



TIME PRIORITIZATION FOR THE FIRST YEAR UNIVERSITY STUDENT

A MINI-COURSE

WORKBOOK

DS EDUCATION GROUP



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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Time prioritization and management have always been a primary concern for university students. Between classes, studying for exams, staying on top of assignments, writing papers, and attending office hours, there's so much you must do as a student. Add extracurriculars and social activities to the mix and time management becomes even more challenging.

As a first-year student, these new opportunities and responsibilities, while exciting, can be difficult to handle. This can further heighten your stress levels as you feel a complete lack of control over your schedule. The thing is, when you feel overwhelmed, you begin cutting back on basic needs in order to remedy more "urgent" tasks.

You try to double down on your studying sessions and to do that you feel compelled to sacrifice sleep, proper meals, and free time. Except, when you make these compromises, you wake up to even more dire consequences. You're more irritable, you lose focus, and your productivity suffers. *This is where proper time management can be really beneficial.*

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Recognize the importance of time prioritization.
- Understand how you spend your time.
- Discover the key principles of time prioritization and planning.
- Learn effective time prioritization strategies for a healthier life-study balance.
- Know how to deal with distractions to overcome procrastination.
- Practice effective time management skills.



WHY IS TIME MANAGEMENT IMPORTANT?

When you have good time management skills, not only are you able to accomplish more in shorter periods of time, but this also allows you to take more advantage of the free time you have. You're less stressed and as a result, you can fully invest yourself in the learning opportunities university provides you with.

Better prioritization also helps you make time for yourself and cultivate healthier habits that will serve you for life. In addition to that, catering to your needs and ensuring you get adequate food, sleep, and exercise will boost your focus, your productivity, and by extension your academic success.

Learning pertinent time management strategies is a vital part of university life. Your workload is bound to be demanding as a first-year student. Not only that but your days will often feel less structured compared to high school so it's very tempting (and easy) to let time slip away.



COMMON TIME MANAGEMENT MISTAKES

1) NOT HAVING A PLAN

Your list of assignments and deadlines does not count as a plan. This is a mistake many students make. They don't bother planning only to find out (when it's too late) that they have urgent assignments due in a few days or that they missed the opportunity to consult with their tutors or professors about a paper.

2) NOT SETTING GOALS

Goals are what provide us with a clear picture of what we hope to achieve and the steps we should take to get there. Without writing down your goals for each class, you won't be able to get the most out of what you're learning.

3) TRYING TO MULTITASK

In theory, the idea of multitasking is very enticing. Who wouldn't want to maximize the time they have and cross every item off their to-do list at the end of the day? However, in practice though your brain can only focus on one task at a time. Multitasking can drastically reduce your productivity, your efficiency, as well as your performance.

4) NOT TAKING BREAKS WHEN STUDYING

You can easily feel burned out if you study for hours without taking any breaks. Going for reasonable time blocks of learning can increase your energy and ability to focus. You also feel more refreshed so you can therefore better relate to what you are studying.

5) PROCRASTINATING

This is one of the main challenges that university students encounter. Procrastination is the act or habit of putting off or delaying something that usually requires immediate attention. It often stems from not knowing where to start but it can also be due to continuous exposure to outside distractions. The freedom that comes with being a university student can quickly turn into procrastination and panic-induced cramming sessions.



6) NOT KNOWING YOUR MOST PRODUCTIVE TIME

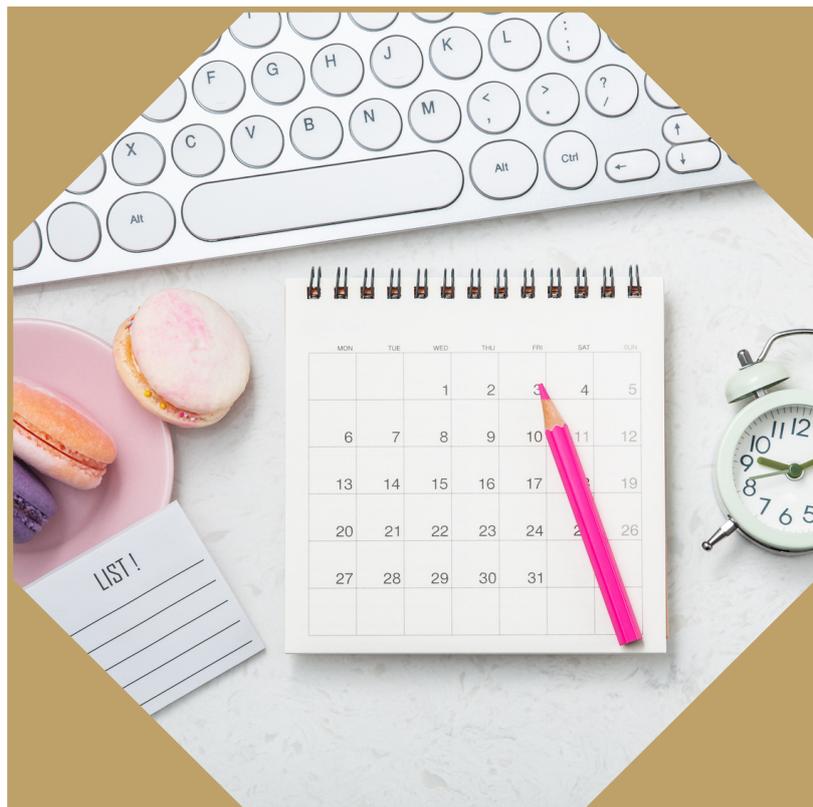
This is another common mistake that many students make. Each person has a different period of the day where they're most or least productive. This varies from one student to the next. So, planning your tasks should revolve around when you feel most energized.

