

Make your  
time count!



# How to Get It All Done

## Time Management For College Students



*Everything you need to know  
to manage your time to get  
the most done you possibly  
can and have time for fun, too.*

*You can't use time  
again so use it well  
the first time!*



Sample



***How to***

***Get It All Done***

***Time Management  
For College Students***

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College is different from high school, obviously. One big important change will be how you need to manage your time. Classes will not all be neatly back to back. You will probably need to study more. Your social life may be busier. College is a great place to make new friends and have fun.

But don't forget that the main reason you are there is to learn something to help you do what you want to do with your life, and it's not free. It's costing dollars and your time. Get everything you can out of every class.

All of which is just saying, manage how you use your time well. Make it pay off. You will never regret it and a few simple concepts can help you do just that.

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You have probably heard of and maybe used a “to do” list. Just a list of things you want to do in a day. Don’t use a “to do” list. You will use another list (later) but not a “to do” list.

A list is just a list. Words on a piece of paper with no plan or direction.

Instead of a list, use a schedule. A schedule creates an image so you can see at a glance if you have time to add anything else. It’s a plan of how you will spend the day and accomplish as much as possible and do the most important things you can.

When you use a list you may end the day with several things incomplete, or totally untouched. They either get forgotten or may be moved to the list for the next day.

As things keep shuffling forward to tomorrow, your list can become longer and more oppressive. It can become frustrating. Scheduling will let you avoid that. It will keep you in control.

There are a lot of ways to schedule. Many are digital and that may be what you prefer. I’ll describe what to do using a paper planner (recommended). The steps are the same.

Important note: use a pencil. You will make changes. Let’s schedule.

For the entire year or to the end of the planner, write notes for all birthdays, holidays, special personal days etc. You might also note prep time (early warning) for these events. For example, if you want to buy or bake a cake for a friend’s birthday, make a note the week before.

Next, using your class schedule add all your classes for the session (semester or quarter). Draw a line through the time it occupies. Draw a line through travel time to and from, too. The classes may be back to back or may take a 10 minute walk or 30 minute drive. Whatever it takes is time you can't use for anything else so line it out.

If you know the dates of tests and when papers or projects will be due, make notes about those. Also, make warning notes a few days ahead for these dates so nothing should ever "sneak on you".

If you have a job, line out your work hours and travel time for the year, to the end of the planner or to your last day of work if you know it.

The things you have scheduled so far are mostly non-negotiable. They are things which you want to do or for which you have a responsibility to be a certain place at a certain time.

At this point you can look at any day and see how much discretionary time you have. If you use a planner with a weekly format, you can size up your entire week with a glance. But you are not finished.

You need to schedule study time. Study is not discretionary. You need to study to learn. You need to learn so that piece of life called college isn't wasted. It's a responsibility to yourself.

There is no set rule. A more difficult class will require more study time. A class where the instructor gives more homework will require more time.

Here's a good way to start. For every hour of class or lab time, schedule an hour and a half of study time. Choose times for that study and line the time off for the entire session. As you get into the session you can adjust time to give more or less to each subject as needed.

A rule of thumb to schedule study is have three study sessions per class period. 1- preview. 2- review. 3- Sink it in.

Schedule sleep. Everyone's need for sleep varies based on circumstances and habit. Get enough. In general, if you sleep more than 10 hours a night, you will probably need to cut back. You have things to do! If you sleep less than 5 hours a night you probably should sleep a bit more.

Sleep is important. If you don't get enough you will tend to be sick more often. If you are tired, effective study takes more time. It will be more difficult to comprehend new ideas and you are more prone to make mistakes. It is difficult to learn when you fall asleep in class. So schedule enough sleep time and if you are especially tired, schedule more.

Schedule physical activity, AKA exercise. Like sleep, proper exercise will help you study better, feel better, and generally enjoy life more. Don't neglect it. It might be morning jogs, afternoon tennis games, weekend hikes, swimming at noon, time at a gym or workouts in your living room. It may change from time to time. Whatever you decide, schedule it and keep your schedule.

