

# Time Management For University Students

The grand tour of your time begins here and now. You as a student have special time concerns and unique perspectives on various aspects of time management. Many of your activities are scheduled for you as lectures, tutorials and lab times are. You may find though, a substantial chunk of your time is flexible but must still be allocated to things like homework, commuting, a part-time job, some recreational time and some social time with friends. After all is said and done, many of us find ourselves disappointed with our ability to plan, stay on track and get things done. To address this and other concerns regarding your time we would like you to consider the following questions:

**Have you set your goals?** Within this first question we would like you to consider things like: why are you here? what do you want to learn? and what do you want to do after you graduate?

The second main question is **What is your time perspective?** Within this question consider things like do you procrastinate? If you do, why? Do you do things because they are easy or because they are necessary? And, how much time are you really using well?

A third main question to consider is **What sort of planning is involved?** Consider things like how do you plan? Do you get things done on time? Are they done to your satisfaction? Do you feel comfortable with the pace of your work, or do you feel rushed?

The fourth consideration is **Have you ever had a time shift?** This question entails things like have you ever been engaged in an activity where time seemed to just fly by, or the opposite where time just dragged on and on. Or, have you ever found yourself doing one thing while thinking about how you really should be doing something else?

If you have ever asked yourself any of these four questions you already know how perplexing good time management can really be. Not to worry, we will be working through all four of these questions throughout the course of the handout starting with "Have you set your goals?"

## Have You Set Your Goals?

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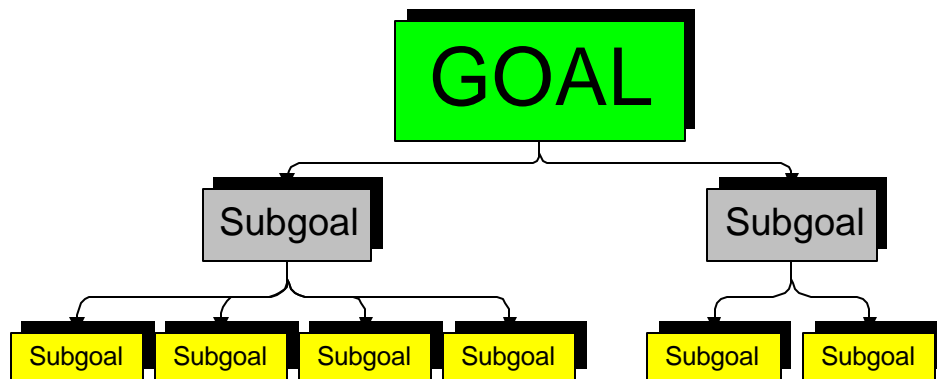
By engaging in a program of study in a university you are embarking on a journey of discovery. But unlike a journey across distances your journey is through time. During the course of your journey you will be manufacturing your own reality. Your future depends on your decisions and actions of today more than anything else. That's why it is so important to clearly determine what you are trying to accomplish. The more clear and specific you are about your future plans and the activities of today that will get you there, the more likely it is that you will make them happen. So, to start yourself off with momentum, take a few minutes to write down your top three short term goals. These are goals that you should be able to accomplish within a year. While you consider these think about some of the things that you would have to change in your life to make them

work. To help you in clarifying your goals we have provided a goal setting sheet for this exercise toward the end of this package.

Once you have completed writing out your top three short term goals, write out your top three long term goals. While you write keep in mind that the more clear and detailed your goal statements are, the more likely it is that you'll succeed. Be warned that if you have not completed the goal setting exercise the remainder of the exercises will be much less effective. After all how can you manage time when you don't know what you want to be doing?

### Goal Breakdown

Now that you have taken the time to write out your short and long term goals, consider all of the component parts that the goals are made of. Quite often goals can be convergent problems; that is, they require you to work on a whole bunch of activities that eventually converge as you reach the goal. Consider for instance the goal of obtaining

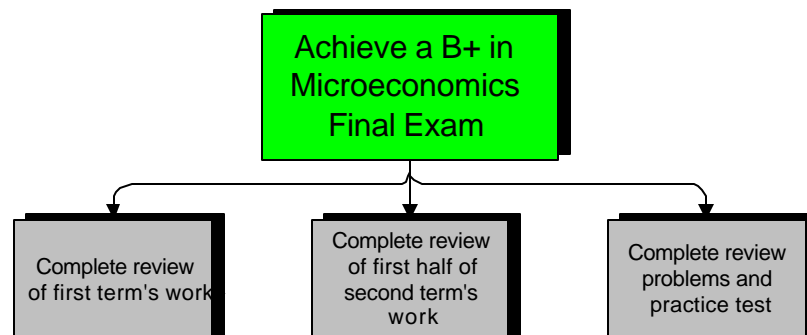


your degree. This goal can be broken down into four sub-goals. Each sub-goal is the successful completion of one year of your program. These sub-goals can be further broken down into individual courses within each year. The courses can be broken down into tests, exams, term papers and such within the course, and finally down to your homework for tonight. There is an unbroken path between the homework that you do tonight and your convocation ceremony. The trick is to stay on the path.

