

TIME MANAGEMENT

Why are you here at Hopkins? You'd probably say to have fun, enjoy your college years, become a doctor, or get a good job. Your parents and academic advisers would say to get an education, better yourself and prepare for the road ahead. Both are correct.

Some students easily execute these goals and the day-to-day life of classes, papers and exams. Most struggle. The main problem most college students face is the problem of ***time management***. And this is not something of which they are unaware. The Class of 2008 reported that of them, 46% were conscious that they needed help with procrastination and 41% needed help with time management.¹ However, knowing you need help with something is completely different from getting help. What follows is a reasonable approach to better managing your time.

FIGURE OUT WHERE YOUR TIME GOES!

Take a day or two to see where your time goes. Use a daily schedule and fill in the hourly time slots with every activity (whether it lasts for 15 minutes or 3 hours). Repeat this for a few days. At the end of the period, look and see where all your time went. Consider this exercise as diagnostic. How much time have you "wasted"?

Ok, so what if that didn't work? If you were unable to record where your time went for a day, perhaps there is a deeper problem involved here. Maybe you are one of the many procrastinators in the world or have a lack of motivation to accomplish a task. See the flyer on *Procrastination* or consult with an academic adviser to get to the root of the problem.

DECIDE WHERE YOU WANT YOUR TIME TO GO!

Now back to your schedule: could those three hours of watching *The West Wing* reruns have been better spent studying or preparing your IAP presentation? Or maybe it was instant messaging your friends from home while you were trying to write your paper? Sure vegging out with your roommate and a bag of popcorn or reliving Beach Week with your high school buddies is tempting; but ultimately, **you** are the one who controls what you do when, so take control and discipline yourself to accomplish what needs to be done.

HELPFUL TIPS:

- **Keep a schedule!** Whether it's the old standard of a weekly planner or the newest Blackberry, it doesn't matter; just use what suits you and stick to it. But also be realistic: Don't plan to start that research for your history paper on a Sunday afternoon when you would otherwise be watching the big playoff game.
- **Set goals.** By setting attainable goals, you are more likely to follow through. But don't just tell yourself what you want your goals to be. Write them down, check them off when they are completed. A list in writing is much harder to ignore than rationalizing yourself out of a mental checklist.
- **Set deadlines.** Decide that your biology reading will be done between 7pm and 8pm and then get it done.
- **Go to your classes.** Not only do you pay for this time with your tuition, but if you miss class, you spent more time making up for it than you would actually going to it.

¹ 2004 Class of 2008 Freshman Advising Assessment, OAA.

HELPFUL TIPS, CONTINUED:

- **Use waiting time.** While waiting for a friend to meet for lunch or between lectures are a perfect times to complete small tasks. Take one of your class readings or notecards with formulae to study while you're waiting.
- **Obey your alarm clock!** Don't schedule "snoozing" time by setting it 15 minutes earlier, but get up when it goes off.
- Along those lines, **watch your naptimes!** If napping has become a daily habit, then plan a way to fix that habit. See the *Sleep* flyer.
- **Keep a notepad handy.** When you're studying chemistry and come up with a wonderful topic for your philosophy paper, write it down and then come back to it when you're done with the chemistry. By jotting down quick thoughts and reminders, you'll be less likely to forget them or be distracted by trying to remember them.
- Be aware of how much time you spend **instant messaging, on the phone, and using email.** These small tasks can add up to a lot of time.
- **Break up your study time.** Don't make yourself study one subject like biochemistry for nine hours before your midterm. Rather break up your studying between subjects, reward yourself with short breaks or snacks and study in smaller chunks. This also helps the mind retain more information than if you were to "cram."
- **Study the difficult (or boring) subjects first.** Honestly, if you leave it 'til last, are you ever going to get to it?
- **Break down large tasks.** If you have a 20-page research paper due at the end of the semester, plan for it and break down the whole thing into smaller tasks, for instance creating an outline as soon as the project is assigned and then doing the research soon thereafter. Then complete different portions of the paper throughout the semester, leaving an adequate amount of time to proofread and revise before the due date.
- **If you screw up, don't worry too much about it!** Life is about making mistakes and learning from them. The same goes for time management. There is no one who perfectly manages their time each day, so if you realize before bed one night that the hour spent socializing on Q-level was not really necessary and hindered your preparation for your midterm, don't fret. Just be aware now what time traps you're most likely to fall into and plan to stay away from them!

FOR EXAMPLE: A BALANCING ACT

Tucker is a junior and he's taking 15.5 credits this spring semester. Tucker plays basketball and has a steady girlfriend. He's a sociology major and has three major papers due during finals week. But all of the weekends leading up to finals week are jammed packed with activities like Spring Fair and Homecoming in which he plans on taking part. Also the beginning of his semester is filled with games and practices. Thankfully during the first few weeks of the spring semester, **Tucker was able to find out from his professors when the projects would be due and plan accordingly.** After getting those due dates, Tucker **started a "backwards plan."** In other words, he took the due dates and planned in reverse what had to be done when, taking into consideration his larger semester plan. **Giving himself time to complete the three papers ahead of the due date, leaving room for final revisions, Tucker is able to successfully turn in three well thought out papers on time.** Since he planned so well, his basketball schedule was not a problem, nor did his girlfriend feel like she was taking a backseat to all he had to accomplish and he thoroughly enjoyed himself during Homecoming Weekend.

TIME MANAGEMENT RESOURCES AVAILABLE:

- Your academic adviser is always available for advice on time management.
- Contact Angela Ruddle (410-516-8216) in OAA about study consulting.
- Helpful websites:
 - <http://www.ecampustours.com/campuslife/balancingcollegeschedule.aspx>
 - <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~acskills/success/time.html>
 - <http://www.collegeboard.com/article/0,3868,2-9-0-118,00.html>