



Time Management

Student Learning Support Worksheet 2./ Student Services

No1. • December 2005



Why is Time Management Necessary?

Almost every day of our lives we are required to organise our time to ensure that we complete specific tasks. For instance, if you are required to attend a particular event (eg. A wedding, the footy, a movie) then it is most likely that you will schedule essential tasks well in advance of the event (eg. Buying a gift, dressing, travelling). You need to plan ahead in such a way that you are confident of arriving fully prepared, in sufficient time.

However, as a student, the importance of managing your time can often be overlooked and, if neglected, can lead to inefficient use of available time. You can find yourself with too much *free* time because of breaks between lectures, or completely overwhelmed because of large amounts of class time. When you take into account that actual *study* represents only a portion of all the activities that must be undertaken, then your available time is further constrained.

Think about the additional time it takes to shower, prepare a meal, travel to and from University, go shopping, pursue your favourite pastime... Being a full-time student does not mean cramming study-related tasks into every free minute! The purpose of this study guide is to assist you in managing your time more effectively by giving you some practical strategies to ensure you keep your independent learning tasks *Goal Directed*.

Using My Time

- How have you spent your time since you arose today.
- How about for the current week?
- How difficult was it too account for how you spent your time?

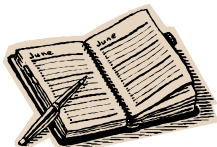
Managing your time can really be broken down into three major areas:

Planning Your Year,

Planning Your Week, and

Planning Your Working Hours.

1. Planning Your Year



You may think the idea of planning a year's activities in advance seems a daunting task, but the intention is not to map out each pending event in copious detail! It is up to you to decide what to include, but most important are those dates that signify events *upon which you must act*.

Your yearly planner can provide you with a fantastic visual aid that reveals passages of time in which you have definite commitments and time you have free.

It is your **road map** for navigating through the year and important items to include on your **Year Planner** might be:

Term Dates

When does the academic year start and when are the term breaks? This tells you when you will be involved with classroom activities.

Assignment Due Dates

When do laboratory reports fall due? Essays? Do you have regular tests? Find out as soon as possible what assigned work is scheduled. This will show how your workload is distributed and enable you to schedule activities to ensure assignment tasks are completed on time.



Examination Times

When are the exams? This will allow you to set up a study timetable that is specifically geared towards your examination schedule. Don't forget to include exams on your Year Planner.

Personal Events

When are the important dates on your *social calendar* (eg. birthdays, weddings, religious festivals and observances etc.)? This may seem unnecessary but it will enable you to plan other activities (eg. purchasing gifts) around these dates as you fine-tune your timetable.



Other Commitments

You may have to attend a conference during the year, or have regular work or sporting commitments. Beware of the *Winter Blues!* Budget your time being mindful of unanticipated problems like catching a cold or getting sick.

Transcribe each of these major commitments (i.e. **milestones**) to a calendar or year planner. The best type of planner for this purpose is in the form of a poster that you can locate close to your study area so it is prominent and can be regularly updated as new commitments arise. As the Milestones pass you can cross items off and give yourself a sense of achieving your goals. Plotting your year should not be seen as the end of planning. You need to use your Year Planner to break down and plan for tasks that are specific to *each week* of the current month.

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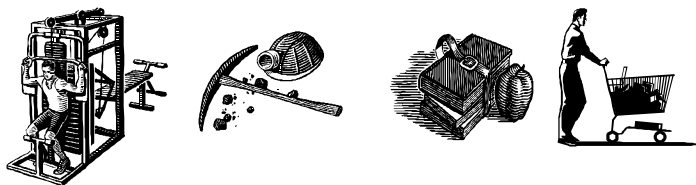
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2. Planning Your Week

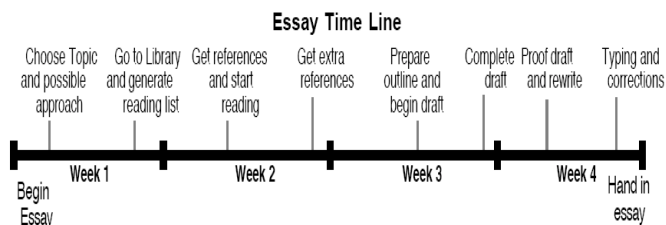
The *Weekly Planner* is intended to bring the activities listed in the *Yearly Planner* into focus. Each of your study commitments will require preparation and an allocation of time to complete specific tasks. For example, the writing of an essay requires time for choosing your topic, research, organising information, writing drafts, typing etc. All of these activities can be allocated a time slot based upon your best guess of the time necessary to complete the task.

You may have difficulty budgeting this time accurately to start with, but eventually your estimates will improve as the tasks become more familiar. Initially it is probably wise to over-estimate the time required (and, inevitably, things do tend to take longer because sometimes you may overlook something, or mistakes will occur).



To illustrate, activities like "Visit library and prepare reading list for essay on Polypeptides", or "Study Biology notes on Cell Reproduction for weekly test" etc., may be scheduled in a particular week. If activities have fixed deadlines (e.g. hand in an essay, sit a test) as opposed to general revision, reading etc. then it is useful to work **backwards** from the due date to determine the latest starting date that will guarantee the work is completed. Itemise every task required to complete the work and allocate a time estimate against each.

The total time, calculated by summing each estimate, will enable you to schedule these tasks into your working week using a **Time Line**. The following diagram shows an example of a timeline for writing an essay.



At the start of each week it is a good idea to draft a list of all the tasks to be completed and assign a time for each in your diary. Some students find it useful to keep two lists. The first list contains items that must be completed during the week (a **Must Do** list) and those they would like to do if time permits (a **Wish To Do** list). By keeping two lists, private study activities (such as Exam Revision or Preparatory Reading for Tutorials and Lab Classes) do not get overlooked in favour of doing only assessed work.

