



TIME MANAGEMENT

PROJECT PLANNING TOOL

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Students are often overwhelmed by large projects, such as an end-of-term research paper, studying for a final, looking for a job, or writing a thesis. Even smaller goals can loom large, especially when students are taxed by other demands.

Breaking a project into smaller tasks is a very useful way to reduce the feeling of being overwhelmed. Students frequently find that it's much less intimidating to tackle concrete and individual tasks that comprise the larger project.

With this approach, instead of declaring to yourself that you're going to "work on a paper," you'd set about working on a small part of that paper, like writing the opening paragraph. In place of saying that you're going to "study for an exam," you'd plan to re-do a particular set of problems or review a specific lecture.

Since, in fact, we are limited to actually doing only *one* thing at a time, breaking a task into small pieces allows us to simply make explicit the steps it will take to complete the task.

Also, as students frequently tell us, crossing out completed tasks is very motivating!

Use this planning tool to create a list of small, specific tasks for your various projects.

1. In the space below, write a goal or task that you would like to accomplish. This goal can be something like: write my term paper, study for an exam, find a summer internship, or write a research proposal. Or you might have other life goals – such as learning how to play a musical instrument or getting involved in an organization.

2. In the space below, list three of the big pieces that might be required in working towards this goal, such as, pick a topic for the paper, read all my notes from the class.
 - 1.

 - 2.

 - 3.

3. In the space below, take each of the three big pieces you listed above and break these into three or more smaller tasks (do the best you can, three is just a good number with which to start). For instance, for “write a paper,” some smaller tasks might be: write the opening paragraph, generate a list of ideas, list the questions you hope to answer, read an article, research in a database, etc.

First Task: _____

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Second Task: _____

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Third Task: _____

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Regularly review and update this list. Repeat this process for any task that’s on your mind.

You may be interested in exploring your responses and discussing time management strategies with a Bureau academic counselor. To schedule an appointment, please call 617-495-2581 or stop by the office.

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