Time Management
“Chance favors the prepared mind” – Louis Pasteur

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HOW TO FOLLOW THIS GUIDEBOOK?

Time management is a very important life skill that helps you to achieve your goals. Through planning, prioritizing and exercising control over your time to be spent on each specific task and activity, you will find it easier to accomplish your goal with higher effectiveness and efficiency.

Why do I need to manage my time?  
What is time management?

This personal time management guidebook is dedicated to assisting you to get the most out of the university years. Start with setting up your personal goals (“Goal Setting”), you then have to review on your working style (“Time Wasters Assessment”) to avoid time wasters and keep good practices. Make good use of common time management tools and strategies (“Tools to Manage Your Time”) can help planning and organizing your tasks and you will find yourself moving a little step towards your goals day by day. You will gain practical tips on “How to Get the Most out of even a Few Minutes” and overcoming “Procrastination”.

GOAL SETTING

Do you know where you are going? 
Take some time to think about what you want to achieve by when and why. Write them down before you forget about it. It serves as a commitment and is easier to prioritize and track progress.

Ultimate Goals
a. Why am I attending university?
b. What do I hope to achieve by the time I get out of university?

Goal Setting Strategies

List 5 goals, then arrange them according to your priorities

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5.

1. Specific and concrete  
(For example, one chapter for each course every week)
2. Measurable
3. Action-oriented
4. Realistic
5. Timely

Set SMART goals

Balance
When you set your goals, make sure you strike the balance between different areas of your life.
TIME WASTERS ASSESSMENT

How do you use your time? Take a review of how much time you have wasted daily without consciously thinking about it. Awareness is the first step to change. You may try to eliminate your time wasters and reallocate meaningful tasks to these hours. You will find that you can achieve a lot more.

* Please write down time spent (number of hours per day) inside the bubble.

**Time is precious.**

**Use it wisely.**

- Watch TV / Online movies / Youtube
- Facebook / MSN / QQ / WhatsApp / Weibo, etc.
- Talk on the phone
- Socialize with friends
- Surf the internet
- ‘Hea’ (i.e., do nothing)
- Figure out how to do an assignment
- Sleep too much
- Physical problems, such as lack of energy
- Daydreaming
- Play computer games
- Others: (Please specify)

Total time spent per day:
TOOLS TO MANAGE YOUR TIME

I. Time Management Matrix


Important / Not Urgent
Things which do not have to be done immediately, yet they contribute to achieving long term goals.

e.g., Preparing for midterm examination, doing a project which will be due after 1 month, planning, regular exercising, relationship building, and recreation.

Important and Urgent
Things must be dealt with immediately.

e.g., Crisis, pressing problems, deadline driven projects, assignments, presentations, examinations.

Important and Urgent
Things causing disturbance to what you are doing.

e.g., Answering whatsapp or unimportant calls, some reports or meetings, responding to other people’s demands, etc.

Not Important / Not Urgent
Things that have little value and have no deadlines.

e.g., Browsing internet, TV, computer games, “hea” (i.e. doing nothing), etc.

Urgent

Quality Time

1
Fire Fighting

2

3
Distractions

4
Time Wasters

NOT IMPORTANT

Principles:
• “Put First Things First.”
• Maximize Quadrant 2 time by allocating time in your schedule consciously. Gradually Quadrant 1 activities will be reduced as you have planned ahead to do them earlier in Quadrant 2.

• Reduce Quadrant 3 time by improving ways to deal with and minimize distractions.
• Eliminate Quadrant 4 time. If it cannot be eliminated, make it meaningfully used. For example, use techniques in 15-minute organizer (P. 16).
Are my to-do tasks

Urgent vs Important?

Try to list them out under different quadrants.

**Important / Not Urgent**
e.g., Midterm exam, Final paper, Job Searching, good health practice, etc.

**Important and Urgent**
e.g., Exam, Assignment, Crisis

**Not Important / Not Urgent**
e.g., Internet, TV, computer games, tidying up your desk, etc.

**Not Important / Urgent**
e.g., MSN Messages, Facebook, Whatsapp, QQ, Weibo, etc.

- **Quality Time**

- **Fire Fighting**

- **Time Wasters**

- **Distractions**
II. My Planner

Wise use of different types of planners helps you to get organized:
- Term schedule/monthly calendar can help you to get a big picture of things around you. You can plan ahead what needs to be done starting from when.
- Weekly planner helps you to focus on your short-term goals and duties, as well as to plan their details.

Make use of online calendar (e.g., Google calendar, Microsoft Outlook, smartphone schedules).

Mark all important dates at the beginning of the term according to school calendar & course outlines (e.g., add/drop deadlines, mid-terms, assignment due dates, exam dates, etc).

Enter all fixed schedules (e.g., class schedules). You will have a better idea about your available time to spend.

Allocate time to complete tasks according to your to-do list.

Set online reminders To help you remember the important dates or tasks (e.g., 5 days before a deadline, 15 minutes before a task)

Make time to plan

DO PLAN TIME TO REST AND HAVE FUN!
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
<th>Sunday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7am - 8am</td>
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<td>11am - 12nn</td>
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<td>12nn - 1pm</td>
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<td>10pm - 11pm</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
III. My To-do Lists
It is better to plan “what to-do” early, e.g. in the morning or the night before.

