Online Learning

Time Management
Prepared by: *Adrienne Sauder, Ph.D.*

Overview: Time management is less about scheduling tasks and appointments down to the second, and more about time awareness, breaking complex tasks down into manageable chunks, and the organization of self, material, and tasks.

Time Management for Online Courses

- Set aside the same time each week to work on and check in with your class OWL site – read discussion forums, watch lectures, review announcements, etc (Berry, 2018;You, 2015).

- Online discussion takes place over days, not just a single hour in class, so do several shorter visits to your course OWL site every week (Berry, 2018).

- Pay attention to the announcements section of your courses; professors will often give you a heads up about what is due that week or where you should be on larger projects.

- Learning online requires that more time be spent with the material and doing class-related tasks than you might normally spend if the class was face-to-face. Stay on top of the "little things" like reading forum posts; otherwise the sheer volume can be overwhelming after a while (Berry, 2018; Oliphant & Branch-Mueller, 2016).

- Self-discipline is key to staying on top of multiple online courses; don't let the lure of flexible class hours impact the amount of time you spend engaging with the learning materials (You, 2015).

- If you are worried you aren't doing enough or aren't doing the "right" things to be successful, make sure you talk to your professor in order to set up reasonable and appropriate expectations (Berry, 2018).

- Procrastination behaviour is more prevalent when taking online courses, so be aware and actively reduce such behaviour (Cerezo et al., 2017; You, 2015).

Important Basics:

1. Organize your space
2. Plan time to plan
3. Optimal study times
4. Engage in long term (entire semester) and daily planning
5. Appropriate balance of academic and non-academic time
6. "*Work Day*" principle – treat school like a job and put in the time required
7. Adjust to pace of online learning
8. Personal responsibility and accountability

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Time Awareness:
Create a schedule and add activities to it in this order:

1. Activities whose time can't be shifted (e.g., synchronous class times, work)
2. Routine activities whose time can be juggled a little (e.g., gym, online class work such as forum posts and watching lecture videos)
3. Eating and sleeping
4. Study times (consider: 3:1 rule of thumb [3 hours of school work for every hour spent "in" the classroom – in online terms, think of the 3 hours a class is normally scheduled], length of efficient focus)
5. Flex time (time that could be used for studying/assignments in heavy weeks)
6. Free time
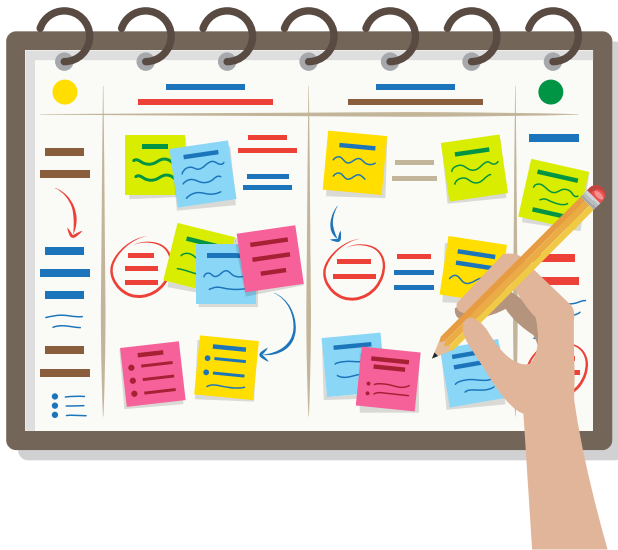
Task Breakdown
(creating "To Do" lists that actually get done):

1. Choose a method of tracking that works for YOU (paper, post its, phone app)
2. List all academic tasks that need to be accomplished in a term
3. Break down major tasks (e.g., essays, major assignments, exams) into small tasks (think about what you can reasonably accomplish in 1-2 hours)
4. Estimate how long each small task will take (add in extra time)
5. Prioritize tasks
6. Do it! Sometimes starting is the hardest part, so commit to a small amount of time, like 20 minutes. It's easier to commit to 20 minutes than it is to commit to "until it is done."

Work Smarter, Not Harder (Quality over Quantity):

1. Prepare for lectures by reading the text, reviewing notes from previous classes, and looking at course outline to see what type of information will be covered
2. Attend lectures and discussion sessions and listen actively, ask questions, & take notes
3. Do same day and weekly reviews (these should be short – 15-30 min per class)
4. Schedule more work on quiet weeks to balance out heavy weeks
5. Think outside the desk (e.g., find ways to use otherwise wasted chunks of time for quick study sessions by audio recording yourself reading your notes aloud, preferably in your own words and then re-listening to the notes while at the gym, going for a walk, doing the dishes, etc.)