

## Time Management Strategies

Time management needs are different for everyone. Review the strategies here and pick those that seem like the best solutions for you.

**Prioritize and make task lists.** If you don't already have a system to plan tasks and make to-do lists DO IT. Use what works for you – written lists, lists on your phone or your computer, planner books. Number those list items by priority, considering the big picture

**Limit time wasters.** Where does your time go? Identify time wasters by taking a recent day and breaking down how you spent your time. Work? Commuting? Online? TV? Decide which are necessary and which are “time wasters.” Limit time wasters by setting timers.

**Replace time wasters with refreshers.** If you plan to stay in all Saturday and study, is that actually what happens? Or do you end up procrastinating? Expect that you'll need breaks, and plan activities that will energize you – socializing, self-care, cooking, etc.

**Allow for flexibility.** Expect that your to-do list might not go as planned. Rather than stressing, plan to restructure your to-do list at the end of every day. In fact, make THAT one of your daily tasks.

**Set SMART goals.** Break down tasks by making goals that are: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely. Read further instructions [HERE](#).

**Schedule less.** If you overschedule, you lose motivation and focus as soon as you fall behind. So even when you have too much to do, if you schedule less you might still get more done.

**Address little tasks immediately.** A full inbox or a messy room requires more time then dealing with the individual parts. When you open an email, commit to answering it then. If you see clothing on your floor, put it away before you leave the room.

**Pick avoided tasks first.** If you don't want to do it now, you probably won't want to do it later today. Schedule boring or unpleasant tasks earlier in your day.

**Start longer tasks.** Finding time for big tasks can be daunting or impossible, so you might keep putting it off. For tasks that you expect to take longer, think “I'm going to start this today.” The goal is to start the task, not necessarily finish it (although you might!). All you have to do is start a task, and then see where it goes.

**Chunk similar tasks.** Balancing different types of tasks can feel overwhelming, and it takes extra cognitive effort to shift into the thinking required for different tasks. Designate certain days or time periods to work on tasks for the same classes or activities.

**Create interim deadlines.** One helpful way of forcing yourself to break tasks into parts is by setting arbitrary but useful deadlines. Tell your professor that you'll send an essay outline two weeks prior. Schedule homework review with a friend the day before it's due.

**Understand your procrastination.** Better understanding why you procrastinate can help it seem more addressable. [Read about what fuels procrastination](#). Know that procrastination is changeable.

**Use reminders.** If forgetfulness prevents your task completion, then set reminders. Set alerts on your phone, write reminder notes, ask friends for help.

**Reward yourself.** Whenever you complete a task, reward yourself! Reward yourself with a fun break, a favorite food, or a relaxing activity. It increases motivation and helps you complete manageable chunks of work.

**Use a planner.** Some people find that using planners can help to visualize the amount of time each task should take throughout the day. Consider monthly, weekly, and daily planners. You can buy one, find free ones online, or make your own.

### Your Time Management Checklist

- ☐ Prioritize and make task lists.
- ☐ Limit time wasters.
- ☐ Replace time wasters with refreshers.
- ☐ Allow for flexibility.
- ☐ Set SMART goals.
- ☐ Schedule less.
- ☐ Address little tasks immediately.
- ☐ Pick avoided tasks first.
- ☐ Start longer tasks.
- ☐ Chunk similar tasks.
- ☐ Create interim deadlines.
- ☐ Recognize anxiety and procrastination.
- ☐ Use reminders.
- ☐ Reward yourself.
- ☐ Use a planner.