Tips for Success: Effective Time Management

As many of you experienced over the last few weeks, the academic, co-curricular, and social demands of college life can be a lot to juggle! Here are some tips to help you manage your time as we approach the second half of the semester.

1. **Put All Deadlines and Project Start Dates for the Rest of the Semester in Your Calendar.**
   One of the biggest time management tricks is simply to ensure that you have a complete sense of what needs your attention any given day, week, month, and semester. Sit down with all of your syllabi, group and organization schedules, etc. Add all deadlines for major projects, daily homework assignments, and important events to your calendar (in your Draft Book, your planner, or your Google calendar). You’ll quickly see which weeks are very busy and which offer you more free time. Using that information, **start planning times to begin papers, projects, and exam study.** Put those dates in your calendar as if they were due on that day: “write rough draft,” “begin researching sociology topic,” etc. This type of scheduling helps ensure that you aren’t trying to write a major paper the same week you are volunteered to participate in a major event for your student group or trying to schedule group meetings while studying for your Calculus exam.

2. **Take 20 Minutes to Plan Your Tasks Each Day.** Both Lifehack and Entrepreneur suggest that you give yourself a few minutes to plan out your day, either the night before or to kick-off the morning. Look over the calendar that you’ve prepared above. Make sure you know what is happening today, tomorrow, and two days from now. Make decisions about which tasks are most important and what time you can devote to completing those activities.

3. **Set Aside Dedicated Chunks of Time and Stick To Them.** A lot of time management advice involves giving yourself distinct chunks of time for tasks. While you will have to be somewhat flexible, it helps to know that you are going to give two hours to studying or work on your research paper for an hour every day. Blocking out your time helps you cope more productively with anxiety/perfectionism and motivation issues.
   a. **Perfectionism/Anxiety:** Almost every assignment can expand to fill the time you give it. You can easily spend so much time tweaking a paper, doing reading for your research paper, or getting the design of your Power Point *just right* that you end up cutting into time that you need to complete the work of your other classes. Block out your time to ensure that you complete all the work you need to get done, not only the assignments that you are most worried about or in which you are invested.
   b. **Motivation:** The thought of sitting down for an unknown amount of time to write a paper or study can be intimidating and difficult to do, especially when you could also hang out with friends, do a different (less important or necessary) assignment, or catch up on your favorite television program. It is much easier to tell yourself that you are going to focus for one hour on the task you don’t want to do; it gives you an end goal and a chance to build in a reward system. One hour of paper writing = 30 minutes of relaxation time, etc.

4. **Break Large Projects into Smaller Activities.** Speaking of intimidating, knowing that you have to complete a large project can really drag down your motivation levels. Rather than trying to do something huge like writing a ten-page research paper, divide your big projects into smaller components. Instead of “write English essay,” your to-do list can have a series of do-able tasks: re-read the assignment sheet, re-read class notes, brainstorm ideas, write a thesis statement, re-read passages to find quotes and evidence, re-write thesis statement, outline paper, etc. Plus, you feel more accomplished when you can cross these items off of your list!
5. **Just Say No.** It’s really hard, but sometimes you simply have to say no. That means saying no both to pleasurable activities (hanging out with friends) *and* to more pressing obligations or responsibilities. Sometimes, in order to complete your group project, you have to be content with skimming the highlights of the article you are expected to read for your history class. This is not to advocate being irresponsible with your classwork; rather, it is suggesting that you prioritize big projects while still completing the minimum necessary for you to be an engaged student with your day-to-day work. Make sure you are still completing the basics, however! Don’t let yourself get into a cycle where you are always behind.

6. **Schedule Relaxation Time.** Give yourself a break! That means both tiny breaks while working to improve focus, as well as larger periods of time to put aside your work, rest, and rejuvenate.

There are so many wonderful online resources filled with time management advice. Check out more time management ideas from [US News & World Report](https://www.usnews.com), [Entrepreneur](https://www.entrepreneur.com), [Lifehack](https://www.lifehack.org), and more!