

Strategies for Time Management

Even small changes in time management practices can make a big difference in academic success. Try some of these simple yet effective strategies and see what they can do for you!



520 621-4548
www.ulc.arizona.edu

- **Get Started Immediately on Important Tasks**

By starting a job, you make an investment of your time and energy and are more likely to complete the task. By contrast, postponing a task indefinitely is taking the easy way out that accomplishes nothing. It's human nature for people to do enjoyable activities first and want to procrastinate on tasks they dislike. If you put off doing a job because it seems overwhelming, break the task into bite-sized pieces that are more palatable to digest. By following this "Swiss cheese" technique, you'll soon find that poking holes in the project makes it less onerous.

- **Tackle Tough Jobs First**

A common mistake is to spend time on easy, unimportant chores first, with the idea of working up to bigger projects. What often happens is that the tough jobs simply don't get done, because too much time is spent doing the less important tasks, and by the time you get to the tough jobs, you're too tired to work on them. The solution is to reverse the process. Prioritize your To Do List into three categories: A) Very Important, B) Important and C) Less Important. Do "A" list items first thing, when your energy level is high, then work your way down by priority level. Only do those easier, "C" items on your To-Do list if you have time at the end of the day. Evaluate and update your list daily, and you'll be amazed at how much more you will accomplish!

- **Consolidate Similar Tasks**

Group or consolidate tasks that are related by location or activity. This step will not only minimize interruptions, but also will economize your use of your resources and efforts. Take one trip the library, the grocery store and the video store. And if you're going to be doing research at the library anyway, bring several assignments requiring research, even if one is not due for several weeks. You'll be that much further ahead, even if you only get a start on that second paper.

- **Use Unscheduled Time to your Advantage**

Maintain a reservoir of things to do during otherwise idle time. Instead of doing nothing while waiting in a long line or in a doctor's waiting room, bring a textbook, an article or class notes to read and review. Travel time can be converted to useful study time: listen to a course-related pod cast or the disc for your foreign language course while commuting. This regular review will have a great effect on your memory recall during exams!

Strategies for Time Management (continued...)

- **Reward Yourself!**

Changing habitual behavior is challenging, especially ingrained behavior such as time management. Instead of being critical of yourself for what you haven't done, reward yourself for your efforts. Identify a reward that will really motivate you: meeting friends or playing a favorite video game. Savor the great feeling of accomplishment, knowing that your obligations are met, so you can really enjoy yourself afterwards!

- **Learn to Say “No”**

For some people, someone is always asking for a piece of our time. Instead of being honest and saying “No” to these requests, we tend to hedge and sometimes accept responsibility for tasks we neither want nor have time to perform. Saying “no” requires courage and tact, but you’ll be proud of yourself and you’ll appreciate the time you gain.

Now Is the Time to Put It All Together!

Your ability to manage time effectively could separate you from less successful students. If you manage your time well, you’ll be able to manage other things better, too.

1. **Of the methods listed on this handout, which strategy is one you don't have a habit of practicing, but you think might work and you're willing to try?**

2. **Write down here exactly WHAT you would change and HOW you would schedule it.**

For example, if you want to increase Using Unscheduled Time. Identify some unscheduled time, and write down some activities you could be performing during this current idle time.

3. **To cement your resolve to try this, write down the exact date you are going to do it next.**

Don't get discouraged if it seems difficult at first. Changing our behavior *is* challenging, but *possible* and worth the effort! You can do it!

