

TIME MANAGEMENT FOR LONG-TERM PROJECTS

With lectures, work, and competing academic assignments, it may seem difficult to manage long-term projects. Sometimes just thinking about a project can cause stress overload. However, by managing your commitments appropriately, you'll be able to relax, focus, and ultimately be motivated to complete the project.

Academic success depends upon [your] ability to find and synthesize a large volume of information, judge its relevance, and incorporate it into [your] academic experiences.~ John Law

Steps Toward Completing a Project

1. **Clarify** the main goals and the desired outcomes of your project. This should answer the question “why?” Many times there are thoughts about a project, but no clear sense of purpose. With this step, your project will become more focused and specific. Try rereading instructions and setting project priorities. This will help identify misunderstandings and give yourself a unique perspective as you approach the project.
2. **Gather** all the concerns you have about the project and write them down. Don't try to hold them in your memory. Now, process these thoughts. Look at each item and ask yourself if there's any action that needs to be taken. Writing your thoughts down helps you work with them. The thoughts are out of your head and off your mind, relieving the stress related to the assignment.
3. **Brainstorm** and **Identify** the action steps needed to complete your project. These steps should be physical actions that will move you forward through the assignment. Research may be involved in this step. Don't worry about any gaps between actions – simply focus on planning an overall strategy. You can fine tune the action steps later.
4. **Organize** and **Review** the results from the previous steps. Figure out the order of completion. Which task comes first; which task follows? Some of these categories could be: *ongoing, urgent, short-term, and long-term*. You may need to perform this step daily to keep you current with changing project status.
5. **Start** – Get to work!

Getting Started

- Don't be afraid to start; create a positive attitude towards the project.
- Brush up on any necessary skills.
- Set up an area where you can get work accomplished.
- Gather the materials and equipment you will need.
- If research is required, compile and document your resources.

Work Schedule

Allocate blocks of time in your weekly schedule to work on the project. Be careful when you choose a time to work based on what fits you in terms of preference and attentiveness.

- *Time of Day* – When is your best time to work? Mornings? Evenings?
- *Duration* – How long can you work? (2-3 hours is often best.) Need a break in between?
- *Location* – Where are you most productive? Having several good locations is smart.

Deadlines

As you set aside blocks of time, determine realistic sub-deadlines for each part of the project. Establishing personal deadlines helps reduce procrastination and provides useful structure. Decide how much time each deadline requires. Some examples of internal deadlines:

- Conceptual Idea (two days)
- Rough Draft (two weeks)
- Revision / Editing (two weeks)
- Final Draft (one week)
- Final Polishing (two days)

Common Problems

- Lack of Sleep
- Not honoring the internal deadlines that you've set
- Disorganized or Misfiled Information
- Inability to focus; easily distracted

Early on, pinpoint typical problems that will impede the project; find ways to circumvent them.

Possible Distractions (this list is actually endless)

- Music / Computer Games
- Friends dropping by
- Laptop / Internet Access
- Television / Facebook (FB)
- Extended Breaks / Food
- Phone Calls / Texting
- Cluttered Work Space
- People talking / background noise

Anticipate, reduce or even eliminate distractions because they are disruptive to your effort.

Bibliography

Allen, David. "Art of Getting Things Done." *Getting Things Done: the Art of Stress-free Productivity*. New York: Penguin, 2003. Print.

"For College Students Time Management is Biggest Research Issue, says ProQuest Study: Quality content has the edge, but convenience can trump all." *PR Newswire* 5 November 2007 ProQuest Newsstand, ProQuest. Web. 11 February 2011.

Herzlich, Jamie. "Planning key in managing time." *Chicago Tribune* 5 May 2008, Chicago Tribune, ProQuest. Web. 11 February 2011.

Lindsey, Mark. "Comments on "Time Management for Architects and Designers: Challenges and Remedies", by Thorbjørn Mann (part 1 & 2)." Review. Web log post. *Note To Self*. 26 December 2008. Web. 12 January 2011. <<http://mark.lindsey.name/2008/12/comments-on-time-management-for.html>>.

"Manage Your Time Wisely to Accomplish More." *Canada NewsWire* , 4 December 2000 ProQuest Newsstand, ProQuest. Web. 11 February 2011.

Mann, Merlin. "Getting Started with 'Getting Things Done'" | 43 Folders." *43 Folders | Time, Attention, and Creative Work*. 8 September 2004. Web. 22 February 2011. <<http://www.43folders.com/2004/09/08/getting-started-with-getting-things-done>>.