As an example of how to break goals down into their component parts consider yourself as a first year student in Introduction to Microeconomics. As part of your larger goal structure you want to achieve a B+ in this economics course. All of the work for the course has been completed except for the final examination and your current average is a B+. So, all you need to do is get a B+ on the final and you get a B+ in the course. How do you prepare for this final? Well, consider breaking down the work into logically separate units. Three possible components might be:

- ⇒ completing a review of the first term's work
- ⇒ completing a review of the first half of the second terms work
- ⇒ complete the review problems and practice test that your professor distributed in class.

The point here is not to prepare you for a microeconomics exam but to demonstrate the breakdown of a sub-goal into smaller, more concrete activities. Generally speaking the smaller the chunks, the more easy and productive your planning will be.



By now you are probably wondering what all of this breaking down of goals has to do with? Well, glad you asked! The purpose of the breaking down of goals into sub-goals and their component parts is to be clear about what you should be doing. We are constantly bombarded by opportunities and options of what to do with our time. Most of our time believe it or not is spent in trying to decide what to do next! Vague goals are often at the heart of the most dreaded of time management no-no's - procrastination. But if you have clarified your purpose in advance you can get to it. The next section will describe in detail how we can get sidetracked into doing things that aren't really that important.

## What Is Your Time Perspective?

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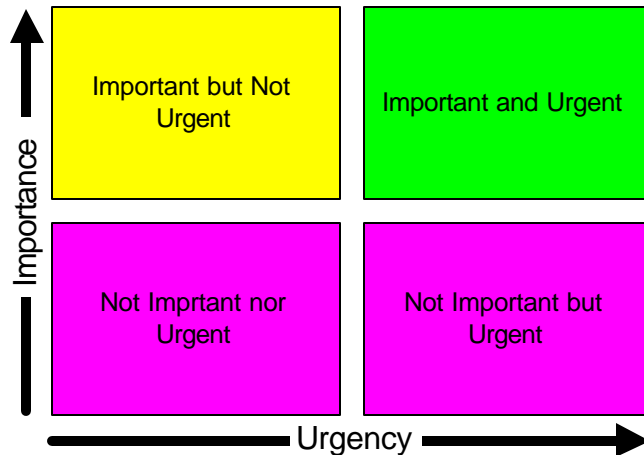
Earlier, we talked about how you define your reality by the decisions and actions of today. Your time perspective is part of that reality. Have you ever noticed how people who have goals and are serious about their future take great care to use their time well? These people seem to consider time a precious commodity and resource to be allocated to appropriate ends, and only after careful consideration. This is in sharp contrast to the wandering masses of people who are confused, lost and unfocused. These people do not consider time as a commodity or a resource but simply as a measurement of how old something is or when something is going to happen. These differing viewpoints are both generated by the goals or lack of them of the people in question. Developing a personal sensitivity to the value of your time is easy. It's a natural outgrowth of having goals.

Imagine you had one more day to live. Wouldn't every minute suddenly become cherished and unwasted? Since none of us really knows how much time we have it would make sense to consider our time to be of limited supply and great value. Being of limited supply, our time should be spent on some things while other things should be avoided. To know which is which, we'll discuss a few crucial spectra of time use including importance and urgency, effectiveness and efficiency, and the Pareto Principle.

## Importance and Urgency

A helpful strategy in clarifying your present time perspective is to think of your activities in terms of importance and urgency. The diagram, displaying a grid of four quadrants, represents different blends of important and urgent activities.

The lower-left quadrant for instance represents activities that you engage in that are neither important nor urgent. As the urgency increases (towards the lower-right) we often find ourselves doing things faster and more hurriedly. Be careful though. That does not mean that these things are more important. The upper-left quadrant contains things that are high in importance and low in urgency, and the quadrant in the upper-right corner represents activities that are high in both urgency and importance. Let's briefly consider each of these quadrants in turn.



### Not Important Nor Urgent

You are probably asking yourself why anyone would engage in activities that are neither important nor urgent, but you would be amazed to find out just how much of your time is really spent in this quadrant. If you find yourself engaging in such throw-away tasks as sleeping in, watching game shows for hour after hour, playing video games, or chatting on the phone - be careful. You might be engaging in activities that have nothing at all to do with your goals. Doing things that are neither important nor urgent does not make sense.

### Not Important But Urgent

Engaging in tasks that are urgent but not really important is a potentially dangerous behaviour. Imagine feeling rushed and pressured to get something done while you think about how useless the task really is. Advertisers love taking advantage of our natural tendency to act on urgency. They tell us to “buy now and save!” or to “shop soon there are only a few days left!” The unfortunate tendency is to misinterpret urgency for importance. But there is a simple solution to this problem. If you are feeling hurried, stop for a moment and ask the following question: What would be the consequences to me if I don't do this? The answer to this question will put the activities importance and urgency into perspective. Urgency has a personal dimension and it is crucial that we understand to whom the urgency really applies. Often, the consequences to you are so small that it seems ridiculous to continue to do the activity.

