

BUREAU OF STUDY COUNSEL  
CENTER FOR ACADEMIC AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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## TIME MANAGEMENT

### Have you ever heard yourself say...

- I just can't seem to keep up with all of my classwork.
- I always wind up cramming for exams.
- Once I do the things I have to, I don't have time to do what I want to do.
- I can make a schedule for myself, but I usually throw it out or ignore it.

There are few skills more important to being a successful college student than managing one's time. All the same, most students struggle with time management when they arrive at college, especially if their high school experience was highly structured by teachers and parents. At Harvard, you have to figure out not only how to attend classes and labs but also how to study, hold a job, participate in extracurriculars, and keep up with family and friends. Managing all of these activities can be quite overwhelming, which is why it's crucial to try out some new approaches.

These suggestions are just meant as a start toward your new time management approaches. We strongly suggest also setting up a meeting to discuss these ideas with a Bureau counselor (5-2581). We can help you create a schedule that suits your particular situation, as well as assist you in avoiding some of the classic pitfalls in time management.

### Create a Typical Week Schedule (see last page of this handout for blank example)

Simply put, planning sets you free. You can actually gain time by organizing your time, completing activities more efficiently and learning to use time that is normally wasted. Also, you will be less likely to forget activities that you put into a written plan.

1. Sit down with a blank full week schedule (Sunday through Saturday) broken down hour by hour:
  - o Be sure that you're including all of the following in your schedule: sleeping, eating, time in class, work, travel, prep, breaks, housekeeping, regular commitments, exercise, family, daydreaming, recreation, etc.
2. Schedule fixed blocks of time first (those things that are already scheduled)
  - o In-class time; job time; lab time
3. A usual rule of thumb is to schedule two hours of study time for each in-class hour.
  - o Plug your study times into your schedule using your most alert times of the day.
  - o You may need to adjust the two hours of study time per hour of class time formula.
4. Schedule self-care activities (sleeping, eating, hygiene, exercise)

5. Schedule flexibility into your schedule (DO NOT BOOK EVERY HOUR)
  - o The unexpected will happen, so you need to plan for it!
  - o Allow time for running errands and completing tasks that just come up.
6. Schedule fun activities into your schedule and remember to include time for your friends and family.

Make sure to come back and modify this schedule after creating it. Some students do best with a detailed weekly schedule; some do better with a more simplified list of things to do; and some people prefer something in between. It's usually helpful to be very detailed in your first sketch, but it's even more important to revise this schedule to fit your actual life, if it is going to be an effective plan for living.

### **Create an Assignment Calendar**

Whereas the Typical Week Schedule above is designed to help you organize your week, the assignment calendar is important for organizing your academic workload. It can help you to avoid forgetting projects until the last minute, decrease cramming behavior, and generally live a less stressful academic life.

#### **Here is one approach:**

1. Gather all of your syllabi and sit down with either a paper or electronic calendar listing the months of the semester.
2. Start by recording all of your exams dates (small and large exams). Then, looking at the material to be studied, determine when you would realistically need to begin studying in order to best prepare for the exam. List the begin date as well as other study dates on the calendar prior to the exam date.
3. Next, list the due dates of your other major projects (e.g., research papers, presentations). Break down these projects into smaller, more manageable units. For example, you might break down a major paper into developing a topic, doing library research, outlining a paper, writing a first draft, revising, composing a final draft, and so on. List the dates on your calendar when you will begin each of these tasks.
4. List the due dates for your reading assignments on the calendar. Some students feel less need to schedule time to read, but later they may find themselves cramming to catch up.
5. You may find it helpful to indicate distinct tasks by some method such as color coding different academic projects. You might also add other semester-long activities here, such as thesis work or extracurricular projects.

#### **When to study...**

- Schedule manageable study sessions – one rule of thumb is never to study for more than an hour without taking a break.
- Figure out your best time of the day to study – when are you most awake and able to tackle the most difficult material?
- Use to-do lists to prioritize the most important activities to complete each day

#### **Where to study...**

- Find at least one regular study spot on/off campus (not your dorm room) that is only used for studying (do your socializing, internet activities, and sleeping elsewhere).
- Arranging study partners and/or study groups can be very helpful.
- Study in a place that is comfortable but not too comfortable!

### **How to cope with distractions...**

- Talk with your roommates about studying – make an explicit agreement about when and where you plan to study.
- Pay attention to how others misuse your time.
- Attend to your attention – if you find yourself consistently losing concentration, notice what are the internal and external factors that might be affecting this.
- Learn how to say NO!

Good luck in scheduling your schedule. Remember, no one always does everything when it is supposed to be done: life is never so neatly arranged. Cut yourself some slack at times when you are not able to live up to your time scheduling. Remember that perfect time management is not a realistic expectation.

Sometimes, a student's difficulty in completing work is better characterized as a procrastination problem rather than a scheduling problem. If you have concerns about procrastination, please refer to procrastination resources on the Bureau's website. If these tips still don't work, it might be important to discuss your situation with a counselor who can help you sort out what's getting in the way of your best intentions.

## WEEKLY SCHEDULE

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6-7am							
7-8am							
8-9am							
9-10am							
10-11am							
11-12pm							
12-1pm							
1-2pm							
2-3pm							
3-4pm							
4-5pm							
5-6pm							
6-7pm							
7-8pm							
8-9pm							
9-10pm							
10-11pm							
11-12am							
12-6am							