

Time Management Skills

After you have made your lists of things to do and prioritized them, the real challenge to managing your time rears its ugly head. The real challenge in effectively managing your time is the process of monitoring, analyzing and revising your plan until it works. Some of the skills you will need to make your chosen method of time management succeed are:

Patience

One of the most important things to keep in mind if you're struggling with time management is that effective planning is a skill that takes time to acquire, practice, and polish. You will not sit down one day and suddenly have a perfect strategy. You may fail at your first attempt. Some frustration is inevitable and to be expected but don't let this keep you from trying. The process of time management doesn't end with the creation of some lists. At first it may seem that you're getting less done than before because planning and monitoring can seem time-consuming. To make your strategy work iron out the details in your time plan at the beginning of the semester when the pressure and workload are at a minimum. The trial and error approach of trying out strategies is an essential part of the process. If you can endure the first few weeks, later in the semester you'll reap the benefits when you need them the most.

Analysis

A vital part of having a successful time management strategy is self-analysis. To develop your time management skills you need feedback but in the case of time management there is no one to monitor your efforts at using time effectively other than yourself. For this reason, set aside a few minutes each day to evaluate how your time plan is working. Determine whether tasks have been accomplished or not, and figure out why. Have you simply over or underestimated how much can be done in a study session? Do you permit people to interrupt what you are doing to socialize or can you stay focused? Your thoughtful analysis of the reasons why your time plan works or does not work is the key to the continuous improvement of your skills. Remember to examine what works as well as what didn't work.

Flexibility

Your time plan will be most successful if you remember that it is not written in stone. You are subject to all the same diseases, disasters and distractions as the rest of the population, so cultivate the sensitivity to know when you're being productive and when you're beating your head against the wall, and take appropriate action. Don't stop writing your essay in the middle of a great idea because you only scheduled an hour for it. Learn to recognize when putting a task off and doing something else is an intelligent, conscious decision and when it is just procrastinating. Sometimes, walking away for a project for a few minutes can be the best thing to bringing a new perspective to a problem or to returning your focus. Be gentle with yourself if you fall short of your expectations, but monitor any negative patterns that emerge and analyze their source. By expecting the

unexpected and building flexibility into your time plan, you'll have a better chance of achieving your goals.

Awareness

To be successful at time management, it is necessary to be strategic. This involves several steps. First, you plan - in this instance how you will use your time. Second, you monitor - is this working? Am I achieving what I planned to do? How am I enjoying this? How difficult is it? Third, you analyze - why did or didn't this plan work? If it did work, you look at where or how else effective strategies can be used. If the plan didn't work, you develop new strategies and try them out. The common denominator of all these steps is awareness of the importance of time management, of how you are using your time, and of what works or doesn't work for you.

Information

Learning to manage time is an ongoing process. The more aware you are of how other people use their time, the more quickly you will see and pick up new strategies. The bigger your repertoire of time management strategies, the easier it will be to adapt to new challenges, such as working around exams or a thesis, or the time management situations a full-time job and family life may bring. Keep your eyes open, listen when people talk about how time is used, and keep trying out new methods and techniques. The ability to manage time effectively is a very valuable asset to have in the working world. If you can master time management in the stressful, unstructured environment of the university, you can be confident of your ability to manage time in almost any situation after graduation.