

Tutor Program Tip - Get Organized: Part 1

No matter what time of the semester, it is never too late to get organized. Getting organized and planning a schedule for the semester is part of being a successful college student. Building self-management skills are not only essential for college, but are important for life as well. In order to develop these skills, it may helpful to know that while high school students are in class for almost 35 hours a week, college students are in class for only 12-15 hours *per week* plus lab time. Most work must be completed outside of class. Self/Time-management skills not only reduce stress but also are highly marketable skills. Developing these skills now will pay off later.

Based on your class schedule, make out a daily/weekly schedule of your class, work, and extracurricular activities? Along with scheduled classes, work, etc., you should schedule study time too.

When making your schedule, remember to include:

- a) Classes
- b) Work shifts, practice times, extracurricular meetings
- c) Personal activities like exercising, commuting time, and family matters
- d) Study time

Here are a few things to keep in mind when blocking out study time:

For every hour spent in class, two to three hours should be dedicated to studying, depending on the difficulty of the course. If taking 15 credit hours, an additional 30-45 hours per week is needed for studying. If time is effectively used between classes, there will be plenty of remaining time for other responsibilities.

Study in 20-30 minute blocks, take a 5-10 minute break and then go back to studying. This allows information to transfer from short-term memory to long-term memory. Breaking large assignments down into smaller, more manageable units will help you to stay on task and cause less frustration.

Schedule study times when you are the most alert. Reading while lying down is not recommended. You can do laundry and eat when half-asleep, but study while you are awake.

Use time between classes effectively. Review notes from the previous lecture while the information is still fresh. Preview chapters prior to the next lecture to help follow along with the professor and make it easier to take notes. Attempt homework problems as soon as possible after class to help retain the methods the instructor followed during class. Use flashcards to review vocabulary, formulas, and other terms to reinforce learning.

It takes 5-7 times of reviewing material before it can be learned. That does not necessarily mean 5-7 hours of study for each concept; it means working with the material 5-7 times is needed for repetition and reinforcement purposes. In addition, the longer time in between being introduced to new material and actually doing something with it (reviewing notes, creating questions, making a study guide, comparing notes to the textbook, teaching someone else, etc.) the more information or learning is lost. Up to 70% of new information is lost if it is not reinforced within 24 hours.

Avoid studying similar subjects back-to-back. Studying psychology and sociology right after each other may lead to confusion of concepts or terms.

Tackle difficult subjects first. Most students will complete assignments for the subjects they like the most, first. However, leaving the assignments that you enjoy the most until late in the day is better as most students will be able to complete the assignments no matter how tired they are. If you leave the dreaded assignments until very late in the evening (or early morning) you may find that you don't do them at all.

Schedule study time to match the teaching format of the course. You will need to study material thoroughly before a discussion-oriented class so that you will be prepared to participate. For a lecture-oriented class, read the associated material well enough to be able to ask questions for clarification and note-taking purposes.

Creating a schedule that includes study time will help you stay more organized and is beneficial because – if you follow the schedule – you can be more productive and work with material from each course, every day.