

## **Time Management Prepared by Dickson College Student Services**

*“Good time management is essential to success at college. Planning your time allows you to spread your work over a session, avoid a ‘traffic jam’ of work, and cope with study stress. Studying at college often involves meeting conflicting deadlines, and unless you plan ahead, you’ll find it impossible to manage. To meet the demands of study you need to spread your workload over a session. Work out what needs to be done and when. Work out how to use your available time as efficiently as possible.”*

### **Plan Ahead and Prioritise**

The first step to good time management is to prioritise your tasks. In other words, deciding which task is most important and should be completed first. For example, in a choice between reading for an essay due in four weeks or preparing a seminar presentation in two weeks, choose to prepare the presentation.

To prioritise successfully you must develop weekly and long term time management plans. Many students find long, medium and short term planning useful for organising their study. Planning ahead saves time, stress and energy.

### **Long-Term Planning**

Using a Semester Planner

A semester planner you can place on your wall or by your desk allows you to plan your workload over an entire session and helps to remind you about deadlines and upcoming commitments.

- Place the planner in a position where you have easy access to it.
- Write in the dates assignments are due and exams are scheduled.
- Work out how long you will need to complete each task. Allow yourself plenty of time.
- Remember to allow for extra workload. If you have several assignments due at the same time, then you’ll need to begin each task earlier.
- Set start dates for each task and write them on your planner.
- Draw lines back from the due dates to ‘start’ dates. Use different colour pens for different subjects, assignments or exams. Doing this will give you a good indication of how much time you have to complete tasks and cue you to start them.

## Tips to Make Time Management Easier

- Don't put off small tasks. Completing them straight away encourages you to begin tackling larger tasks.
- Try 'chunking' long/ difficult tasks into sections. This allows you to approach a large task as a series of manageable parts.
- Don't try to write an entire assignment in one sitting. Complete it section by section.
- If you have writer's block, try writing something—anything— down. Even if you change it later, at least you've started.

Your study and the time you spend on it is up to you. If you find yourself losing direction, remind yourself of why you are doing your subject; remembering your goals can put things into perspective.

## Planning on a Weekly Basis

### Use Time Slots Wisely

Students often believe they have no time to study, but many of them think of study time in terms of long time slots (three hours or more). While long time slots are necessary, medium and short time slots can be used just as effectively. A well-used 15 minutes is more effective than a wasted 2 hours. Different periods of time suit different activities:

### Short Time Slots

One hour or less is useful for:

- reviewing lecture notes
- completing short readings
- previewing long readings
- doing problems
- revising for exams
- jotting down essay plans
- proofreading an assignment

### Medium Time Slots

One to three hours is a good time for more concentrated study. Medium slots can be used for:

- more detailed note-reviewing
- reading for courses/ assignments
- taking notes from readings

- drafting/editing an assignment
- revising for exams

### Long Time Slots

More than three hours can be set aside for:

- working on an assignment
- completing an extensive amount of reading
- doing research for assignments
- revising for exams

Bus and train journeys or lunch breaks are useful for this kind of work. During medium and long time slots, divide study time up into one hour sections and take breaks. Try not to study for longer than an hour at a time, as concentration begins to slip.

### Fill in a Weekly Planner

For weekly planning, use a diary, a timetable or a DC Student Services Weekly Study Schedule.

Fill in all the main demands on your time:

- College lessons/classes
- Hours of work (if you have a part-time job).
- Any regular sport or leisure commitments.
- Mealtimes and regular family commitments.
- Sleep times.

When you have blocked in the main demands on your time, look at the blank time slots left. This will help you work out how many hours a week you actually have for study. Next, plan time slots to use for college-related work. Fill in times that could be used as study periods including short, medium and long time slots.

### Be Flexible

Some weeks will be busier than others, and unforeseen things can happen. Remember that a timetable is only a plan or a guide. You don't have to follow it religiously every week, but try to stick to your plan as best you can. If you plan a study time slot and miss it, don't panic—look at the schedule and rearrange your time.