## Important But Not Urgent

The activities that fall into this quadrant tend to be tricky. Quite often we put off until tomorrow a very important activity only to engage in something less important and more urgent. Let's be honest, one of the most important activities students face is studying for exams through regular reviews, but how many students do it with lots of time to spare? The very best time to start studying for a final exam is the first day of class, but many students find a third re-run of a situation comedy on television more compelling. It's your choice to make as to which quadrant to be in, but be sure of your reasons for doing what you do.

## Important And Urgent

Activities that are both urgent and important are readily acted on by most students. In this quadrant we find things like studying for exams a few days before class, typing up a major term paper the day before it is due, and trying to finish the lab assignment before lab time ends. For many students it is the urgency of the activity that prompts them to do the work. Some believe (as one student has said) "I do my best work the day before it's due." The sad reality for many of us is that the day before the due date is when we do any of the work. The work was not done when it was not urgent. Strangely enough, the importance of the activity has never changed, only the urgency has. Waiting until something

**I do my best work the night before the due date. Why change my method, it got me this far hasn't it?**

It may be true that the focused determination that you show the night before the due date of an important assignment or exam will produce results. But it is very unlikely that it is your *best* work. As time goes on and your assignments become increasingly complex and involved you will recognize that the 'night before' approach will fail. It becomes more and more difficult to do an entire term paper at the last minute.

becomes urgent makes less and less sense as something becomes more important. Take for instance two real-life examples; financial planning and marriage. Would it make any sense to begin your retirement savings plan a few weeks before you turn 65, or how about trying to get to know your fiancée a few days before getting married? These two examples display how strange it seems to try to cram months and years of activities into a few days. Not only would you retire without enough money to live, but you would marry a virtual stranger. If these examples make sense to you, you will realize how foolish it is to try to cram your studies too.

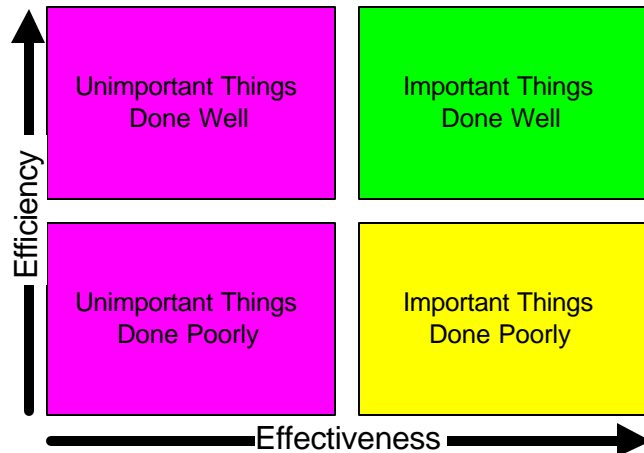
## Effectiveness and Efficiency

Let your imagination wander for a moment and imagine that you are the director of an expedition of explorers making your way through dense jungle. Surrounding you on all sides is the deep green foliage and the whistling and chattering of thousands of birds and monkeys. You begin to think about how fortunate you are to be leading this expedition when suddenly you hear "Stop! Stop your advancing!" It's the expedition navigator. He is approaching you from the back of the line. "It has become apparent in the last few days," he says "that we have veered drastically off course!" He motions to the north-east

exclaiming “we must continue *this* way.” The bushwhacking guide hearing this turns and approaches the two of you from the front. He gazes to the north-east momentarily and exclaims “That’s the densest jungle I have ever seen. Why don’t we just keep going *this* way. We’re making *great time!*”.

Now, after having been on your expedition, what do you have to tell the rest of the world? Did you follow the advice of the navigator or the bushwhacker? We certainly hope the choice seems rather silly to you. If you follow the navigator’s advice you will certainly have your work cut out for you, but you will eventually reach your destination. On the other hand, if you follow the bushwhacker’s path of least resistance travelling should be easy, but you’ll have no way of knowing what problems lie ahead or where you will end up.

The purpose of having you think about yourself as an expedition director is to clarify the concepts of efficiency and effectiveness. This grid represents two more ways of thinking about your time. Each quadrant is a different blend of effectiveness and efficiency. Let’s consider each in turn.



### **Unimportant Things Done Poorly -Low Effectiveness, Low Efficiency**

Remember the expedition you were on? Doing unimportant things poorly would be just like taking the expedition off course to go site seeing and completely ignore your purpose for being there. This would be doing something unimportant and it would make you ineffective. Doing an unimportant activity poorly simply compounds the problem. It’s like taking that side trip site seeing and then getting lost! Certainly this is very ineffective because it takes you much longer to get back on course. Unimportant things are best left undone. Why do something poorly, or well for that matter, if it’s just not important. As a student many of your goals either center around or are interdependent with your schooling. So, activities that lead you toward your goals are important. Activities that do not lead you toward your goals are real barriers and would be considered unimportant activities.

