

Time Management

Why are you here at Hopkins? Your answer may include such goals as entering grad school, becoming a doctor, or getting a good job. Many students struggle with trying to execute these goals and balancing the day-to-day life of classes, papers and exams. Improving your *time management* can help you accomplish your goals and enjoy your time at Hopkins.

Where does your time go?

To figure this out, complete a time experiment for a day or two. Use a daily scheduler and fill in the hourly time slots with every activity (whether it lasts 15 minutes or 3 hours). Repeat this for a few days. At the end of your experiment, study your scheduler. How much time have you “wasted”? Look at how much time you spend instant messaging, on the phone, texting, and emailing. These small tasks can add up time.

If you were unable to record where your time went for a day, there may be a deeper problem involved. You may be one of the many procrastinators in the world, or you may lack motivation to accomplish a task. See the flyer on *Procrastination* or consult with an academic advisor to get to the root of the problem.

Decide where you want your time to go!

Pay attention to your “wasted” time. Could those three hours watching reruns have been better spent studying or preparing your IAP presentation? Or maybe it was instant messaging your friends from home while you were trying to write your paper? Ultimately, **you** are the one who controls what you do when, so take control and discipline yourself to accomplish what needs to be done.

Helpful Tips:

- **Keep a schedule**
Whether it's a weekly planner or a Blackberry, it doesn't matter; just use what suits you and stick to it. But be realistic: don't plan to start research for your paper on a Sunday afternoon when you would otherwise be watching the big playoff game.
- **Set goals**
By setting attainable goals, you are more likely to follow through. Don't just tell yourself what you want your goals to be, write them down. Check them off when they are completed. A list in writing is much harder to ignore than rationalizing yourself out of a mental checklist.
- **Set deadlines**
Decide that your biology reading will be done between 7pm and 8pm and then get it done.
- **Go to your classes**
Not only do you pay for this time with your tuition, but if you miss class, you spend more time making up for it than you would actually spend going to it.
- **Use waiting time**
Waiting for a friend or between lectures are perfect times to complete small tasks. Take note cards or one of your class readings to study while you are waiting.
- **Obey your alarm clock**
Don't schedule “snoozing” time by setting it 15 minutes earlier - get up when it goes off.
- **Watch your naptimes**
If napping has become a daily habit, then plan a way to fix that habit. See the *Sleep* flyer.
- **Keep a notepad handy**
When you're studying chemistry and come up with a wonderful topic for your philosophy paper, write it down, then come back to it when you are done with the chemistry. By jotting down quick thoughts and reminders, you'll be less likely to forget them or be distracted by trying to remember them.

Helpful Tips, continued:

- **Break up your study time.**
Study in chunks. Split up studying between subjects and reward yourself with short breaks or snacks. Start studying for an exam several nights before - don't force yourself to study one subject for nine hours the night before. By breaking your study time, the mind retains more information than if you were to "cram."
- **Study the difficult (or boring) subjects first**
Honestly, if you leave it until last, are you ever going to get to it?
- **Break down large tasks.**
If you have a 20-page research paper due at the end of the semester, plan for it and break down the whole project into smaller tasks. For instance, create an outline as soon as the project is assigned and then do the research soon thereafter. Then complete different portions of the paper throughout the semester, leaving an adequate amount of time to proofread and revise before the due date.
- **Be nice to yourself when you make mistakes**
Life is about making mistakes and learning from them. The same goes for time management. No one perfectly manages their time each day. If you realize you just spent an hour socializing when you should have been studying for your midterm, don't berate yourself. Instead, learn from your mistake and be aware of the time traps you're most likely to fall into, then plan to stay away from them in the future and do better.

Student Example: A Balancing Act

Tucker is a junior sociology major taking 15.5 credits this spring semester. He plays basketball and has a steady girlfriend. He has three papers due during finals week, but all of the weekends leading up to finals week are filled with activities like Spring Fair and Homecoming, in which he plans to participate. The beginning of his semester is filled with games and practices. Thankfully, during the first few weeks of the semester, Tucker was able to *find out from his professors when projects would be due and plan accordingly*. After getting those due dates, Tucker *started a "backwards plan."* In other words, he took the due dates and planned in reverse what had to be done when, taking into consideration his larger semester plan. This gave him time to complete the three papers ahead of the due date, leaving room for final revisions. Tucker is able to successfully turn in three well thought-out papers on time. Since he planned so well, his basketball schedule was not a problem, nor did his girlfriend feel like she was taking a backseat to all he had to accomplish, and he thoroughly enjoyed himself during Homecoming weekend.

Time Management Resources Available:

- Your academic advisor is always available for advice on time management.
- Contact Mrs. Day (410-516-8216) in OAA about study consulting.
- Helpful websites:
<http://www.ecampustours.com/campuslife/studyhabitsandtimemanagement/balancingcollegeschedule.htm>
<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~acskills/success/time.html>