Effective Time Management

Learning effective time management may be difficult, but is certainly not impossible. It does take planning, organization, and accountability. The following keys to success will help you to think about the ways you can effectively manage your time in order to meet your goals.

Keys to Success
In order to help you **effectively manage your time**, follow these keys to success:

**Write down your goals.** It’s difficult to manage your time if you don’t know what you’re aiming to do. Create SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, timely) goals. Make sure you have short term SMART goals (one to six months) and long-term SMART goals (more than six months).

**Use your tech!** We often forget that technology can be used to help us organize and plan our time (not simply waste it!). Use calendar features with reminders to help organize your busy schedule. Build in alerts and alarms for projects and due dates. Download apps that lock you out of your social media.

**Know what you need.** In college, most of your time management challenges will come in the form of due dates. Before the term starts, reach out to your faculty member and ask about what they are envisioning for the course. They may send you an advanced version of the reading list, assignments, and/or syllabus. These documents will help you to plan ahead.

**Prioritize tasks.** Planning your day can help you accomplish more. Determine your “high, medium, and low” priorities for the day or week. Write a to-do list with deadlines for each item and list them according to your “high, medium, and low” priority ranks.

**Organize your time.** It’s important to find a system (digital or paper) that works for you and that you can reference when you need it. You then need to be honest about the way you use your time and the commitments you have. Use your goals and priorities to guide the way you tackle tasks and complete steps.

**Say “no.”** It may be difficult to say “no” to people and activities that you like to do, but if you want to accomplish your goals, you need to safeguard your time. Let people know about your schedule ahead of time, so that you can find a time that works for you. Avoid taking on additional work that doesn’t move you closer to your goals.

**Reward yourself.** When you finish a task, complete a step towards a goal, or complete the goal itself, recognize your accomplishment. If you enjoy physical activity, go for a longer run or take a hike. If you enjoy watching media, set aside a few hours to watch a movie you’ve been wanting to see or play a new video game. By delaying these favorite things until you complete a task, you will hold yourself accountable and incentivize yourself to keep going.

Adapted from Central Penn College Keys to Success handout.