### **Important Things Done Poorly - High Effectiveness, Low Efficiency**

Have you ever heard the phrase “If you are going to do something you might as well do it right?” If you have, you are probably wondering why someone would want to do an important activity poorly? The answer is, for practice. It’s not that your focus should be to do it poorly - not at all - you should always strive to do important things well. But keep in mind that people who are the best in the world at what they do started out being lousy at it.

## Unimportant Things Done Well - Low Effectiveness, High Efficiency

We all like to receive congratulations for a job well done. It seems to boost our self-esteem and sense of competence when we get wonderful results. Most often, though, the recognition and personal satisfaction do not come from doing unimportant things well. Only when something is important is there a real payoff. As a rather silly but very helpful example consider students who commute to their classes from off campus. Does it matter how well a student stares out the window of a bus? I warned you that the example was silly but that's how most students use their time while commuting - they stare out the window. It doesn't make sense to do unimportant things at all, let alone do them well.

## Important Things Done Well - High Effectiveness, High Efficiency

Doing things effectively and efficiently means finding out what's important and then doing it over and over until you do it well. It's highly unlikely that you as expedition director would have much success if you set out without a map (which tells you where to go and when) and some background in expeditions, navigation and jungle survival. Likewise, efficiency and effectiveness have bearing on your schooling. Displaying effectiveness as a student means knowing what to study and understand for your exams.

### Pareto's Priority Puzzler

It's quiz time at the Learning Skills Programme. Give Pareto's priority puzzler a try and see how well you do. The question is: *What percentage of waking time does the average university student spend on important tasks?*

The surprising answer to this question can be found at the end of this document.

Displaying efficiency means you have gone over the material enough to be so familiar with it that, come test time, you aren't fumbling around with the concepts, drawing blanks and running out of time.

## Planning and Scheduling

So far we have discussed the importance of knowing what to do and when. We have discussed the importance of setting goals and knowing how to break them down into smaller, more manageable activities. Then we challenged you to think about these activities in terms of importance and urgency, effectiveness and efficiency, and Pareto's Principle. The next section allows you to take all of your wonderful hopes, aspirations and dreams and make them happen. How? Simple! Remember how we discussed importance and urgency, and we said that we can get side-tracked by the urgent and unimportant things? Well, in the following pages you will learn a step-by-step method of how to get control over your time and keep it. By learning to use a structured, detailed planner like the one used in this program, you'll be developing a set of skills that you will carry with you wherever you go, even long after you graduate. So, let's get started - shall we?

### Thought for the day:

Time flies whether you wastefully spend it on frivolous things, or whether you carefully invest it in your goals.



No one really wants to be the kind of person that wastes 80% of their time. Most of us set out to use time effectively, but how many of us use methods that we know will work? Now if you are not completely confident in your present approach, you will want to ensure that the tools you choose will build the future you want. We are going to introduce you to 4 tools; a Monthly Planner, a Weekly Objectives List, a Weekly Planner and a Time Log

You might be accustomed to thinking of planners as simply collections of pages filled with lines and boxes to write things in. Everyone has seen (and most of us have used) a monthly or a weekly planner. What we would like to emphasize here is not the papers but the thinking process involved in planning. While we introduce these 4 planning methods we want you to think about how much planning you are already doing. What would your life be like if you completely stopped planning? Suppose for instance you never planned any of your school related activities. Would you know which class to go to or when? Or the dates and times of your exams? Or the due dates of term papers? Or which chapters of which text to read for next week? Or when your study group was meeting? Or when the tuition fees were due? Or when your vacations are? You can imagine the chaos! Imagine if you stopped planning in all the other areas of your life as well. Or worse, imagine what the world would be like if everyone stopped planning.

Now with this image in mind, consider how much effective planning you are already doing. It should be obvious that you are already doing quite a bit extra. You might not have really thought about it as planning, but it is planning nonetheless. The amount of planning that you have done up until now has resulted directly in your present state. Now, given the assumption that you would like to improve your time management abilities we are going to ask you to do more planning. After some practice you will find that this advanced planning will become as common place and effortless as your regular planning - except that your results will be very different. Imagine never forgetting an important task or date, or imagine the confidence that you will feel knowing that you understand all the material in a course or lecture, or better yet, imagine knowing everything you need to know for an exam - and knowing that you know it. You might think that this is pie in the sky but not only is it possible, it is realistic when you have a well thought out plan.

### **The Monthly Planner**

The monthly planner is something that many students use. In addition to the days of the week and month are minimal marking students add on, such as due dates for assignments and essays, alongside dates of tests and exams, and important appointments, anniversaries, birthdays, holidays, vacations and so on.