7) KEEPING A MESSY STUDY AREA

You might not think that your studying space has some impact on your time management skills. But as it turns out, studying in a messy environment often reduces productivity. This is because cluttered spaces are full of distractions. Not only that but you also end up wasting more time looking for studying materials.

8) NOT KNOWING WHAT YOUR PRIORITIES ARE

Prioritizing is a key element in time management. Sometimes, you won't be able to afford to go over everything on your to-do list. That's completely fine if you concentrate your efforts on what matters the most. Not all tasks are equal in terms of benefits and rewards. So, knowing how to distinguish the important and urgent ones from less significant or impactful ones is vital.





HOW TO GET STARTED?

1) DETERMINE HOW YOU SPEND YOUR TIME

We all have different attitudes when it comes to how we spend our time and how we perceive time in general. Some people are always running around and stressing over how little time they have while others are much calmer and less concerned as they go about their day. If we come to think of it, everyone has a specific “time personality”. This generally shapes how they approach their days and how they typically schedule tasks. To develop better time prioritization practices, you need to start by figuring out how you currently use your time.



ACTIVITY: WHERE DOES MY TIME GO?



Try to account for how much time you spend on each of the activities in the table below on a weekly basis. For the activities that you do every day, make a daily estimate, and multiply it by seven.

Examine your results and determine how much time you have left out of the 168 hours available in a week. Are you surprised by the results? How satisfied are you with the amount of time you spend on these activities? Where do you think you’re spending too little or too much time?

Depending on your attitude towards time, you might overestimate or underestimate how much time you spend on each activity. For this exercise to be more successful, you must be realistic. The best way to know where your time goes is to record what you do on a particular day and log that information then add it all up. This can be an incredibly insightful initial step toward better time management practices.



| ACTIVITY | NUMBER OF HOURS PER WEEK |
|--|--------------------------|
| SLEEP | |
| MEALS (including cooking or prepping) | |
| PERSONAL HYGIENE | |
| CLASSES | |
| STUDYING, DOING HOMEWORK, COMPLETING ASSIGNMENTS | |
| TRANSPORTATION (going back and forth to campus, traveling back home on weekends, etc.) | |
| VIRTUAL SOCIALIZING (text messages, chat, etc.) | |
| SOCIALIZING IN PERSON | |
| WORK AND/OR VOLUNTEERING ACTIVITIES | |
| EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES | |
| ENTERTAINMENT AND LEISURE | |
| EXERCISE | |
| ERRANDS | |
| OTHER ACTIVITIES | |
| TOTAL TIME SPENT | <input type="text"/> |



WHAT YOU SHOULD DO TO BETTER MANAGE YOUR TIME AS A FIRST-YEAR UNIVERSITY STUDENT

1) LEARNING TO PRIORITIZE

Importance vs. Urgency

In his book, the **7 Habits of Highly Effective People**, *Steven Covey* explains the concept of urgency in juxtaposition with importance. So, in this case, when you have a task that you need to assess, you have to consider its significance as well as how time-sensitive it is. Covey delineates four quadrants that we can break prioritization into. He also recommends that we spend the majority of our time on quadrants 1 and 2.

QUADRANT 1: IMPORTANT AND URGENT

This category includes those tasks that carry a lot of weight and that you cannot get your mind off of. So, an assignment that is due the next day and that counts for a significant percentage of your final grade.

