in time for the things you want to do. Plan your most challenging tasks for when you have the most energy. Block out time for your high priority activities first and protect that time from interruptions.

Capitalize on what would otherwise be time lost. Avoid nonproductive activities, such as playing games or scrolling through social media. Limit scheduled time to about three-fourths of your day to allow for creative activities such as planning, dreaming, and thinking.
STOP PROCRASTINATING

People put off tasks for a variety of reasons. Perhaps the task seems overwhelming or unpleasant. To help stop procrastination, consider “eating the big frog first.” A quote commonly attributed to Mark Twain says, “If it’s your job to eat a frog today, it’s best to do it first thing in the morning. And if it’s your job to eat two frogs, it’s best to eat the big frog first.” Unpleasant tasks we procrastinate completing are “big frogs.” Complete these tasks as your first action of the day to get them out of the way.

Another option is to “snowball” your tasks by breaking them down into smaller segments, completing preparatory tasks, and eventually completing the larger task at hand. Whether you choose the “big frog first” or “snowball” method, try building in a reward system for completed tasks to help stay motivated.
Psychological studies have shown that multi-tasking does not save time. In fact, the opposite is often true. You lose time when switching from one task to another, resulting in a loss of productivity. Routine multi-tasking may lead to difficulty in concentrating and maintaining focus. Do your best to focus on just one task at a time by keeping your area clear of distractions, including turning off notifications on your devices, and set aside dedicated time for specific tasks.
STAY HEALTHY

The care and attention you give yourself is an important investment of time. Scheduling time to relax or do nothing helps you rejuvenate physically and mentally, enabling you to accomplish tasks more quickly and easily. Be sure to monitor your screen time as a part of your digital wellbeing, setting boundaries to stay healthy.

Unfortunately, poor time management and too much screen time can result in fatigue, moodiness, and more frequent illness.

To reduce stress, reward yourself for time management successes. Take time to recognize that you have accomplished a major task or challenge before moving on to the next activity.
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