To exploit its full potential as a planning tool it's important to realize that the monthly planner is that it can help us manage our large goals and the smaller sub-goals that we have divided these larger goals into. Once we have established our larger goals and broken them down into smaller objectives and activities, we can use the monthly planner to record important milestones along the way between now and the expected completion date of the goals. In this way the monthly planner becomes a tool for tracking the progress of all of our important projects. By looking at the completed monthly planner we can instantly determine not only on what sub-goals we should be working on any given day, but when during the weeks to come will be periods of high work load, whether we realistically have time to take on more work, and whether we are on target for the completion for these already planned goals. The monthly planner simply gives us a longer range look at our time than either the daily or weekly planner and helps us to more accurately anticipate the unfolding of our time weeks in advance.

Monthly Planner						
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
		Time Management Workshop 9:30-10:30am				Complete review of 1st term's work
Complete review of 1st half of second term's work	Busy studying, don't waste time!		Complete review problems and practice test	Micro-economics Exam Today!		
		Time Management Workshop 9:30-10:30am				
				Half-way through term!		

Let's say for example that you had an upcoming exam in your Friday class for Introductory Microeconomics. You would want to enter this date both so it would not be forgotten and because it prepares you to do further planning. In keeping with our suggestions for keeping sub-goals in the monthly planner, you would enter a series of interim objectives between the start of your preparation for the Economics exam and the exam date itself. These milestones would serve as indicators of the progress of your study. You might enter a note to complete a review of the first-term's work, to complete

a review of the first half of the second term's work, and to complete the review problems and practice test that your professor handed out in class. As well you might make notes of how far along in the term you are as a motivational aid or warnings of how busy certain times will be to assist you in planning the amount of work you take on. If you would like to take this opportunity to fill out your own monthly planner, a blank one has been provided in the back of this package.

### **Weekly Objectives List**

The weekly objectives list works in much the same way as the monthly planner, giving us an opportunity to sub-divide our shorter term goals into weekly objectives or sub-goals and then further into specific activities for the week. The importance of these steps cannot be overemphasized: by listing out our specific activities, we can more accurately estimate time required for them and so better plan our time.

Let's say for example that one of your goals for the year was to maintain your honours standing and that you had a series of exams coming up including one for first year Introductory Microeconomics. You might set an objective to score a B+ or A grade on the exam and list this on your objectives list. Your next step would then be to consider a variety of study activities that would prepare you well for the examination. You might begin by entering your first activity, "complete readings and review lecture notes", in the activities column. Once you have entered your activity it is important to assign it a time estimate, in this case we've assigned this activity a three hour block of time. This block of time reflects an important principle in time estimating; when estimating time you might want to add time to the amount of time you think it will take you to complete the task. This is important because we tend to estimate without considering possible difficulties or interruptions. In this example we have applied a factor of 1.5 to 2.0 to the estimate; that is, our best case estimate for the activity was 2 hours, so we assigned the task three hours.

Now, once you have entered the first activity for study, you would continue with the others you have in mind. So, you might want to add "select main concepts, one hour", "practice problems from the end of the chapter, two hours", "reproduce graphs from memory, one hour", and "write paragraphs to interpret the graphs, one hour". (Though the times used here are for example purposes only, some of these strategies might just be helpful to you as study skills.) The final two columns on the form allow you to track whether or not you have scheduled and completed the activities you have listed. Your next step is to carry the listed activities, along with their associated time estimates to your weekly planner to be scheduled. Now would be a good time to record your objective for the upcoming week using the form provided in this package.

# Weekly Objectives List

Academic Objective	Activity	150%-200% Time Estimate	Scheduled	Completed
<u>Score B+ or higher on Economics Exam</u>	<u>complete readings/review notes</u>	<u>3 hrs</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<u>select main concepts</u>	<u>1 hr</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<u>practice problems from chapter</u>	<u>2 hrs</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<u>reproduce graphs from memory</u>	<u>1 hr</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<u>paragraphs to interpret graphs</u>	<u>1 hr</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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## The Weekly Planner

Often the weekly planner that most people use carries on it a series of items such as lecture time, tutorial times, laboratory times, times for your favourite television program and times for extracurricular activities such as social events with clubs, exercise times and so on. If this sounds like your schedule then you are probably under-using another very versatile time management tool because many of the most important tasks (homework activities which move you toward your goals) are left out of the picture. The result of this should be clear. *If it isn't on the schedule it doesn't get done.* That means you can see a lot of seemingly full and busy weeks can go by without you moving substantially towards your goals.

Earlier we mentioned the weekly objectives list. At the end of our discussion of the objectives list we suggested that it could be used to track whether or not you have transferred your activities derived from your objectives onto your planner. If you look at the partially completed weekly planner (below) you'll notice all the unscheduled time and there is usually lots of it. Using the time estimates for the activities on the weekly objectives list as guides find a block of time of appropriate duration in your schedule. Then write in the activities one at a time in priority order until you have either scheduled all of your activities or you have run out of time spaces.

