



Making Your Schedule Work

Are you having trouble completing all of your study tasks on time? The following are some tips that may help make the best use of your study time.

Identify your best time of day: Studying at your best time of day – whether it is morning, afternoon, or evening - will enable you to complete your assignments in less time. Research studies show that what we can accomplish in 60 minutes will take as much as 90 minutes to accomplish when we are fatigued.

Study difficult or boring subjects first: Study subjects that are more of a challenge to you first when you are less fatigued. It will be easier to find the motivation to study something you find enjoyable when you are tired than for a subject you dread studying.

Break tasks into manageable units: You may find that you become distracted after an hour or two of working on large tasks that take a lot of time to complete, or you may even lose motivation to finish the task because you don't feel that you are getting anywhere. Sometimes breaking up a big task (for example, a large amount of reading or term paper) into smaller units (10 to 15 page chunks to read, or sections of your term paper to write), and spacing them out over several or many days will help you complete your tasks without becoming bored, losing motivation, or procrastinating.

Use the same place to study every time: By studying in the same place each day you begin to associate a particular activity with a particular location. When you are in that location, you are better able to focus on the task at hand more quickly. Studying on your bed or in your bedroom is not advised because you naturally associate your bed a bedroom with sleeping, not studying.

Use the library: The library is an excellent place to study, and you will find yourself in good company there. If you have good reasons you prefer not to use the library, try to find another location outside of your room that provides a good study environment and is relatively free of distractions.

Avoid distractions: Many things can be a distraction to studying if we are looking for ways to procrastinate. For the next few weeks, try to find ways to reduce the frequency with which distracters are interfering with your study time. This might mean finding a different place to study, or turning off your phone, computer, television or radio.

Use waiting time: If you take the bus to and from campus, waiting time is a great opportunity to study discrete pieces of information. Also, make use of the time between classes as well.

Treat school as a full time job: Try to accomplish as many of your school tasks as possible within a concentrated period of time, such as 8 am – 5 pm, Monday through Friday. If you use these hours either for attending class or studying, you'll have much more free time in the evenings and on the weekends. This also leaves your evenings and weekends available for studying during those "crunch times." Treating school as a full time job when it comes to scheduling your hours can result in better, more efficient management of your time.

** Adapted from: Virginia Tech, Cook Counseling Center (www.ucc.vt.edu/lynch/TMTips.htm)*

Blerkom, D.L.V. (2008) Taking charge of your learning: a guide to college success. Thompson Wedsworth. Boston, USA. 283 pp.