QUADRANT 2: IMPORTANT BUT NOT URGENT

The important but not necessarily urgent tasks are those long-term projects, presentations, and papers you need to plan ahead or study for in advance.

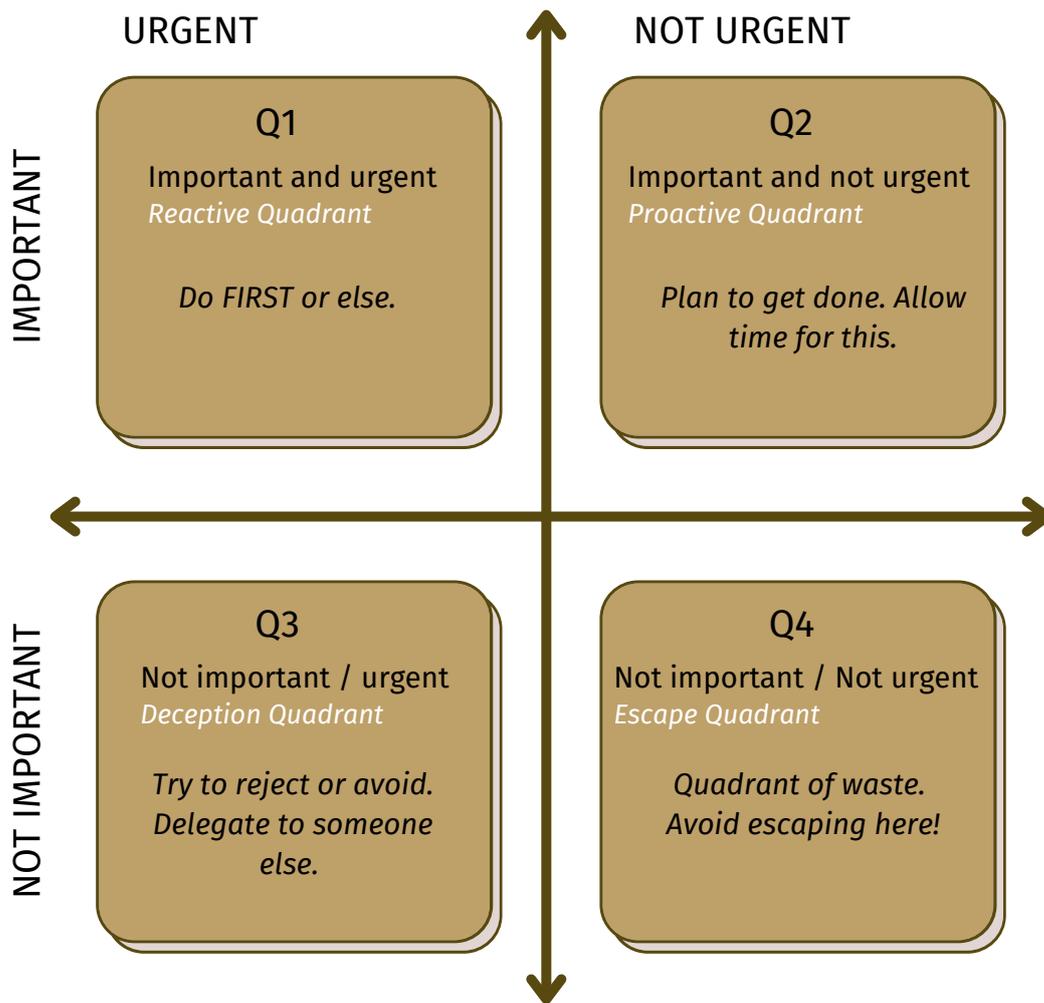
QUADRANT 3: NOT IMPORTANT BUT URGENT

The urgent but not important tasks can include events and activities that feel urgent because they have an expiration date. These could be special social gatherings like parties, concerts, conferences, etc.

QUADRANT 4: NOT IMPORTANT AND NOT URGENT

The activities that fall into this category are generally the ones you resort to when procrastinating, e.g., aimless scrolling through your social media feeds, cleaning, and reorganizing when you have a looming deadline, etc.

STEPHEN COVEYS TIME MANAGEMENT MATRIX:



The ABC Method

American author and expert on time management, *Alan Lakein* developed the ABC method to assign a priority status to a set of tasks, ranging from “A” to “B” to “C”.

STATUS "A" : MUST DO ITEMS

This consists of high-priority tasks and very important items that need to be addressed immediately like assignments that are due very soon or projects that are very high stakes.