Weekly Planner							
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
8:00am		Work Out		Work Out		Work Out	
9:00am			Select main concepts		Problems from back of chapter		
10:00am		Complete readings & review notes				Reproduce graphs from memory	
11:00am				The Classical Experience 1100.06	Micro-economics 1 1000.03		Write paragraphs to interpret them
Noon	Natural Science: Astronomy 1740.06		Issues in History 1000.06		Lunch with Chris		
1:00pm							

So, to give you an idea of how you might go about scheduling these activities, consider the first activity, “Complete readings and review notes.” This three hour activity could be placed almost anywhere in the early part of the week, say on Monday or Tuesday and it could be in, say, two 90 minute blocks or all in one three hour block, depending on your preferences. For demonstration purposes, we have decided to use the time on Tuesday between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m.. For the next activity, “select main concepts” we require a one hour block of time. Wednesday at 9 a.m. seems like a good potential time for this one. Our third activity, “Problems from back of chapter” might be scheduled, by you early birds, on Friday morning between 8 and 10 a.m. The final two activities could be scheduled on the weekend as shown.

If we return to the weekly objectives list for a moment you'll see that, having scheduled the activities on the list, we can mark that we have done so.

Notice the column next to the one marked "Scheduled" on this form. It has space for you to mark whether or not you have completed the scheduled items on the list. You will derive a real sense of progress as you check off each activity. When you look

back on the past week's activities it will become quite obvious to you that you are accomplishing a great deal with your time. As your time goes on, the build up of these activities will eventually lead you to the accomplishment of your goals. As the minutes of your time become hours, days, months and eventually years, you will be designing your life rather than having it be thrown together by uncertainty. As the architect of your destiny the products of your labours don't come merely from time passing, but from your time being invested in the careful planning and building of your future.

A good time to schedule is before the week begins and it is important to construct a plan for the entire week. The most important reason for planning this way is that by having a plan laid out for the coming week you maintain reasonable control over your time. Even with unexpected occurrences that can impact your schedule you assist yourself in making decisions that are governed by your desire to reach your goals. Without using a schedule you may be governed by your moment-to-moment moods which may lead you to make time decisions that take you away from your goals. A great deal of time is saved by using a weekly planner. On the short run you avoid the wastage of time that comes from constantly having to reevaluate what to do next. As well, you relieve your mind of the responsibility for organizing and remembering all your tasks, allowing yourself to focus intently on the work you want to accomplish. On the long run you save time by ensuring that on a daily basis you are making decisions about your time use that will lead you step-by-step towards your personal goals avoiding the pitfalls of chronically misdirecting your time and

## Objectives List

	150%-200%	Scheduled	Completed
Review notes	3 hrs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Concepts	1 hr	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
From chapter	2 hrs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
From memory	1 hr	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prepare graphs	1 hr	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**But I feel 'cramped' by lots of schedules. Is there any other way that I can get similar results without worrying about each minute?**

Sure! The purpose of scheduling is not to enslave you to your planner, but rather to indicate when certain things should happen. Many students find, for various reasons, that their scheduled activities do not occur the way that they were planned. An alternative method would be to keep a to-do list structured in order of priority. The list would contain the most important and urgent (be careful here) activities in your weekly objectives list. If you do not have many urgent activities, the fall back tasks would be the most important of the non-urgent activities. Keep the unimportant activities off the list.

efforts. After you have taken the step of planning your time in a weekly planner, your next steps will be to put the plan into action and log your achievements.

As you engage in the process of planning regularly you will soon notice that you become more proficient at it. You will make better time estimates. You may be able to reduce or even eliminate costly time interruptions. You'll get more done in what seems to be less time. You'll reduce your wasted time and you will become more confident in your ability to achieve. Now would be a good time to begin filling out your weekly planner for the upcoming week.

### **Time Tracking**

One final strategy that we would like to recommend you use is time tracking. Using time tracking once every few months will really help you get a clear sense of where your time is actually going. The form used here looks just like a weekly schedule but it works in reverse. Instead of writing things in that you are planning to do, time logging is a process of writing down the things that you have already done. Doing this is sort of a get-to-know-yourself exercise because this procedure will highlight many of your habits. Some people find that every time they plan to do math homework they end up watching television. Other people just can't seem to follow their schedule until the week before finals. Whatever the case may be for you, we are sure that you will find this process helps you adjust and fine-tune your time management practices.

Using a time tracking sheet is fairly straightforward. At the end of an hour (or half depending on your preference) jot yourself a quick note about what you did for the last hour. The note needn't be long, one sentence or less should suffice. If a particular planned activity doesn't transpire simply enter a comment as to what you really did during that time. This way you will be able to take a long, hard look at your distractions and tendencies, compare them to what you had planned, and act to reduce the impact these distractions have on your planning.

If you're really serious about making changes and getting results from your time management strategies you can analyze your time log by time category such as: sleep, study, work, travel and so on. Before doing the summary estimate the amount of time that you think you spend on the various activities listed on the form. Feel free to add any additional categories that might be helpful. Then log your time for one week on an hour by hour basis. When the week is over summarize your time by category for each day and add up the values for all seven days of the week.

