

# How to plan your time

THURSDAY 3 / 15 /		FRIDAY 3 / 16 /	
PLAN	MONITOR	PLAN	MONITOR
6:45	Shower Dress	6:50	Exercise
7:00		7:00	Shower and Dress
7:15	Eat	7:15	
7:30		7:30	Eat
7:45	Travel Class	7:45	
8:00		8:00	Study
8:15		8:15	
8:30		8:30	
8:45		8:45	Travel Class
9:00		9:00	
9:15		9:15	
9:30		9:30	
9:45		9:45	
10:00		10:00	Library
10:15		10:15	
10:30		10:30	
10:45		10:45	
11:00	Study	11:00	Class
11:15		11:15	
11:30		11:30	
11:45		11:45	
12:00	Lunch	12:00	Eat & Relax
12:15		12:15	
12:30		12:30	
12:45	Relax Class	12:45	
1:00		1:00	Shopping
1:15		1:15	
1:30		1:30	
1:45		1:45	
2:00		2:00	Travel Study
2:15		2:15	
2:30		2:30	
2:45		2:45	
3:00	Exercise	3:00	Class
3:15		3:15	
3:30		3:30	
3:45		3:45	
4:00	TV	4:00	TV & Relax
4:15		4:15	
4:30	Study	4:30	
4:45		4:45	
5:00		5:00	
5:15		5:15	
5:30	Eat Dinner	5:30	Dinner
5:45		5:45	
6:00		6:00	Shower Dress
6:15		6:15	
6:30	Study Group	6:30	
6:45		6:45	
7:00		7:00	Party
7:15		7:15	
7:30		7:30	
7:45		7:45	
8:00	Laundry	8:00	
8:15		8:15	
8:30		8:30	
8:45		8:45	
9:00	Study	9:00	
9:15		9:15	
9:30		9:30	
9:45		9:45	

1. Schedule fixed blocks of time first. Start with class time and work time, for instance. These time periods are usually determined in advance. Other activities must be scheduled around them. Then schedule essential daily activities like sleeping and eating. No matter what else you do, you will sleep and eat. Be realistic about how much time you take for these functions.

2. Include time for errands. The time we spend buying toothpaste, paying bills, and doing laundry is easy to overlook. These little errands can destroy a tight schedule and make us feel rushed and harried all week. Plan for them and remember to allow for travel time between locations.

3. Schedule time for fun. Fun is important. Brains that are constantly stimulated by new ideas and new challenges need time off to digest them. Take time to browse aimlessly through the library, stroll with no destination, ride a bike, or do other things you enjoy. Recreation deserves a place in your priorities. It's important to "waste" time once in a while.

4. Set realistic goals. Don't set yourself up for failure by telling yourself you can do a four-hour job in two hours. There are only 168 hours in a week. If you schedule 169 hours, you lose before you begin.

5. Allow flexibility in your schedule. Recognize that unexpected things will happen and plan for the unexpected. Leave some "holes" in your schedule; build in blocks of unplanned time. Consider setting aside time each week marked "flex time" or "open time." These are hours to use for emergencies, spontaneous activities, catching up, or seizing new opportunities.

6. Study two hours for every hour in class. It's standard advice that you allow two hours of study time for every hour you spend in class. Students making the transition from high school to higher education are often unaware that more is expected of them. If you are taking 15 credit

hours, plan to spend 30 hours per week studying. The benefits of following this rule will be apparent at exam time.

This guideline is just that—a guideline, not an absolute rule. Consider what's best for you. If you do the Time Monitor/Time Plan exercise in this chapter, note how many hours you actually spend studying for each hour of class. Then ask how your schedule is working. You may want to allow more study time for some subjects.

Also keep in mind that the "two hours for one" rule doesn't distinguish between focused time and unfocused time. In one four-hour block of study time, it's possible to use up two hours for phone calls, breaks, daydreaming, and doodling. Quality time counts as much as quantity.

**7. Avoid scheduling marathon study sessions.** When possible, study in shorter sessions. Three three-hour sessions are usually far more productive than one nine-hour session. In a nine- or 10-hour study marathon, the percentage of time actually spent on task can be depressingly small. With 10 hours of study ahead of you, the temptation is to tell yourself, "Well, it's going to be a long day. No sense getting in a rush. Better sharpen about a dozen of these pencils and change the light bulbs." In the nine-hour sitting you might spend only six or seven hours studying, whereas three shorter sessions will likely yield much more productive time.

When you do study in long sessions, stop and rest for a few minutes every hour. Give your brain a chance to take a break.

Finally, if you must study in a large block of time, work on several subjects and avoid studying similar subjects back to back. For example, if you plan to study sociology, psychology, and computer science, sandwich the computer course between psychology and sociology.

**8. Set clear starting and stopping times.** Tasks often expand to fill the time we allot for them. Saying "It always takes me an hour just to settle into a reading assignment" may become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

An alternative is to plan a certain amount of time for that reading assignment, set a timer, and stick to it. People often discover they can decrease study time by forcing themselves to read faster. This can usually be done without sacrificing comprehension.

The same principle can apply to other tasks. Some people find they can get up 15 minutes earlier and still feel alert throughout the day. Plan 45 minutes for a trip to the grocery store instead of one hour. Over the course of a year, those extra minutes can add up to hours. Over a lifetime, they can add up to days.

Feeling rushed or sacrificing quality is not the aim here. The point is to push ourselves a little and discover what our time requirements really are.

**9. Plan for the unplanned.** The best-laid plans can be foiled by the unexpected. Cars break down in winter. Children and day care providers get sick. Subway trains go out of service. Electricity goes off and freezes alarm clocks in the distant past.

That's when it pays to have a back-up plan. You can find someone to care for your children when the babysitter gets the flu. You can plan an alternative way to get to work. You can set the alarm on your watch as well as the one on your nightstand. Giving such items five minutes of careful thought today can save you hours in the future.