## Be Realistic

A great deal of time management is really about taking responsibility for your learning. The best plan is to be aware of how much time you have and to manage it effectively. Be realistic about your time and what you can do with it.

Example:

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6-7 am		GYM	SHORT	SHORT	SHORT	SHORT	Sleep
7-8 am	SHORT		Tutorial	Lecture			Sleep
8-9 am	Lecture	SHORT			GYM	Work	Sleep
9-10 am		Lab					Sleep
10-11 am							
11-12 pm			MEDIUM	LUNCH			
12-1 pm	SHORT			Lab			
1-2 pm	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH		LONG		
2-3 pm	SHORT		Discussion Group				LONG
3-4 pm	Tutorial	MEDIUM				MEDIUM	
4-5 pm							
5-6 pm		Lecture	MEDIUM	DINNER	DINNER	Party!!!	
6-7 pm	GYM		LONG	Work	Work	Let My Hair Down!!!	
7-8 pm	SHORT		DINNER				DINNER
8-9 pm	DINNER		MEDIUM				
9-10 pm	Sleep	Dinner	LONG				
10-11 pm		Sleep					
11-12 pm			Sleep				Sleep

## Over commitment

Before you undertake study, you need to realistically assess all the demands on your time. Consider paid employment, family duties, sport, leisure or civic commitments. Good time management will not help if you are overcommitted. If you study full time, spend more than about 12 hours per week in paid employment and spend every evening at the gym, you won't have much time to study. If you suspect you might have taken on too much, reassess your commitments, prioritise and compromise.

Be realistic about the amount of time an assignment will take you to complete. Different tasks require different amounts of preparation time. You can't produce good, well-written work unless you give yourself enough time to think, research and write.

## Seeking Help

It's easy to procrastinate when you experience difficulties with an assignment, but putting off starting only means you'll have less time to work on it. If you miss an assignment deadline, you will lose marks. So, if you think you need some assistance, ask for it. Remember, good time management includes good self-management. Talk to your teacher, or attend the weekly Homework Club or visit Student Services to speak with a Year Coordinator or the school counselor. Don't put off seeking advice— the longer you wait, the more anxious you'll feel.

## **Common Time 'Thieves'**

**Problem:** Feeling so overwhelmed and anxious about your workload that you 'freeze', put things off and don't get anything done.

**Solution:**

1. Set priorities.
2. Get started.

Actually starting a task reduces your anxiety about it. List all the tasks you have to do in order of importance and urgency, and work through them one at a time. For example, if an assignment is due in one week, then it goes to the top of your 'to do' list.

**Problem:** Putting off starting a task because it feels so overwhelming or difficult that you can't face it.

**Solution:** Break up the workload into small chunks.

This is a very effective strategy. Divide work into as many small, achievable tasks as you can. Then when you sit down to study, you are not facing a huge, daunting pile of work, but one small task.

Complete a 'chunk' every study period. It might be a task or a period of revision. Take a break after completing a 'chunk'. If it's something you've really been dreading, reward yourself when you've done it!

**Problem:** Procrastination (or spending time on irrelevant tasks when you know you should be studying)

**Solution:** Set study goals and vary your study techniques.

If you're feeling stressed about a task, putting it off will only make things worse. Make a start, even if it's simply to note down a plan about how you will proceed further. Break up the task into 'chunks' and list each one from start to finish. Set yourself a goal and tackle one chunk at a time. Be conscious of what you're doing. If you catch yourself delaying study in order to perform some 'essential' task—stop yourself and do it later.

**Problem:** Daydreaming or 'drifting off' **Solution:** Check your energy level and concentration.

**Solution:** Take a short break or a little exercise every hour. Open a window and walk around. If you drift off, try visualising a red stop light. Hold that image for a few seconds-then switch to a green light and go back to work.