Summarizing your time use allows you to understand how much time your really spend in the various areas of your life. The weekly summary of time use form in this package is a sample that we have used in many workshops with students. As we have seen with many of these students it is almost certain that you will see a notable difference between the number of hours you expected to use in certain categories and the actual number of hours you spend. If you find that you spend more time in one area than you wanted, and less in another, the weekly summary of time use clearly indicates which activities to reduce to find the extra time you want for that neglected area of your life.

## Weekly Summary of Time Use

	Sleep	Eating	Commute	Family/ Social	Study	Work	T.V.	Other
Monday								
Tuesday								
Wednesday								
Thursday								
Friday								
Saturday								
Sunday								
Expected								
Actual								
Difference								

Looking back on the material you have covered in this presentation may give you the feeling that there is far too much to remember and even more to do. Setting goals, breaking them down into manageable chunks, allocating those chunks to specific time slots in your schedule, ensuring that you are working effectively on important tasks and keeping yourself on track may seem like more work than it is worth. To keep the amount of work involved in perspective, remember that your goal setting will take considerable time. But once your goals are set, your planning for the next week should take you no more than an hour or so.

It is often said that one hour spent planning saves several hours of activity above and beyond the hour spent planning. This is true because of our tendency for all the things that have already been mentioned, like a lack of focus, distraction, procrastination and uncertainty. Once your week is planned you will experience clarity of focus, your tendency to be distracted will be reduced and you will be certain of your reasons for doing the things you had planned.

When the next week starts you will be able to move toward your goals immediately. In this state you will be much more comfortable and capable of dealing with time shifts. In the next section we will begin an investigation into some unique challenges that you face as a student.



## Time Shifts

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Have you ever thought of the amount of time you spend waiting in line-ups, commuting, waiting for your next class to start, or on the telephone? If you ever want a wake-up call try to calculate it for yourself. You may already have a sense of this if you've tracked your time. After a while, the few minutes here and there amount to days, months and even years. Since we all find ourselves in these situations at one time or another we should carefully consider our use of this time. Each time shift listed below contains its unique challenges, and we present you with some really interesting options. These options, if used will transport you from your present state of time management to a whole new level of effectiveness.

### Line-ups

Did you know that, over the course of your life, you will spend approximately 8 years waiting in lines? It's true! At the library check-out, waiting for the bus, waiting for the light to turn green at an intersection, buying tickets, and even at amusement parks you find yourself staring mindlessly at the back of someone else's head! Why? Think of what you could be doing. If you carried around a book or some photocopied readings you could be actively engaging



**Figure 1: As some get frustrated and leave and others wait in line unproductively you will be expanding your mind and enriching your education in what is normally considered wasted time.**

your brain in something interesting and exciting. Tape cassettes of your lectures are ideal ways to fill times like these, and the review will profoundly aid your recall come exam time. While some people in the line get frustrated and leave, and others wait unproductively, you will be expanding your mind and enriching your education in what is normally considered wasted time.

### Commuting

Imagine, most North Americans spend between 1 and 2 hours commuting from home to work or school every day. If you commute, you will probably find 5 to 10 hours of your week taken up in a car, bus or subway. In one year, your commute works out to between 250 and 500 hours. Imagine what it would be like over the course of 4 years. If you study while you commute you could invest up to 2000 hours in your education. That's equivalent to attending all of the required lectures in every course of a 4-year university degree. Impressive! Imagine what your grades would be like. Now, some readers might say "Well, I'd love to get grades like that, but I just can't study on the

bus/subway/walking across campus ...” If you think this, consider the amount of time you spend reading ads, signs, posters and billboards. You are getting good at identifying products that other people want to sell you. All you really need to do is change what you are reading. Even 5 minutes and a couple of pages work out to hours and books. If you happen to be driving, don't read - that's dangerous. But, study anyway. Tape your professor's lecture or yourself reading. You will be amazed at how much you can learn by listening. The key to commuting time is quite simply, use it or lose it.

### **Between Classes**

Quite often you might find that you have a chunk of time, maybe an hour or two, between classes. Without advanced planning you never know exactly what is going to happen during this time. Sometimes, even with a plan, you may find the time to be unproductive. Imagine that you have an hour during which you would like to get some reading done. You find a seat take your book, open it up and begin reading. Depending on where you sat (1, 2 or 3), what happens next can be quite different.



**Figure 2: The student centre can be a great place to socialize, but a difficult place to study.**

1. In the student centre you experience a deluge of sight and sound distractions. Some few students may be able to read here, but for the majority of us there is so much going on that we won't be able to hear ourselves think. You look around you and see a few others with books open, but only about one in thirty will keep her/his eyes on the book for any duration. Even then, there is no guarantee that they are studying.



