



Managing Your Time

Academic success often begins with good time management. To become a better time manager, include the following strategies in your approach to school:

Allocate Adequate Time for School Each Week

Often the biggest challenge that students face is juggling competing demands for time. It's especially important to be realistic about all these demands. How much time do university courses require? If you have a total of 14 to 18 hours of scheduled class time each week, a guideline is to allocate two hours outside of class for every hour in class to complete the associated work (e.g, reading the textbook, doing problems, using the study guide). *This is only a guideline.* Some courses may require more (or less) independent work; some students may require more (or less) time to complete course tasks. This guideline is still useful for anticipating how much time to initially allocate to your studies. If you have greater than 18 hours per week of scheduled class time, aim for a total of 45 to 50 hours in and out of classes on coursework. As the term unfolds, adjustments can be made as warranted.

Treat School Like a Job

If you're a full-time student, school is your primary job. Just like a full-time career, to be successful may require 35 to 55 hours each week. Sound like a lot? Keep in mind that a 40-hour work week could take the form of five 8-hour days from Monday to Friday. This still leaves 16 hours on each of those days and an additional 48 hours each weekend for other things. While approximately 8 hours each day should be spent sleeping, that still leaves plenty of time for sports, clubs, socializing, and other activities.

Spend Time on Each Course Every Week

Cramming is stressful and often ineffective at university. The best preparation for tests is what you do day-by-day. Prepare for and attend all your classes and spend some time each week learning new material. Learning as you go helps to identify and clarify material you don't understand early so that you build a sound knowledge base, and it reinforces important information as a course unfolds. Beware of courses that you dislike or find particularly challenging: work on them regularly at a time when your concentration is best and in a place where you won't be distracted.

Plan Your Week and Term

Develop a plan to increase the likelihood that your goal of being a successful student is realized. A goal in itself is not sufficient. The following statements emphasize the distinction between a goal and a plan:





- My **goal** is to have an A average.

To accomplish this, I **plan** to prepare for each class every week and to review my notes after lectures. As well, I'll dedicate time on the weekend to review new concepts that I find difficult and to identify problems to clarify with my professors in their office hours.

Some tools to help you plan:

- **Term calendar**

Having a sense of the big picture contributes to effective planning. What are the major events in the upcoming term? On a term calendar indicate major social commitments, holidays, and important academic responsibilities such as tests and assignments. Make note of any overlapping events (e.g., an assignment is due the same day as a midterm exam). Update and refer to your calendar frequently.

- **Weekly planner**

This planner provides a detailed picture of how you're allocating your time each week. Block out committed time for all classes, labs, travel time, sports, work, meals, etc. and identify blocks of time available for coursework each week. Use a weekly planner to establish a routine.

- **Day planner**

Many students use a day planner to track tasks and organize time commitments. Productivity is enhanced by regularly planning and blocking out available time each day. It's the day-to-day accomplishments that add up to an effective week and contribute to academic success. Used in conjunction with other planning tools, the day planner highlights the priorities on a given day and allocates time accordingly.

Seek Help in Becoming an Effective Time Manager

SDC's Learning Skills Counsellors can help Western students learn and practice effective time management skills. If you're not sure how to proceed, if you'd like more suggestions, or if you're looking for someone to help set goals and monitor progress, meet with a Learning Peer in the PAL Centre or a Learning Skills Counsellors in an individual appointment.

