

ACADEMIC SKILLS CENTER

STUDY SKILLS LIBRARY

Time Management

Discussion

Many people see schedules as an inflexible method of organizing time. An inflexible schedule, however, is both useless and destructive. Instead, create a schedule to suit your individual needs and personality, one that will help you study at the best possible time. If used correctly, schedules will give you more freedom.

A schedule is a tool that helps you plan your time and work. Think of it as a time map with every task spread out in plain sight. You are in control. You can move the tasks around and change the amount of time you wish to allot. When the schedule is finally set up, it will work well since everything is planned and accounted for the way you want it to be.

An effective schedule reflects your personality. Match your personality - rigid, flexible, or a combination of both - with your schedule in order to get things done. Decide how effective you want to be in scheduling your tasks. You may wish to jot a few things down, now and then, and live with it. Or you may decide to get actively involved in your life and meet the three requirements for good time management:

1. Be aware and sensitive to your unique life's rhythm.
2. Be aware of how you value your time by knowing how and on what you spend it
3. Match the appropriate task with the appropriate energy level time, keeping in mind that subdividing tasks will help all energy times to be used more effectively.

Study Time

How much time should you allot for studying and how should it be distributed? In general, plan on two to three hours of study per week for every academic unit. However, if you're spending more than four hours per unit, you may be studying ineffectively. Only you can determine how much time you need. The following techniques and examples can help you organize your time.

Track Your Time

Do this if you have no idea where your time goes. Once an hour, write down in 15-minute segments how you used the previous hour. Do this for seven days during waking hours. At the end of a week, you'll know how you spent your time. Study the results and make adjustments. Perhaps you've learned that you spend more time in meetings and recreation than you realized.

Establish Base Rates

Determine approximately how long different tasks will take. The amount of time needed to do a task is called a base rate. The actual time will vary with the energy you have. For example, reading fifty pages of physics may take you one hour of high energy time, two hours of medium time, or three hours of low energy time. The best way to establish a base rate is to observe how long it takes to do something and when you did it. Write this information down.

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