How you arrange your weekly activities depends on the time you have available in any week. Consequently the "*bottom line*" is your weekly schedule and this determines how you plan your *working hours*.

Must Do

*Write up lab.
Do tute problems
Prepare essay plan
Study for quiz on Friday*

Wish To Do

*Revise for exams
Re-write Analytic notes
Prepare for next prac.
Do extra problems*

3. Planning Your Working Hours

What's Available?

In order to calculate what time is available to you for study you need to work out what time *isn't* available for study. This means monitoring exactly how you use your time, preferably by observing yourself in action over a reasonable period, (ie. a couple of weeks) and recording the information. In your working week you will need to allocate suitable amounts of time for:

- Your currently scheduled classes
- Travel to and from University
- Time for preparing and eating meals
- Time for sleep
- Time for shopping and domestic activities
- Time consumed in employment
- Regular recreation activities (eg. sport, visiting friends, going out)

How much of my time is fixed?

Using the **Weekly Timetable** supplied, fill in all of your committed time. Total the number of fixed hours and add to this the time allocated for sleep. Enter this total in the space allocated (ie. A). Do not include your private study time.

In order to keep on top of your study you should have some idea of how many hours are necessary to maintain your workload. A reasonable estimate is three to four hours of study per unit per week outside the classroom. For example, if you are taking five subjects, then expect to spend between 15 and 20 hours per week doing private study. Note that these estimates are **only a guideline!** You need to determine, for yourself, how much time you will really need.



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How much study time do I need?

Using the Weekly Timetable supplied, fill in your estimation of the number of hours you require to maintain your workload. If you are uncertain of how many hours you need then make an intelligent guess. Try to find out (e.g. from lecturers, your course handbook) the amount of time you should allocate. Enter the estimates for each subject into the table. Calculate the total and write this in the space provided (i.e. B)

The amount of time actually required will depend on current course work and your understanding of course material. Obviously some people need more time to understand certain material. Similarly, your work commitments will fluctuate throughout the year—there will be busy periods as well as quiet periods. Budget your time around your course commitments and your capacity to understand new material and be prepared to vary your timetable accordingly.

What's Left?

To determine how hectic your life will be, add the number of committed hours (A) to the time estimated for study (B). Enter this total in the space allocated (i.e. C). Subtract the total in C from 168 (there are 168 hours in a week) and place the result in D.

The total number of hours remaining (ie. D) tells you what surplus time is available for other activities outside of your fixed study allocation. This gives a *margin of error* for planning your time. If this figure is *less* than 10 - 15 hours then you really don't have much choice about when you study – you will probably have to **Lay Down the Law** to ensure your study is done.

If you are a full-time student and this figure is *greater* than 10-15 hours then this means you have flexibility in how you assign your workload and when you prefer to study. This can be a good thing but it also means that **Procrastination** (ie. putting things off until later) may become a problem. Let's now look at the different approaches you can take to allocating study time to your Timetable.

Allocating Your Study Time

There are two distinct (yet very different) approaches to organising your study time:

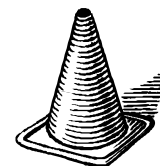


Laying Down the Law

This approach requires you to schedule *exactly* when you intend to work in advance. Allocate your study time into the free areas of your timetable. If you are aware of your study habits then choose study times to coincide with your peak efficiency (eg. during the day, at night etc.).

Procrastinating

Procrastinating means putting things off to another time. Most people procrastinate about doing things that are boring or difficult (“I’ll get around to it tomorrow...”) and sometimes things don’t ever get done.



Procrastinators may prefer to approach the problem another way.

Do not allocate any time at all to study.

Only record study time *as it is completed* and record only in half-hour blocks. This allows your study to be performed in chunks and will provide you with a record of the work that you have really done. The key to this approach is to actually start working and to reward yourself afterwards for the study you did perform.



Regardless of the approach you choose to adopt, it is important to monitor your progress. If you are not sure which approach suits you best then experiment with both. It may be worthwhile to keep a log of all your activities over a fortnight.

How good were your predictions?

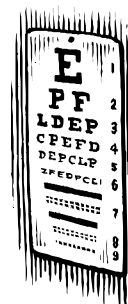
Were your aspirations realistic?

How difficult was it to maintain your schedule?

What differences did having a schedule make to your study patterns?

Although getting this information might seem like a lot of trouble, recording how you *really* use your time will give you more confidence in approaching new tasks because you will better understand how long it takes to complete specific activities.

Use what you learn through observation and reflection to improve your time management. Above all be realistic. Don't set impossible goals (e.g. 6 hours of continuous study without a break), and reward yourself for your efforts (e.g. watch your favourite TV show, ring a friend). The skills you gain from learning to manage your time will always be useful to you as a student as well as in other aspects of your day-to-day life.





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Weekly Time Table

Time	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
8 to 9							
9 to 10							
10 to 11							
11 to 12							
12 to 1							
1 to 2							
2 to 3							
3 to 4							
4 to 5							
5 to 6							
6 to 7							
7 to 8							
8 to 9							
9 to 10							
10 to 11							
11 to 12							
Sleep							
Totals							

Total Hours Committed including Sleep Hours = _____ hours _____ A

Subject Name	Hrs/Week
Total Hours Study Time Required per Week	= _____ hours

_____ B

Committed Hours + Study Hours (A+B) = _____ hours _____ C

Unallocated time (168 hours - C) = _____ hours _____ D

Essay Time Line