TIME MANAGEMENT FOR ENGINEERING STUDENTS

With a heavy Engineering course load, one of the most important skills for Engineering students is Time Management. Taking 5 or 6 courses, attending labs, completing weekly problem sets, and participating in group projects mean that you have to be able to handle multiple assignments with limited time. Strong time management skills can help you succeed as an Engineering student while still finding time to have fun. This handout was designed by Guelph Engineering students for you, a Guelph Engineering student. We've tried a lot of different time management strategies and want to share with you some of the strategies and ideas that have worked for us.

How to Prioritize?

Prioritization is one of the most important components of managing your time. Engineering students need to learn to prioritize duties and tasks to get everything important done.

This will be especially important around Week 6 and 7, when you will have lot of midterms and projects due in different courses. You'll need to be able to prioritize when lots of things are due on the same day.

There are a few different ways that students prioritize their school work. Since people all work differently, try and see which method of prioritization works best for you. Here are a few different methods:

Level of Difficulty

Choosing to get done the most difficult assignments first may be one way you want to prioritize. It can be beneficial to take study breaks with the easier tasks when you're working on the tough one.

If you find that Chemistry midterms are really difficult but Calculus is a review for you, you could start your study time off with your Chemistry notes and take breaks by working on your Calculus assignments.

Marks

Some students choose to prioritize based on mark allocation. This is important to identify in Engineering courses because there are many assignments due at various times. Some assignments and tests may be weighted higher than others, so this method can help when you have tons of projects and tests all worth different amounts of marks.

*Some Design assignments may be worth 5% of your total grade but require many hours of work. It's important to keep that in perspective and weigh your time on that assignment against time spent on reports and projects worth much more of your total grade. You might **not** want to spend a week on a Design assignment that is worth 5% and only an evening on the final report that is worth 45% of your total grade!*

Time Allocation

If you have a big project that takes a long time to do, you might choose this as a high priority and put it at the top of your list, and save those quick tasks to be done as breaks throughout the progress of the large assignment.

Many students find that Mechanics assignments take a long time, but they're very important to understand and finish for success on the midterm. Try and start the assignment as early as possible so you can allow yourself to take breaks and work on other assignments that take up less time.

Maybe you'll identify with even more than one of these prioritization lists and be able to choose a method based on the situation.

Once you've figured out your priorities you can move on to decide how to get those important tasks done.

Tools to Help Manage Your Time

Task Lists

Producing a task list is a quick and easy way to see what you need to get done in your day or week. Sometimes when you get flustered with a lot of projects you need to do, seeing them all in a list will make it easier to prioritize and then you will be able to accomplish more things!

To make a task list, write out all the things you need to do in a day, week, month or semester. From there you can choose the tasks you want to get done first from your method(s) of prioritization. Check out the

Learning Commons handout, *Making a Task List*, for more information.

Flexible Time

Make sure you allot extra time for your plans. A good rule of thumb is to multiply the amount of time you allot to a task by 1.5. This way, if you need extra time for a task or need to squeeze something else in, you'll have that time accounted for!

Schedules

A schedule will help you plan ahead and prioritize tasks. Make a schedule of your classes AND include time to have fun! To keep on track, write out the tasks for each class and activity you're involved in on a calendar, day planner (the CSA provides free ones during the first week of classes) or schedule sheet provided by the Learning Commons. You might find it useful to make daily or weekly schedules to stay on top of homework. Try and think about how much time a task will take. This way you can have a good idea of how to spend your time most effectively.

If you know you have other engagements outside of school that happen on a regular basis, try and schedule them in so you can see how you're spending your time.

If you schedule in Grey's Anatomy as a planned break, you won't feel as guilty watching it! Instead, you might feel like you earned it (yes...you do deserve rewards sometimes for all your hard work).

Also, check out the Engineering Excel Scheduling Program, which combines a weekly schedule and task list. It has been developed by an Engineering Peer Helper with the difficulties of engineering time management in mind!

Take Breaks

In addition to making time for fun, if you have a big project that will take a long time, make sure you plan on taking breaks. These can include things like working on simpler projects, exercising, or just going outside and having fun for a bit!

REALLY IMPORTANT!!!
Words of Wisdom

The key is to not get frustrated or down on yourself, because at first you will greatly underestimate the amount of time you think it takes to do something. Once you get the hang of it, you will get much better at guessing how long it takes to complete assignments or study for a test.

Time management takes a bit of work in the beginning but it is SO worth it in the long run! Use 1st and 2nd year to really master time management and make your life that much easier in 3rd and 4th year!

Make Use of Resources

Keep in mind all the resources available to you! On campus there are tons of people who can help you keep on track and manage your time! You can:

- Attend an Engineering Study Lab
- Meet one-on-one with an Engineering Peer (email engpeers@uoguelph.ca)
- Make a study group with other Engineering students to help you stay motivated
- Check out the Engineering Excel Scheduling Program!

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