STATUS "B" : SHOULD DO ITEMS

This consists of medium priority tasks that hold importance but are not as critical or time-sensitive as “A” status items. These include long-term projects, papers, presentations, reports, or exams.



STATUS "C" : NICE TO DO ITEMS

This consists of low-priority tasks that won't have negative consequences if left incomplete.

While three categories are not nearly sufficient to properly organize each single task on your to-do list, you can still use your own subcategories to make a more accurate assessment of each item. With each status group, you can use numbers to prioritize your responsibilities and assignments.

| | |
|-----------|---|
| A1 | Complete an assignment for a class due the next day. |
| A2 | Study the 3 last chapters for a test due at the end of the week. |
| B1 | Reach out to group project members to make an outline for a presentation. |
| B2 | Start researching your final paper. |
| C1 | Chat with friends. |
| C2 | Go to an outdoor yoga class. |

It's important to understand that some tasks can move from one category to another based on the context and circumstances. For instance, meditating or calling your parents can be both urgent and important if you have not been feeling your best mentally.

Ideally, you should find yourself more in Status B and Quadrant 2 than in Status A and Quadrant 1 tasks. When all your time is spent trying to complete urgent tasks within a limited time frame, you're basically existing in crisis mode. As a result, you are constantly stressed out and overwhelmed. When you start important tasks ahead of time, you're able to work more effectively and manage the time you have more successfully.



After you categorize your tasks, it's time to start prioritizing. You can do that following this process.

- Start with the hardest task on your list.
- Move on to the more urgent ones.
- Work on the assignments that yield a higher percentage of your grade.
- Prioritize the tasks that align with your goals and objectives.
- Take strategic breaks and reward yourself for your efforts.

CREATING YOUR TO-DO LIST

The goal of creating a to-do list is to help you achieve your goals all while reducing stress and feeling more confident in your abilities to get things done. A good to-do list will also allow you to organize your priorities and avoid forgetting important things. To get started, you can use whatever tools you have access to, whether it be an app, a document, a personal notebook, or sticky notes.

Make sure you have all your coursework deadlines and student calendar on deck. Once you're ready, begin listing every task you can think of, from readings, assignments, projects, and administrative tasks to errands, chores, events, and activities. Your list may seem too long and cumbersome but don't worry about that for now.

After you write everything down, it's time to start breaking those large tasks into smaller, more specific, and more manageable ones. So, if you have a paper you need to write, you can start by doing research. Your next task would be determining the academic papers and books you will rely on for references, then you can start compiling notes and relevant quotes before you move on to crafting your first draft.

To make your to-do list more dynamic, ensure that all the tasks on your list start with a verb and include the specific deadline or the time frame you need to complete them. At the end of each week, take 20 to 30 minutes to review your list for the upcoming week. See what tasks need to be accomplished and what you need to add to your list. You can also do this at the end of each day to help you further develop your prioritization skills.



ACTIVITY: YOUR WEEKLY TO-DO LIST



Create your weekly to-do list using the table below and make sure to include an estimate for how much time each task will require you to complete.

| | High Priority | Medium Priority | Low Priority |
|-----------|---------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Monday | | | |
| Tuesday | | | |
| Wednesday | | | |
| Thursday | | | |
| Friday | | | |
| Saturday | | | |
| Sunday | | | |



CREATE A TIME-EFFICIENT ROUTINE

Your high school routine was pretty straightforward. You had a set amount of time for classes, extracurriculars, and homework every day. On the other hand, your university schedule is drastically different. You have a few classes here and there and different time slots for other activities that vary on a daily basis.

This is why creating a routine is essential. Not only will that allow you to reduce the uncertainty of when and how you will fit in your study time and homework on top of attending lectures, but it also helps you get adjusted to university life more quickly.

BALANCE YOUR COMMITMENTS

University comes with a plethora of benefits and opportunities, from meeting new people and making connections to networking and preparing yourself for the professional world. With many organizations and clubs to join, the possibilities are truly endless. With that said, don't make the mistake of spreading yourself too thin in an attempt to bolster your resume.

This will only make it that much more difficult to be fully involved in a particular engagement or activity. Picking a few commitments that you will be able to manage with everything in your student life will be much more beneficial in the long run.

STAY FOCUSED ON YOUR GOALS

It's very easy to get lost in what everyone else is doing or focusing on at a given time in university. This is especially true when you're new to university life and have trouble navigating all the different activities and responsibilities. As a result, you may lose sight of the bigger picture and end up pursuing commitments that do not serve you or your goals.

Developing better time management skills starts with focusing on what you seek to accomplish. You must always keep your purpose(s) in front of you because that's what gives you the motivation and desire to persist even or particularly when you're going through difficult times.



