



Resources for Online Learners

Managing Your Time

The Time Dilemma

Do you often find yourself distressed by the sense that you never have enough time to do the things you have to do, let alone the things you want to do? Where on earth will you find the time for the new academic responsibilities you're adding to your already overloaded schedule?



While we can't add more hours to your day, we can recommend some strategies for managing your time more effectively. But first, let's find out what you already know about time management. Which of the following statements are true?

- Most of our problems could be resolved if we only had more time.
- We can squeeze more activities into our schedule if we really want to.
- Our lives are largely controlled by time.
- People are naturally disorganized, and, as a result, will always experience time-related stress.

If you thought that any of these statements were true, you have bought into some of the common myths about time. The truth is, these beliefs must be replaced with the attitude that time is a non-renewable resource, a resource that is under your control.

Strategies for Managing Your Time and Your Life

If your management of time is less than ideal, you should ask yourself whether you engage in any of the following:

1. *Without your awareness, you are following rules about your time use which restrict you and make you feel that you are "not in charge of your time."* This may involve assumptions and beliefs about:
 - the way things are done
 - who does these things
 - when things are done
 - what must be done



When you find yourself feeling stressed by the use of your time, stop and ask yourself, *Why am I doing this now?* The answer may help you to become more aware of unnecessary limitations on your time use, and help you substitute more reasonable and satisfying rules.

2. *You are not really deciding what deserves your time.* If you operate on the "squeeze-it-in" principle, you are not making choices about how to use your time. Deciding on priorities in your life is often difficult and sometimes painful, but it

must be confronted. You may discover in the process that you engage in some low-priority time wasters that are quite painless to eliminate.

3. *You cannot let go of unnecessary control.* Can you delegate? You may be using the “squeeze-it-in” principle to avoid delegating--you convince yourself that you can do it better and easier. Are you caught up in this “superman” or “super-woman trap,” as so many others are?



4. *You are not assertive about your time.* Do you let your time be invaded too easily? While the ability to be flexible is sometimes useful, it can deprive you of the time you need to complete your tasks. Do you think about what deserves your time, or do you respond to whoever needs you? Next time, don't just respond, *decide*. There are times when you should not be disturbed. Begin to identify your “soft spots”--the comments and reactions from colleagues and family that make you feel guilty and selfish for being unavailable.
5. *You are a perfectionist.* This is a common source of time misuse, and the most frequent reason for procrastination. Although there are many reasons for perfectionism, it often has its roots in assumptions about how certain things must be done.

Tips for Scheduling Your Time

The following are some suggestions for making room in your schedule for the additional study time you need to complete your program of study.

1. *Contrast activities.* If you spend two hours studying, follow with some kind of physical activity.
2. *Build in breaks.* A 50-minute hour followed by a 10-minute break gives new ideas a chance to “sink in.” Breaks can also be used to reward your successes.
3. *Follow your natural energy rhythms.* If you are most alert at 7:00 PM, use that time to study, not to watch TV or do the laundry.
4. *Use a Weekly Schedule to Plan your use of Time.*
5. *Make use of small chunks of time.* That 15-minute coffee break may give you a chance to review your notes or answer a question for an assignment. Make a list of 10-minute tasks in advance so that you can reduce wasted decision time.
6. *Handle paperwork only once.*

Additional Resources

Axelrod, A. & Holtje, J. (1997). *201 ways to manage your time better*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Douglass, M. E. (1998). *ABC time tips*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Lakein, A. (1998). *Give me a moment and I'll change your life : Tools for moment management*. Kansas City, MO: Andrews McMeel Publishing.

Lakein, A. (1996). *How to get control of your time and your life*. New American Library.

Leboeuf, M. (1993). *Working smart: How to accomplish more in half the time*. New York: Warner Books

MacKenzie, R.A. (1997). *The time trap*. New York: AMACOM.

[23 Time Management Techniques \(http://www.csbsju.edu/academicadvising/help/23tmt.html\)](http://www.csbsju.edu/academicadvising/help/23tmt.html)

[Time Management Tips \(http://www.gmu.edu/gmu/personal/time.html\)](http://www.gmu.edu/gmu/personal/time.html)