Take Control of Your Time

Time is one of our most precious resources, and it can be used to support your academic success; however, you must learn to effectively control it. Learning to control your time is about finding strategies that work well for you personally. Below are some ideas for effective scheduling and considerations for maximizing your time to make the most of your academic experience.

Make time to plan
Take 30-60 minutes on Friday or Sunday to sit down and plan your week. Strong time managers take control by integrating planning into their homework. Think of this time as self-care and a stress-reliever. Planning ahead can also free you from constant decisions that sap you of energy. Make a plan to ease your mind and put your focus on your schoolwork.

Write it down and use scheduling tools
Writing out your plans helps you to be intentional and strategic with your time. It also helps to uncover any gaps or holes in your plan. Whether you use a digital tool or a paper tool, writing it down means you have better chance of sticking to an organized schedule. The TAEC offers several tools that you can use to help organize your time. When using the tools, here are few questions you need to answer:

- What are your weekly standing commitments? Other set events?
- When will you eat, sleep, and exercise? What are your commute times?
- When will you relax and recharge?

Think quarterly, weekly, and daily
Quarterly: Using a tool such as our Term-at-a-Glance can provide an overview of your entire quarter. Being aware of busier weeks and high-stress times of the term can help you plan accordingly.
Weekly: Create a map for your week by scheduling blocks of time for your weekly tasks and requirements. Include things you have to do (classes, work, eat, sleep) and things you want to do (exercise, relax, spend time with friends). Be as specific as possible. Using our Weekly Calendar can help you to strategically plan your time.
Daily: Some students prefer to also include a daily to-do list in their time management. It allows you to check things off as they are completed.

Plan your study sessions and add to them to your schedule
A basic rule is to plan to study two hours for every hour in class. This is a guideline, so consider what works for you and adjust accordingly. Also, be aware of your best time of day to study.
- When do you feel the most awake and focused?
- When do you have the lowest chance for distractions?
Schedule your most difficult subjects for blocks of time when you learn best, and set clear starting and stopping points. Push yourself to stick to your plan and take breaks when needed.

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Identify and minimize distractions

What do you do to put off studying or completing your work? In other words, what are your time "sponges"? Taking control of your time includes discovering strategies to minimize distractions. A few ideas to try out:

- Pay attention to your study space and study in a location that signals to your brain that it is time to work.
- Agree with living mates (roommates, partners, children, pets) about specific study times. Make the rules clear and commit to following them.
- Put the phone away, turn off notifications, and close any extra tabs on your computer. Avoid the urge to break your concentration to scroll or search.

Having a plan to navigate these distraction-obstacles can help you feel more confident going into your work sessions and help you to break impactful habits.

Be realistic

The goal of time management is not to create rigid timetables you will never be able to stick to. Assess how much time you realistically take to complete tasks and build this into your schedule. Set yourself up for success instead of frustration.

Add in some flexibility

Sometimes unexpected things happen and/or new opportunities present themselves. Leave room in your schedule by adding in blocks of unplanned time. You may call this “flex time” or “open time”. This time can be used for the unexpected, to catch up, or for adding in self-care. Add in these blocks at the beginning and end of your week to allow for extra cushion.

Use formats that work for you

There is no single correct format to choose. What matters most is that you select a method or format that works best for you and your personal style. Experiment with different tools, combine different methods, and adapt as necessary. Be willing to try something else if your current method is not working.

Make it visible

Put your time management tools or schedules where you can regularly see them. Put them in a location you can easily find and reference. This is especially important with your term planner. Make sure to check this regularly to inform your weekly schedule and your daily to-do list. Also, have fun with your tools! Add color, post-it notes, inspirational quotes...whatever it is that motivates you while also keeping you on track!

Need some help planning? Make an individual appointment with a TAEC Learning Specialist. We are here to help! Check our website for more information.

Sources:
OSU Academic Success Center. 7 Ways to Manage and Make Time.