It's important to have goals in life. In college, completing college itself is a goal. It may be your only goal right now since it will take years, lots of time and energy. But if you have other goals, map out the plans to attain them and schedule activity on them.

Example: You may have a simple goal of finding a better place to live. Schedule half an hour each evening to go through classifieds. If you find a place to view, schedule an appointment. You may want to look around a neighborhood you're interested in - schedule time this weekend to do just that.

Another example: You may have a goal of traveling abroad next summer. Plan for it and schedule your plans.

If you want to learn a language and it's not part of your classes, you may sign up for an online course and schedule time for it. You may need to schedule time to apply for a passport. You will need to plan out an itinerary and well in advance of next summer you will start watching travel prices to help you get a good deal

Get the idea? Any goals you have beyond successfully completing college, schedule time for them. Depending on the goal, you may have weekly time scheduled or simply a couple of hours every 3 months. Scheduling helps you keep the goal alive and keeps you moving surely toward it.

Respect your goals and yourself. Don't neglect or be late for appointments with yourself to work on a goal.

Besides sleep and exercise schedule other fun personal activities. Schedule time for yourself alone and with friends. Movies. Dinner. Beach. Responsibilities of school and work have priority. But you need to relax to keep from burning out. So find a way to make fun a regular part of your schedule in an appropriate amount and add it after responsibilities have been scheduled.

Now schedule open time. In other words, as much as you can, leave a little time open. How much depends on how busy you are so play with how much.

There are a couple of reasons to keep some open time. You have probably experienced how things often take longer than expected.

That's one good reason to leave some open time. When something takes longer than expected, you may be able to slide things around on your schedule and still complete it that day.

That free time can also be used with your list. Not a "to do" list but an ITP or WTP list. That stands for "if time permits" or "when time permits".

There may be things you would like to accomplish that don't fit neatly on a schedule. They may not have a pressing deadline or specific date to finish. Your personal goals very often fit into this category. So do hobbies. So does extra reading for a class.

These things go on your ITP list. When you have free time on your schedule, you work from your ITP.



An ITP list gives you a place to keep goals and resolutions alive and top of mind. You could just write them down somewhere and put them in a drawer but that could mean sure death for them. Being on a list that you refer to and work from keeps them going.

Your ITP list is an extension of this old idea: “if you’re going to stand in line, take a book to read.”

Of course things will always be changing. An instructor may schedule an additional test you want to study extra for. You may have an interview for a new weekend job. You have a dental appointment. Parents or friends are visiting from out of town. A super blizzard may cancel classes for a day.

For everything that comes up, adjust your schedule immediately. Never wait to schedule. The sooner you write it in, the sooner you will see if there are any conflicts. And of course whenever you set a new appointment consult your schedule.

Occasionally two or more tasks will want the same time slot. When this happens you first might consider if any of these things can just slide up or down the schedule? Be done earlier, later, faster, by a friend? Or can it be rescheduled for another day?

When none of these ideas work, and one time slot is “now or never” for more than one task, you must make a decision. You must prioritize.

The need to prioritize can also come up when multiple tasks are waiting your attention and you aren't sure how many you can complete in a specific available time (this afternoon, for example).

Two concepts can help you when you need to prioritize things to do.

First, always do the most important first. What has the biggest return for being completed and/or the biggest price if not done? This may sound obvious, yet when faced with the situation, we often will not consider what is the best use of time but just begin with what is easiest or easiest to begin.

There is an obvious advantage to doing the most important first. If you run out of time, you have used your time in the most valuable way possible.

There will be times when you cannot decide what is most important. Every task will seem to be as important as the next. The concept to follow in that case is, do the worst first.

It might be more difficult, boring, dirty - for whatever reason you don't like doing it but you need to. If you don't do the worst first, you may unconsciously drag your feet on other activities to avoid getting to the task you dislike.

Also, that distasteful task likely requires more energy or concentration than the other activities and you will have more of both when you begin. It will also give you a stronger sense of accomplishment early. With the worst behind you, things will be getting easier!