**Figure 3: The areas near the entrance to the library can be full of sight and sound distractions**

2. Inside the library, near the entrance, you choose one of the first open seats in order to save time. It certainly is much quieter than the student centre and you really start to do some reading. However, you may find that you still look up from your book every so often as a particularly attractive passer-by catches your attention. Then you begin daydreaming and your quality reading time goes out the window.

3. In a quiet study area in the library, you find your self seated among others who are also reading quietly. The sight and sound distractions are mostly separated from the reading area. Here is an area where you feel you can really get some work done. The hour passes with few distractions and the reading goes smoothly. By the end of the hour, you may find that you've accomplished much more reading than you thought possible.



**Figure 4: A number of quiet study areas can often be found. Search for a place where you feel comfortable and productive.**

## **Interruptions**

Have you ever sat down to study, and not two minutes later something like this happens...

RING, RING

**You:** Hello?

**Your Friend:** Hi <your name here>, it's <your friend's name here> whatcha doing?

**You:** Oh, I just sat down with a highlighter and a hot pile of notes. I've got some stuff here that I don't quite understand yet so I wanted to go over it.

**Your Friend:** Well, I'll tell you what. My boss just gave me two tickets to tonight's game. Third row! Right above the dugout! Whaddaya say?

Or maybe you find something like this occurring more often than you would like...

KNOCK, KNOCK

**You:** Come in...

**Your little sister** (those of you with little brothers can probably come up with a few hundred thousand examples of your own): <your name here> look what mom bought me! A barbie-doll just like the one in the movie! Wanna see?

Or perhaps, something like this...

**Your father:** <your name here> get your head out of the book there lad and come take a look at this. They've got some guy on the news that they're taking off to jail for watering his lawn in a rain storm! Can you believe that! Come on, you're gonna miss it!

Whatever the case may be, you are interrupted. Your train of thought has been derailed and getting back on track could be difficult. There are a few things that you can do to minimize the impact on your study time.

- ⇒ First of all, try to find a place where it is difficult for people to find you. That way you are more likely to have longer periods of interruption-free work. If you can't find a hideout, consider an attention getting sign on your door - "Developing photographs - please do not disturb" might be a kind sign that will work.
- ⇒ Tell the person interrupting that you are studying and that you really need to continue. Some people are considerate of this and will volunteer to come back or call later. If this is the case, recommend a time when you know you will be free.
- ⇒ As you are interrupted, stand up and remain standing. Stand-up interruptions are usually much shorter than sit-down ones. When you stand make sure that you mention how important it is that you continue your study uninterrupted. Ask them if you could become involved with their request later, after you have finished studying.
- ⇒ If it is only a short request that you can take care of in a couple of minutes, it may be worth while to do it now. In this case it is helpful to inform the person interrupting that you can only spare a few minutes and you intend to return to your studies immediately upon completion of the task. That should help keep you from getting side-tracked and over-involved.

This is by no means an exhaustive list of options. There must be hundreds of ways of dealing with interruptions. In fact, entire books have been written on the subject. If you find yourself falling victim to constant interruptions don't give up hope. Just keep trying different approaches until you find a few that work for you. The payoffs over the course of your life will astound you.

## Conclusion

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At the beginning of your grand tour of time we asked you four questions, and throughout this handout you have begun to answer them. Beginning with the assumption that you need to take responsibility for your time use, the first question, **Have you set your goals?** can be summed up with the idea that that one of the most important things you can do is to know what your goals are. Now that you have thought about goals, the second question, **What is your time perspective?** clarifies how important it is to decide to do activities that lead toward your goals rather than away from them. The third question was **What sort of planning is involved?** You learned how to develop and use a system of structuring your chosen activities in time with the weekly and monthly planners and the weekly objectives list. Finally we asked **Have you ever had a time shift?** Here you learned that as you employ your new-found strategies, it will be important to you to keep your mind open to evaluating your time management system and to making changes on an ongoing and gradual basis to improve your results.

What you have probably discovered is that you are ready to take yourself on you own grand tour of time, and that to do so you will need to go through the steps of time management again and again. All the while you will improve your system, and all the while you will move toward the achievement of your goals.

## Answer to Pareto's Priority Puzzler

- ⇒ 50? - no
- ⇒ 80? - Hah! You've got to be kidding right? If students spent 80% of their time doing effective and important things do you think we would be sitting here right now talking about time management?
- ⇒ 60? - no
- ⇒ 40? - Not quite! But give it another try.
- ⇒ 10? - no
- ⇒ 20? - Yes! Scary isn't it? We spend roughly 20% of our time doing the things that are important to us. Do you know what that also means? It means we waste 80% of our time. Now maybe you have caught yourself wishing for more hours in the day. Certainly you wouldn't wish for more time so you could waste it. You would want to do something valuable with it. While modern science hasn't found a way to stretch the day beyond 24 hours, Pareto's principle teaches us that we can get these extra hours simply by stealing the time from wasteful activities. You will see this principle in action when we talk about planning and time tracking.

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