

Academic success in college does not depend only on comprehension of course material. Time management is crucial for all students if they want to be able to perform to the best of their ability both inside and outside of the classroom. The following pages provide an outline and specific strategies for developing strong time management skills.

Analyze Your Commitments

One of the first steps to take to manage your time well is to assess your commitments and determine how much time each of your commitments requires. Make a list of the tasks and activities that you perform frequently, and estimate the time that it takes to complete each item.

1. *Use the “2-for-1 rule.”*
 - a. If you are in a traditional undergraduate degree program, you should expect to spend a minimum of two hours studying outside of class for every hour spent in class. If you are taking 15 credits in a semester, you should plan on spending a minimum of 30 hours per week outside of class reading course texts, reviewing lecture material, and doing homework.
 - b. You may need to increase or decrease the 2-for-1 rule depending on the difficulty of a class and your familiarity with the course material.
 - c. Use a chart such as the one below to estimate the amount of time you need for studying each week.
2. *Determine if you are overcommitted*
 - a. Total your time commitments for a week—include class time, study time, work, athletic practice, etc. Subtract that total number of hours from 168 (the total number of hours in a week) to see the number of hours of uncommitted time you have available.
 - b. If you have little or no uncommitted time, you should assess where you can cut out commitments—reduce your hours at work, drop an activity, revise a course goal (within reason).

Build a Study Plan

Once you have estimated your total study hours per week and identified your other commitments, develop two schedules—one for the semester and one for each week.

1. *Develop a semester schedule*
 - a. You can use either a paper calendar or a digital calendar that divides each day of the week into one-hour increments.
 - b. First block out class and scheduled work times. Then block out all commitments that will remain unchanged throughout the semester such as sports practice, band rehearsal, etc.
2. *Develop a weekly study schedule*
 - a. After you have developed your semester schedule, make a copy of it for each week of the semester. Each weekend, review upcoming assignments, papers, and tests. Make a list of what needs to be done or reviewed for each of your classes in the upcoming week. Decide when you will complete these tasks, and write those times on the upcoming week’s schedule.

Making the Most of Study Time

1. *Use peak periods of concentration*
 - a. Determine when you concentrate best, and set aside those times for intensive study
 - b. Use less efficient times for more routine tasks such as recopying an assignment
2. *Study difficult subjects first*
 - a. Resist the temptation to get easy tasks out of the way first
 - b. When you start studying, your mind is fresh and alert and more ready to think through more complicated problems or study complex ideas
3. *Study for a particular course close to scheduled class time*
 - a. If a class meets on Tuesday and Thursday mornings, plan to study Monday evening and Tuesday afternoon or evening and again Wednesday.
 - b. By studying close to class time, you will find it easier to see connections between class lectures or discussions and what you are reading and studying.
4. *Take breaks in your study time*
 - a. Take a 10-minute break after every hour you study to give your mind some time to rest and refocus.
 - b. It is a good idea to take a break between subjects so that you give your mind time to rest and shift to a new area of focus.
5. *Use distributed learning*
 - a. Instead of studying only one subject for an extended period of time, distribute your study time for each subject over several days.
 - b. This approach to studying facilitates learning because your mind continues to process information after you stop studying. If you study over several blocks of time, this aftereffect takes place multiple times rather than just once.
6. *Overestimate your study time*
 - a. Sometimes assignments and studying take longer than anticipated. If you overestimate how long something will take, you build a buffer zone in case you need additional time.
 - b. If you overestimate and do not need the extra time, the free time you have left will function as a reward for hard work.
 - c. If you underestimate how much time you will need, you may not be able to study enough, and you will likely feel pressured, rushed, and dissatisfied.