There is another reason to do the worst first. An unpleasant task can have a habit of being put off again. And again. It could go on for days. On each of those days you will function with a bit of dread looking for a way to avoid it again. It may be unconscious, but you will waste time and energy.

If something is unpleasant and doesn't need to be done, just scratch it off and forget it. But if it is on your ITP or on the schedule, it must need done. So get it done and forget it so you can work on more pleasant things!

SO: something clearly more important should be done first. Otherwise, do the worst first.

Now let's tackle procrastination.

Don't put things off for no reason or for a bogus reason. Start early. Otherwise, you may run out of time, and a deadline may arrive with you inadequately or completed unprepared. Another reason is that little jobs become monster jobs when you put them off.

Imagine you have a home with a yard full of wonderful prize roses. You need to pull weeds out of the beds and it will take about 30 minutes this weekend. But you put it off.

Next weekend you could do it in an hour but just don't. Finally, after a few weeks of procrastination, your beautiful roses are hidden by weeds and it will take you an entire Saturday to clear them out. Which is easier to schedule - half hour of weed pulling or a full day?

If you have a chapter to read before the next class it is often easy to ignore it. There is something you want to see on television, or you want to hang out with friends. So you don't read the chapter.

At class another chapter is assigned. You don't like the class so you find another reason to postpone reading the next assigned chapter. Pretty soon, a test is scheduled next week and you haven't read any of the 6 chapters covered.

Now you need to stay up most of the night reading and cramming. You feel miserable, do less well on the test than you would have had you read as you went, you need to mess with scheduled activities to accommodate the cram session...

Get the idea? Do not put things off. They will not get better. When it needs done, when it is scheduled, do it.

Sometimes you have unpleasant tasks that you must do again and again. Like pulling weeds or reading chapters. It can help to put a time limit on this work. Like pull weeds for 30 minutes, read for an hour. Having a finite time to work on that distasteful task makes it a bit more palatable. Without a set limit it can feel endless - another reason to use a schedule.

You now know the most important thing you can do to be a super achiever. Schedule. And you know how.

You can get free examples of student schedules at <http://www.sqbookstore.com> Go to the supplemental info page.

There are still plenty of ideas you can use to get more done. Here are some of the best.

Here is a very old idea that really works. Tie a string around your finger. When you first begin scheduling you may find that you forget to consult your schedule. This is like all those New Year's resolutions you made and forgot about. It's a change of habit so until it becomes your new habit, it runs the risk of being forgotten.

The old saying is "Tie a string around your finger so you won't forget." It really doesn't need to be a string. It can be a bracelet or whatever. Something you use to symbolize "check the schedule".

It should be something new or that you haven't worn often so you can have a clean association with scheduling (or any other habit you want to change for that matter). Leave it on the night table when you go to bed so it is right there when you wake up.

Eventually the habit of using your schedule and of doing the things as you plan will become a habit and you can forget the "string".

Don't wait until you feel like doing something. This is another of those simple sounding concepts that can really make a difference in how much you get done daily and eventually in your life. We all have times we're "not in the mood".

Do you think writers like Stephen King and J.K. Rowling wait until they feel like it to write? They would never finish all those long books.

What would happen if firefighters didn't feel like responding to a call? What would happen if you didn't feel like getting up and you got to work an hour late? How long would that last?

Give yourself the same respect you would an employer or a professor or the 7:30 movie. Do what you need to do whether you feel like it or not.

You've probably experienced that strange phenomenon - begin something you dread and pretty soon it doesn't seem so bad. And if you have bothered to schedule it or it is a step toward a personal goal, it is important. Right?

In business, accomplishment is almost always better served by completion than by perfection. Perfection can seldom be reached and it is often fleeting. Even when results seem perfect, the ever changing environment can deflate that balloon quickly.

In college this seems wrong. You do want to get the best grades possible, and if it's perfect that's great. But don't overwhelm yourself working for a 4.0.

As Les Brown says, "Shoot for the moon; even if you miss you'll land among the stars." Aim for learning as much as you can, especially about your major. Do that and the grades will pretty much take care of themselves.

