Learning and Academic Skills Center
104 Eddy Hall
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A CHECKLIST OF TIME USE PROBLEMS

If you are anything like a typical college student, you've had occasional difficulty in time management. In fact, the typical college routine of term paper deadlines, Friday lab quizzes, and specified testing hours almost demands procrastination. If you were to graph the actual amount of time you spend studying, you would probably find a rapid increase just before each deadline. College students must learn quickly to meet time commitments in order to survive in the system. Yet many find cramming or working at the last minute painful, even guilt-producing. They make resolutions to spread out their work - to study on a regular schedule "next term". But somehow they fail to meet their own objectives and end up in that old "midnight oil" predicament.

Here is a checklist of questions, facts, and suggestions about time use. It will give you some leads, hints, and directions that really help you in carrying through your resolve to manage study time better. To get the full effect, record your answer to each question. Then read the suggestions and ask yourself how it applies to YOU.

1. How long does it take you to get warmed up for study? _____ minutes

Do you lose time in getting started? Many students have problems in getting down to the books. They get discouraged if they can't flop down in a chair and start thinking instantly. Unfortunately, it seems that some activities require greater "warm-up" than others. For example, studying a foreign language - learning vocabulary, translating and working exercises - may require more warm-up time than reading through a history chapter. It may take even longer to get warmed up to writing an essay. When you plan study time, don't forget to figure in that warm-up time.

2. What time of the day do you study best?
Morning ____ Midday ____ Evening ____

When are you most effective and most alert? When do you read fastest? When is your enthusiasm highest? Keep a brief diary to find out. Then plan accordingly. Some students function better in the wee hours, while others are actually more effective shortly after dinner. Forcing yourself to study late at night if you are a daybird type leads to fatigue and wheel-spinning. Setting unreasonable goals like, "I'll get up at 6:30 a.m. on Saturday and start studying" makes for difficulties unless you really can stick to it. Be realistic in selecting your times to study.

3. Do you usually plan what to study first? Yes ____ No ____

Do you lose time through disorganization? Are you uncertain as to what you're going to accomplish in your study period? Do you try to handle too many kinds of activities, or cover too many different problems in one evening? Do you grab the first book that is handy rather than systematically planning what you want to accomplish and what courses you should study for openers? Often, it is desirable to study the most difficult or boring course first. Then, after you've completed your first job, reward yourself by turning to the one you

find more enjoyable. If you like reading the newspaper, use that as a reward after you've completed the toughest chemistry problems or the difficult chapter on genetics.

4. Do you skim a book before you study?
Always ____ Occasionally ____ Never ____

Do you screen your reading materials to weed out unnecessary or unproductive matter? Many students, faced with long reading lists, start plodding through book #1, finish two out of six books, and feel guilty that they have not managed to get through the others. They just give up and trust to luck on the exams. Developing effective skimming and scanning techniques would enable them to get the major concepts from all of the books. If you can skim for main ideas and later review them carefully and in depth, you will be more effective and retain more. Practice rapid reading techniques to improve your speed and comprehension. Put pressure on yourself. You will get more ideas in less time.

5. What do you usually do when you hit a study barrier?
Keep working ____ Change jobs ____

Do you ever work so long on a problem that you're mentally wheel-spinning, getting nowhere? Maybe you get tense, even panicky, when the answer does not come. If you are fatigued, it is better to change to some other activity rather than continue forcing yourself-like whipping a tired horse-to keep going. If you're stuck on a problem, change activities and then return to the problem later. You will find you can usually solve it more quickly and thus manage your time better.

6. Do you make outlines for all your writing? Yes ____ No ____

To get more writing done in the time available, do you make some sample outlines for reports or term papers? When answering essay questions, do you take a few minutes to jot down the major points you are going to cover? Do you make more detailed outlines for your major writing the thesis you are attempting to prove? Is your major concept clearly in mind before you start writing? Do you get to the point simply and directly? Do you get the message?

7. Describe the last change you made to reduce paperwork but increase information.

_____

_____

Do you eliminate work done out of habit, work which no longer serves any useful purpose? For example, copying from the textbook to your notebook all major terms or concepts and then retyping all class notes may take too much of your time. Is it really necessary? Can you streamline your studying by cutting out non-essentials? Can you combine records, for example, in your notebook? Leave every other page blank so that you can make notes from your text reading to fill in the gaps or expand on information points.

8. Do you stick to study priorities once you set them up?
Yes ____ No ____

Do you lose time through diversion? Do you sacrifice prime working time for personal gains? Or do you carefully set priorities in budgeting your time? O.K., so you need to do your laundry. But do you sue the prime morning hours when you are feeling freshest to do the wash? Or do you go to the laundromat after classes between 4 and 5 p.m. when you're likely to be too pooped for anything constructive? Budget your time by priorities. Screen them ruthlessly.

Apply standards of value. Set priorities and accomplish the important things first. Then work in the significant details but don't spend the major part of your time on irrelevancies.

Would you like some more help setting up a reasonable time schedule?
Sure, why not? ____ I'm not really interested in being a machine ____

If you checked the second choice--so long, see you. But if you checked the first, contact a counselor in the Learning and Academic Skills Center. How? The address is 104 Eddy Hall (Minneapolis campus) or call 624-7546.

Shamelessly adapted from an original idea by Dr. Martha Maxwell, University of California, Berkely.