List out
things you need to finish daily, or weekly, or even long-ranged goals. You can have more than one list.

Review
goals and decide what needs to be done

Prioritize
tasks basing on the time management matrix

Grade
each task means breaking the task into small steps until it is completed, especially if it is a large task. It can help to make the task seem less overwhelming, and also increase the motivation to get over it.

Estimate
the time it takes to complete each step. Evaluate if it is realistic to finish all the steps or tasks in one day or the desired time frame. If not, let go of some and make readjustment.

Sample of a To-do List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks (with priority)</th>
<th>Grade Tasks (with time)</th>
<th>Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Find a friend (4)</td>
<td>i. Look up the phone (1min)</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii. Speak to him (10min)</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare for mid-term (2)</td>
<td>i. Read through Chapter 1 to 3 of textbook (1.5 hr)</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii. Revise lecture notes (1hr)</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iii. Work on sample questions (1.5 hr)</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iv. Review mistakes and revise difficult questions (1hr)</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay visa card bill (1)</td>
<td>i. Look up the bill (1min)</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii. Pay over phone or internet (5min)</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do exercise (3)</td>
<td>i. Go to the gym (15min)</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii. Get changed (10min)</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iii. Exercise (30min)</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tidy the room (5)</td>
<td>i. Make the bed (3min)</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii. File the notes (10min)</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iii. Do laundry (5min)</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iv. Empty trash (3min)</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF EVEN A FEW MINUTES

Do not underestimate the value of just a few minutes’ gap time between schedules. Make good use of these few minutes can help you save time and clear interfering tedious tasks.

The 15-minute Organizer can

- Review class notes
- Review activity schedule for the next day
- Organize class notes
- Read assignments instructions
- Do a load of laundry

Be creative - customize your needs!

PROCRASITINATION

Does it sound familiar?
- It’s not due yet
- I don’t feel like doing it now
- It’s boring
- I’ve got to tidy up first
- I work better under pressure
- I don’t know where to begin
- I’m too tired
- Before I start, I think I’ll take a break
- My bi rhythms are out of sync
- Someone else might do it, if I wait
- I don’t really know how to do it
- Let me play 1 round of the computer game first
- There’s a good TV program now

These are all Procrastination Beliefs!

What are you afraid of?

Fear of Failure
- I’m either first or nothing
- Why procrastinate?
  - Avoid assessment of ability
  - Perfectionist
  - Safer to procrastinate than fail

Fear of Success
- I’m either first or nothing
- Why procrastinate?
- Avoid any further responsibilities
- I’ll turn to be a workaholic
- Worry if I will be judged being too successful by my friends

Typical reasons for procrastinating
- Boredom
- Intimidation (feel threatened)
- Overwhelmed by the amount of materials

Videos about Procrastination
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aj7eSlGLxU
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VTK6yGH80
Procrastination Elimination Strategies

Time Telling
Estimate realistically the time needed to complete a task. Compare the accuracy of your estimation over a series of tasks. Procrastinators usually underestimate the time necessary to perform a task.

Goal Setting
You may set long term (5-10 years), intermediate term (3-5 years), short term (1-2 years) and immediate goals. Using SMART principles in setting up details of how to achieve.

Modify the Environment
Avoid distractions. Go to a room without computer, TV or bed, or go to the library. Avoid instant notification of incoming message from mobile phones. Stay focused.

Bits-and-pieces Approach
Breaking a big, difficult task into several smaller, easier tasks. For example, rather than ignore the whole assignment, commit to completing one or two pages per day.

5-minute Plan
Getting started on time by doing just the first 5 minutes of the task. After 5 minutes, you may decide whether to keep on doing for another 5 minutes. The momentum can keep you going and stay focus at the end of every 5 minute period.

Reminder Notes
Use physical reminder notes (sticky notes such as post-it) placed in specific locations to remind you to finish a particular task.

Reinforcement
Reinforce yourself periodically. For example, “If I finish reading this chapter, I will eat some ice cream.”

Social Support
Work with students who tend to complete tasks. These students can serve as a positive model and influence. Making public commitment and working with others help us to stick to our plan.

The 80% Success Rule
Don’t expect to finish a task at all once. Instead, take a realistic approach by setting a goal to complete at least 80% of the task. Give yourself some reinforcement when you reach this goal and plan the completion of the final 20% of the task.

Adapted from:
RECOMMENDED BOOKS/RESOURCES

Books:


• Kennedy, D. (2007). How to ace your way through college and still have a life! Broomfield: Wellness Research Publishing;


• 弘兼憲史(2008)：《時間活用術》，台中：晨星出版社。

Other Resources:

a. Effective Learning & Study Strategies
(https://sao.ust.hk/counseling/publications/psycho/study.pdf)

b. Assessment and Examination Anxiety
(https://sao.ust.hk/counseling/publications/psycho/examination.pdf)

c. No More Procrastination
(https://sao.ust.hk/counseling/publications/psycho/procrastination.pdf)