Think about what you strive to achieve by learning the materials you're provided with, attending the lectures, and completing the assignments. Don't just blindly go through the courses for the mere objective of passing the semester. Frame these activities in terms of how they may apply to real-life professions, how they will help you advance your professional path, and how they can contribute to your personal growth and improvement.

MANAGE YOUR TIME WITH PERSISTENCE

Managing your time with persistence consists of examining your to-do list with a focus on your short-term and long-term goals and dreams. If you don't make a conscious effort of focusing and re-focusing on the projects you must complete, you won't be able to get anything done. No assignment, schoolwork, or project comes without its set of difficulties, obstacles, and challenges. If you are not persistent in your efforts and if you're not determined to do your best, then you simply won't be able to complete all the important items on your to-do list. Persistence and consistency are what allow you to persevere despite opposition and adversity. These are qualities that allow you to silence those excuses and limiting beliefs so you can maintain that forward momentum that will carry you to your goals and dreams. When you are persistent, only then can you conquer procrastination and eliminate all distractions.





UNIVERSITY SUCCESS - SEMESTER PLANNING

Get all the relevant information you have regarding exams, university events, and due dates in a word document. This will help you determine which weeks are busier and which ones are slower in terms of activities so you can alter your workload accordingly.

STEP #1:

Print the syllabus for each course you are enrolled in.

STEP #2:

Create a personalized calendar for the current semester and make sure to include everything from courses and assignments to social commitments and downtime.

STEP #3:

Highlight important test and assignment due dates so you can plan ahead.

STEP #4:

Create sub-tasks and milestones for big projects.

STEP #5:

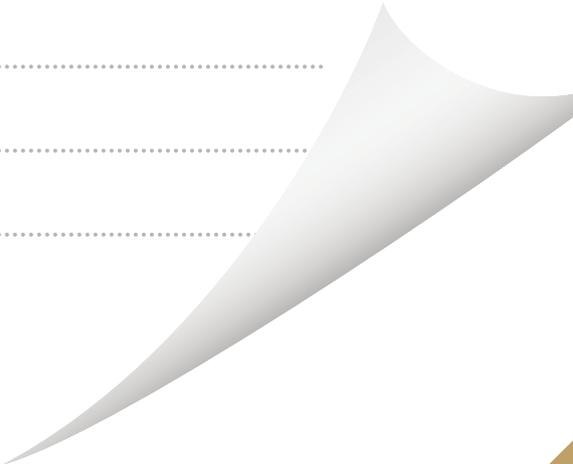
Plan your weeks according to the personal, professional, and academic commitments you have. Make sure you account for rest and recuperation or other stress-management strategies to avoid feeling overwhelmed on busier days and weeks.





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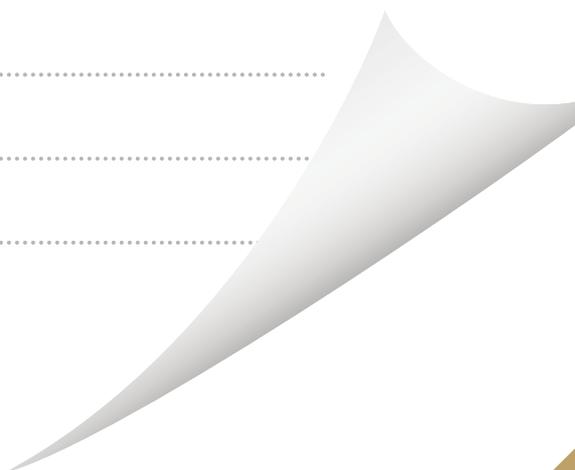
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CONSULT WITH DS EDUCATION GROUP

HELLO,

I am *Amanda Da Silva*, Founder, and CEO of **D.S. Education Group**. I have been an educator and consultant for over 20 years. I am on a mission to create energy and excitement around lifelong learning. My passion is to guide young students like you to a bright future by teaching you how to create compelling admissions applications to gain admission to your chosen universities. I also help you determine excellent career choices that match with your passions and goals.



As your coach and consultant, it is my responsibility to inspire and hold you accountable to "take action" to reach your goals. If you're looking for someone who cares about you and your successes, is competent and knowledgeable, and will consistently work with you to reach the results you so seek, please do not hesitate to book a **FREE Discovery Call with me TODAY.**

I look forward to working with YOU!

xox
Amanda Da Silva

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WWW.DSEEDUCATIONGROUP.COM



amanda@dseducationgroup.com