

7 Ways to Manage (& MAKE) Time

We know you've got a lot on your plate And it's great to be involved and developing relationships, but sometimes it can be challenging to juggle everything. We've got tools and strategies to help!

We get that this is a lot to read. But learning and practicing strategies now can set you up to enter life after school with the chops to juggle and achieve a fulfilling work/life balance. So take your time, pick and choose, and remember: time management is a life-long process. Don't feel like you have to do all of these at once to make a change. Listen to yourself and jump in!

First: Set aside time to plan



When you have a lot to remember, it can be easy to forget. Take twenty minutes or so at the start of each week (Sunday!) to sit down & plan your week out. Consider these questions:

- ▶ What are your standing appointments and commitments? ▶ Where is everything located?
- ▶ When are you going to bed and waking up? ▶ How long will it take you to commute place to place?

Second: Use a weekly schedule



When you know the answers to the above questions, begin plugging information into your preferred scheduling device. If you like to use your phone, challenge yourself to also try a paper-&-pen planner or a weekly calendar sheet (see ours inside).

Essentially, you're creating a map for yourself. Don't just record your class and work commitments, but also when you plan to work out, or to hike in the woods, or to go to the movies with friends, or to just take time for yourself to meditate or work on your bike or whatever it is that helps you to feel whole. And **be specific**: don't just mark a block of time as *study*. Add details: What are you studying? Where? What do you want to accomplish in that time? Etc.

Third: Think long-term



In addition to your weekly calendar, try to use a term-long calendar. A *Term at a Glance* (see the back page) can help you to see your entire term in one go, can help you to populate your weekly calendar & can help you to prepare for high-stress times of the term, so you can deliver on deadlines and commitments and also feel as balanced as possible at the same time.

Here's how it works:

1. Take all of your syllabi at the start of the term: identify all of your exams, all of your major project and paper due-dates, and any major assignments for each of your classes.
2. Think beyond coursework for your term, too: what else are you involved in? Do you have a weekend you'll be away, or will you be delivering a paper at a conference, or celebrating someone's most important birthday? Make note of these on the *Term at a Glance*, too.
3. Use color coding and symbols to easily delineate between courses and project types.
4. Once it's filled, study it: when will you need to plan ahead to be able to meet the obligations of your coursework and your work life and your social life, too? How will you plan ahead to do your best studying and your best drafting and your best project work?
5. Take a picture of it and keep referring to it. Use it as your screen-saver on your phone. Hang it up where you eat. Make copies of it so it's with all of your course notebooks. Know what's coming up so you're prepared and can plan.

Fourth: To-do lists make the days go 'round



In addition to a weekly calendar and a term calendar too, there's the to-do list. In a perfect world, you'll be using multiple tools and strategies simultaneously & the to-do list will be one of these.

For some people, to-do lists can feel like an easier tool/strategy to introduce to their time-management lives. They're great for daily tasks, it's motivating to cross things off, and they can help you prioritize your approach - what HAS to happen, what would be great to have happen, and what's alright if it doesn't happen today (and moves to tomorrow's list)?

Fifth: Attack your distractions

Take a minute and answer the following questions - list as many answers as possible:

1. I lose track of time when I...

2. I do my best work when I'm...

Distractions can be *internal* and *external*.

Internal distractions are often thoughts or feelings about what you've recently experienced, what you're excited about, nervous about, or trying to remember. When you're trying to study, or write, or code, or participate in group sessions, at the same time as this internal noise, it can feel difficult to concentrate.

External distractions relate to the environment that surrounds us, and the things we have at our disposal to distract us by. If it's easy to lose track of time when you go on social media, or hang out with friends, or start texting on your phone, pay attention to this and put yourself in situations where those distractions can't reach you as easily.

- ▶ Put your phone away
- ▶ Go to the library, rather than trying to study in your room
- ▶ Arrive to your work & study session with everything you need
- ▶ Tell your friends that you'll be unavailable at specific times when you're studying
- ▶ When you catch yourself distracted, course-correct: note the distraction & try to remove it

Internal distractions can be harder to counter than *external* distractions. But, being aware of what could distract you internally is a big part of the process, and so is deciding ahead of time what you'll do when you find yourself distracted. Will you simply acknowledge the distraction, or write it down and then try to move forward? Or will it be better for you to take a quick break to refocus? Having a plan to navigate these distraction-obstacles can help you feel more confident going into your work sessions.

When I notice I've lost focus, I'll get back on track by (What will you do to re-focus/re-center/re-commit to concentration?):

- 1.
- 2.

Sixth: Be realistic

If you're new to a class or discipline, or to the 10-week term, it may take a week or two to have a good idea of how long your tasks will take. But, once you know, be sure you use that information, and do your best to schedule your time appropriately. If something is taking far longer than you'd like it to, try to break that task up. Part of being realistic with your scheduling is understanding yourself and how long you can focus for. As a rule of thumb, it's best to spend anywhere from 25 - 50 minutes studying or working before you take a 5 - 10 minute break. Take care of yourself, so you can stay fresh and focused.

Seventh: Flex-time is your friend

What's flex time? Hours blocked solely for the purpose of being available as back-up, in case you spend more time than you planned to spend on something. They provide you with buffer time in the event that something unexpected happens.

Try to have your flex time show up a couple places (maybe once in the beginning & once towards the end of the week). It can be a huge relief to know that you have that time available in case you need it. And, if you get there and you don't need it, then you have that extra time in your schedule!

A note of advice: don't fall into the trap of relying solely on that extra time. Continue to work to follow your weekly schedule and your daily to-dos. Just know that you've set yourself up with some just-in-case time, too.

BONUS!!! Consider this as you manage time... & strive to successful!

Time Management is a process that intersects with concentration (and distraction), as well as with motivation, goal setting, and a whole lot more. We've offered some concrete strategies and tools here, but we also love talking about and working with students on *motivation techniques* and *goal setting* (among other topics!).