

Top tips for effective time management

1. Use 'tools' to keep track of your time.

No one is born with good time management skills so you should use as many tools as you can to keep yourself organized. For example, an agenda (planner) is one of the best investments a student can make. At Durham College, each student receives a free agenda, so make use of it. Other valuable tools include course outlines, wall calendars, cell phones and computer programs including Microsoft Outlook.

2. Consider all your responsibilities.

In addition to scheduling your academic time, do not forget to schedule time for work, family, recreation, exercising, socializing and personal care. Seeing the whole picture is important and will help you to avoid putting off academic time for other responsibilities that were not accounted for.

3. Prioritize your tasks strategically.

Effective scheduling of all of your academic tasks should be done according to priority. A simple way to prioritize is to rank your tasks from most to least important. A task that has an immediate due date (e.g. a lab report) or one that has multiple phases (e.g. a research essay) would be considered high-priority tasks.

4. Plan ahead.

In your course outlines, the entire semester is laid out for you. Use this to your advantage and transfer all of your test dates, assignment due dates, textbook chapter readings and anything else associated with your courses into your agenda. If you know you have a large assignment worth at least 25 per cent of your mark, start it early to ensure a higher quality of work with lower stress.

5. Recognize when you are most productive and schedule accordingly.

Are you a morning person or a night owl? Each person has an internal clock that regulates when they are most alert. Schedule textbook reading and studying of your most difficult subjects at your most productive times of day.

6. Use your spare time wisely.

When spare time shows up in our schedules, we tend to spend it on leisure activities. However, it is best to schedule in leisure and recreation so this spare time can actually be spent on more productive tasks. A task that often gets missed is the daily review of lecture notes. Daily review is a good way to fill the gaps that may appear in your schedule, helping make you more proactive.

7. Break large tasks into smaller ones.

If you schedule small parts of a single task over an extended period of time and mix those tasks with other activities, the task becomes more manageable and is more likely to be completed ahead of the due date.

8. Use strategies for avoiding procrastination.

By using the previously mentioned tips, you can help avoid procrastination. You will also become more aware of how you are spending your time and learn to resist activities that you had not previously accounted for in your schedule.

9. Reward yourself.

Use leisure activities as rewards for achieving academic goals to help keep your motivation high.

10. Use the academic support available.

Visit Student Academic Learning Services for more information about time management.