This concept of “completion over perfection” works well when you have a paper to write. Don’t try to write a perfect paper at one sitting. Most professional authors cannot write a finished manuscript at one sitting.

Get started. Outline things you need to say in the paper. Then write fast. Get a complete “rough draft”.

Then polish it. Find where you need to say more and add. Find places you have been too wordy and cut.

And here is a tip that will save you a lot of time on research. Do your research after you write that rough draft. You know what you want to say. As you write that draft, when you reach a place where you want to add statistics or a quote, etc., make a clear note about what you want to include there.

When you finish the draft go back and look up only the information you need. If you research before you write you will almost certainly go through much more material than you need and that takes time. If you do research after the first draft, you are looking for specific information and will finish faster.

Have an accountability buddy or several. This is someone who, like you, wants to accomplish as much as possible. One buddy may help you with everything or you may have different accountability buddies each for difficult class, exercise program, personal goals and so on.

You just keep each other informed of your intentions and plans. Then you check each other regularly asking simply, “Have you done it?” And when things are tough you encourage one another.

Here is another simple thing that can make a big difference. Use a timer. When you begin a task set a timer where you can see it. Seeing those minutes ticking off will help you focus on the task at hand. A sharp focus will help you work faster, more efficiently.

If something comes up that wasn't planned, and you do it right then, write it on your schedule. This may seem unnecessary but it serves 2 purposes.

First, it gives you accurate data to analyze. If you have trouble getting things done, you have a journal of how you spend your time. Add up time spent on various activities and see how you can alter your patterns for better results.

Second, it creates an accurate historical journal of when you did what. There will be times this is handy.

If you have activities that you do again and again, and you feel they are draining too much time, brainstorm and get creative. What you can possibly do depends on the situation and is personal. There are, however, some *types* of changes you can consider:

1. Do that activity at a different time
2. Do it at a different location
3. Do it in a different way
4. Get better tools or resources
5. Make yourself a cheat sheet of steps to do (like pilots use to fly) - that may speed things up
6. Stop it altogether if you can
7. Get help (study group, tutor?)
8. Convince someone else to do it (like Huck Finn)



Traffic is a huge time waster in many cities. If you attend school where there is heavy traffic and live off campus, here are a couple of tips.

Avoid rush hour traffic. You're in a hurry to get home, but all that time in your car is lost. Wait 2 hours in the library and study. Or go to the track and put in your daily exercise. Go home when the traffic dies down.

Do the reverse, too. Leave early in the morning. Study or read at a campus coffee shop if the library isn't open yet. Or take an alarm and sleep in your car if you're tired (park somewhere safe!)

Even sleep is a better use of time than sitting in traffic. What sounds better - hour and a half in traffic or half hour in traffic and 1 hour nap in the car?

Use time in traffic to learn. Record professors who allow it or find related recordings or record your notes. Don't use videos - you might be tempted to look at a dangerous time. Don't wear head phones, either. You need to be able to hear what's happening around you - sirens, horns honking or screeching brakes.

Here's your summary:

- > No "to do list".
- > Schedule. Everything, at least through the current session. Include free time.
- > Don't neglect things, they get bigger.
- > Note schedule changes immediately.
- > Refer to your schedule before you commit to anything.
- > Do the most important first or do the worst first.

# Back Cover

- > Use a timer & tie a string on your finger.
- > Avoid heavy traffic when you can, use it when you can't avoid it.
- > Respect your own time and study time as you would an employer's time
- > Use an ITP list to remember things you want to schedule later and to work on in free time
- > Write papers fast, then edit. Research after the first draft.
- > Stay healthy - get enough sleep and exercise.
- > Don't neglect repeating time drains - brainstorm a solution.

Be confident. Astronauts, farmers, producers, accountants, professors, artists, and everyone else all do their work in 24/7. Every super successful person in history did their thing in 24/7. So you can too. Use what you have just learned and you won't just do it, you'll do it well.

## Topics Distilled

### Fluff Plucked & Discarded

