

Making Time Management Work for You

Introduction

Following the steps for creating a time plan is really the easy part of time management. The challenge in effectively managing your time is the process of monitoring, analyzing, and revising your plan until it works. This Study Skills Tip Sheet will look at what may be required to make your chosen method of time management manageable.

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, to practice, and to polish. One of the most common reasons students give up trying to manage time is that they assume that once a time plan has been drawn up, the process is complete. Some frustration is inevitable and even to be expected. At first it may seem that you're getting less done than before because planning and monitoring are time-consuming and distracting. But it's a good idea to iron out the bugs 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, seeing them fail, and then trying something else are essential parts 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

Another difficult aspect of time management is the fact that you have no one but yourself to monitor how effectively you are using your time. Self-monitoring is essential; you must be your own watchdog. No skill can improve without feedback, so set aside a few minutes each day to evaluate how your time plan is working. Whether tasks have been accomplished or not, figure out why. Have you simply over or underestimated how much can be done in a study session? Are you monitoring progress too much by interrupting your reading every few minutes to see how many pages are left before the end of the

chapter? 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.

Flexibility

Your time plan will be doomed if you assume that it is written in stone. Students are subject to all the same diseases, disasters, and distractions as the rest of the adult 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 effective procrastination - recognize when putting a task off and doing something else is an intelligent, conscious decision and when it is just procrastinating. 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

Time management and learning skills are often grouped together for a very good reason. To be successful at either, 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, 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. The moral here is 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.

Advice

Sometimes it's helpful to speak to someone about your style and method of time management so that you can gather new ideas or discuss what's not working.

Want more information?

The Counselling Department and the Academic Success Centre are your best sources for advice and information on issues related to learning, studying, time management, and academic performance.

Workshops on learning, studying, etc., are offered regularly each semester by the Counselling Department. Please contact Student Services at Abbotsford - 604-854-4528 (B 214) or Chilliwack - 604-795-2808 (A-1318) to make an appointment.

Study Skills Tip Sheets providing information on many learning and time management topics, as well as writing and referencing, are available free to students. The complete range of Study Skills Tip Sheets is available on-line at www.ufv.ca/counselling/study/.

Other Relevant Study Skills Tip Sheets:

Controlling Procrastination
Making a Tasklist
Effective Planning Strategies

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