

Time Management

Your teaching duties will increase your overall workload, which may already be heavy with the burden of your own academic program. Moreover the teaching duties may be more demanding when you are busiest with your other academic work. In order to do both well, and still have some enjoyment in your life, you must be an efficient time manager. Effective use of time is the result of careful planning and appropriate strategies.

Analyze how you presently spend your time

Try monitoring and noting your time use and accomplishments for a week. Many people are surprised by how much, or little, actual time is spent on some things. Compare your time use with your real priorities.

Plan the Year

Look at the year as a whole, noting times when your own academic work peaks as well as when you will be busiest with TA responsibilities. Determine what can be done earlier than it is due in order to even out the workload over the term or year.

Identify tasks that occur daily or weekly and set regular times for them.

Some Guidelines for What to do When

- It is most important to be realistic about what you will accomplish within the time allotted.
- Plan to do the difficult or non-preferred tasks during the times you work best.
- Plan time for leisure activities. Trying to work all the time eventually results in lower productivity. Moreover, setting aside non-work time allows you to enjoy it without feeling guilty.
- Be flexible. Unexpected things come up. When this happens, you can use your daily list of things to do or your weekly schedule to help you clarify your priorities. Usually a planned task can be moved to another time slot, but not just dropped.
- Plan time at the end of each evening to relax before going to bed.

Plan the Week

Choose a system for planning your time.

- One simple system is to make a list each night of the tasks you want to do the next day. The list can be ordered in priority.
- Another system is to construct a written schedule for the whole week, specifying your activities on an hour-by-hour basis. This can be made a relatively easy weekly task by initially constructing a typical weekly schedule which includes your class schedule and regular minimum times set aside for weekly academic

tasks, TA work, and leisure time. Planning for each week becomes a question of deciding how to spend the remaining time, with reference to long-term projects or special events.

Eliminate Distractions

- Avoid distractions by selecting a quiet, secluded place to work. Clear your desk of everything but the materials needed for the current task.
- Let others know when you will be busy and should not be disturbed, and when you will be able to do things with them.

Improve Your Concentration

- Set short, specific goals each time you work, with realistic time limits.
- Become actively involved in the task. Search for something interesting about it. Hold a pencil while studying, to underline or make notes.
- Plan breaks. You can sustain maximum concentration for only a limited amount of time before fatigue sets in and you become inefficient.

Overcoming Procrastination

People procrastinate for many different reasons. However, procrastination usually occurs at the beginning of large tasks, and/or when the person has doubts about being able to perform the tasks well enough or lacks motivation.

1. **Avoid feeling overwhelmed** by large tasks by breaking them into smaller components and focusing your attention on the small immediate sub-task you are working on.
2. **Don't let perfectionism paralyse you** with self-criticisms and self-doubts. Try to do your work well, but not perfectly. So-called "perfectionism" ties people up as they overdo or redo some components of their work while neglecting others, resulting in a low overall standard of real achievement.
3. **Don't wait until you "feel like it"** to get started. Warm up by doing a small bit of work.
4. **Record your progress** by checking off each task or sub-task on your list or schedule. Enjoy the satisfaction of accomplishing what you set out to do.

Be sure to share this list of strategies for effective time management with your undergraduate students. It may help *them* meet *your* deadlines.

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