

The LSS 'How to' Series



A3

Time management tips

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Most students will find that managing their time at college is very different than it was at secondary school or even at their jobs. When you're given so much independence to accomplish your assignments and other responsibilities, it can seem overwhelming.

The key to reducing this stress, and making your tasks manageable, is **planning**. This guide will help you plan your time with a minimum of stress and worry. Keep these tips in mind, and it will be a lot easier to:

- set achievable goals;
- think about the steps you need to take; and
- be prepared for any problems or setbacks.

With a bit of planning, and an understanding of common problems and how to avoid them, you'll find time management a whole lot easier.

Time Management Tips

The human brain has a lot of built-in problems when it comes to time management. Here are some tips on how to account for them:

- **Choose goals intelligently.** It can be very easy to get overwhelmed when your goal is too broad. Use the SMART system to make sure your goals are achievable.
- **Break the task down into parts.** If your goal is 'write a thesis,' then it will be difficult to decide what to do in a single specific session. Breaking your goals down will help. There's nothing wrong with one of your goals for the day being to write a single important sentence!
- **Include extra time.** It's a widespread problem that we tend to be bad at predicting what can go wrong. The solution is to assume that *everything* will go wrong. When scheduling deadlines, plan for each task to take a bit longer than you think it actually will. That way, when something unexpected comes up, you'll be prepared.
- **Use time wisely.** One hour of focused, serious work is better than eight hours of just partly paying attention. When you're working, work; when you're relaxing, relax. If you make a plan, stick to it.
- **Know yourself.** Do you work better in the morning or in the evening? Do you prefer one long session or many short sessions with breaks in between? Are you better off planning to complete a specific task and stop when it's finished, or spending a certain amount of time working and stopping when the time is up? Knowing your own strengths and weaknesses will save you a lot of stress and frustration.

Time Management Tips

SMART goal planning

Specific: What **exactly** do I want to accomplish?

Measured: What **exactly** is my set goal and how will I know I have achieved it?

Achievable: Is it **realistic** to think that I can get this done in the timeframe I've set?

Relevant: How does this task **fit in** with my overall goal?

Timed: Roughly **how long** do I estimate it will take?