



# Counselling & Learning Support

North Vancouver Campus

## Student Success Workshops

# Time Management



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## Time Management

As a student, the ability to manage your time will be an important ingredient in determining your success in university. Time management skills are important for several reasons. They help you to meet your academic and personal goals; they help you maintain a balance between school, work and family; and they help you use your valuable time effectively and efficiently.

Effective time management involves using a variety of time management tools. These tools include:

- A **Term Calendar** that provides an overview of all your academic and personal deadlines for the semester.
- A **Weekly Time Plan** that provides you with a study plan for the week.
- A **Daily Planner** that helps you plan how to most effectively use your time each day.
- A **Project Outline** that helps you to start, organize and finish large projects and assignments.

### The Term Calendar

The purpose of creating a Term Calendar is to provide you with an easy to read overview of all the important academic and personal deadlines you have to meet over the course of the semester. This helps you to know what is coming up, so you can plan your study time and get assignments completed on time. You can record up-coming events using any one of the following tools:

1. **A Term Calendar**

A copy of a term calendar is at the back of this handout. This type of planner enables you to record your important dates and deadlines on a single, double-sided sheet of paper. This can be kept at the front of a binder for quick reference.

2. **A Month-By-Month Calendar**

This is a typical monthly calendar, like the ones they give out at the bank, which gives you a month at a glance. This provides you with more space to write your deadlines in than the Term Calendar but is not so compact.

3. **A Large, Laminated Wall Calendar**

These can be purchased at the university bookstore or any large stationary store. These give you four months at a glance and can be re-used from semester to semester. They are well worth the money.

4. **A Student Planner**

Many student planners these days include a monthly planning sheet at the start of each month in addition to the daily planning sheets. When buying a planner, look through a number of them to find the planner that best meets your needs.

## Creating an Effective Term Calendar

1. Choose the type of term calendar that will work best for you
2. Record all statutory holidays for the semester
3. Record important university dates, such as, last day to withdraw from a course; last day to pay your fees, last day to apply for your program of choice etc. This information is in the front of the university calendar.
4. Look carefully at each of your course outlines and record all listed due dates for major quizzes, exams, assignments, term-papers, projects, etc.
5. If due dates are not listed, add them to your calendar as soon as they are announced (ask your instructor if you are particularly concerned).
6. Record self-imposed start dates and deadlines for long-term projects. Determine what steps are involved in the project and set a deadline for the completion of each step.
7. Record any important social engagements or personal events.
8. Keep your calendar in a visible place, so you can clearly see and plan for up-coming events. This prevents any nasty surprises or things piling up on you.
9. Use different colors on your calendar for emphasis, to distinguish one class from another, or to distinguish your personal dates from your academic dates.

## The Weekly Time Plan

The purpose of a weekly time plan is to help you plan how you are going to use your time during the week to meet the up-coming academic and personal deadlines recorded on your Term Calendar.

Weekly plans can be a sheet you make up on the computer or a store-bought product. A sample weekly time plan is provided at the end of the handout for you to photocopy and use if you wish.

## Creating an Effective Weekly Time Plan

1. Start by making a master weekly plan on which you only record those fixed weekly activities that will remain the same for the whole semester. These typically include your class times, working hours (if they are fixed), practice times if you are on a sports team, exercise classes, etc. Add anything else such as travel time and meal times to the schedule that occur at a fairly consistent time every week.
2. Make one copy of your Master Weekly Plan for every week of the semester including the exam weeks. Most semesters are 15 weeks long.
3. Figure out, on average, how much study time per week you need to put in to complete all your independent study tasks. On average, you should schedule two hours of study time for every one hour of class time; however, if you do not have that much time available, start by scheduling a minimum of one hour of study time for every one hour of class time and then increase the number of study hours needed per week based on the demands of each class or the number of assignments due that week.

4. At the start of each week, decide on the times each day you are going to study and mark these on your Master Weekly Plan. When scheduling study time, consider the guidelines below:

#### **Guidelines for Scheduling Study Time**

Schedule short, frequent blocks of time distributed across the week rather than large, infrequent blocks of time

- a) schedule study time as close to the related class as possible, so the material is fresh in memory
  - b) schedule study time before and in-between classes rather than leaving it all to the evenings when you are tired
  - c) if possible, create patterns in your study schedule to create some element of routine in your week. For example, if your classes fall at the same times on Monday and Wednesday, plan to study at the same times on those days.
5. Schedule several study blocks labeled “Flex” for the days and weeks when more study time is needed than anticipated. If you do not need the time for school work, use it as free time.
  6. Schedule time for other responsibilities such as doing household chores, laundry, paying bills, etc.
  7. Schedule leisure, social and family time. Having leisure and social time is important, so schedule it in. If there is no time left after scheduling your fixed commitments and study time, look for ways to reduce time in other areas to find a comfortable balance. This might mean reducing working hours or reducing your course load.

## **Making the Most of Your Study Time on a Daily Basis**

Whether you have a lot of study time per week or the bare minimum, it is important that you use that time productively. In order to make the most of your study time, consider the following:

- a) **Take care of your physical/personal needs** before you sit down to study. If you are tired, hungry or have a headache, you will not use your time well. Take a power nap, a brisk walk, a relaxing shower or bath, etc to re-energize before studying.
- b) **Study in a distraction reduced environment.** It is hard to find a perfectly quiet study place but choose an area that is as conducive to studying and concentrating as possible. Studying in the same place at school, and/or at home can help with concentration as you come to associate doing school work with that place.
- c) **Take frequent breaks.** Take a ten minute break after every 50 – 60minutes of studying. In the break get your circulation going by moving around, putting in a load of laundry, doing a few sit-ups, etc.
- d) **Make a Study Plan for that day’s work by using a Daily Planner/Agenda.**

# The Daily Planner

Another time management tool often used by students is a *Daily Planner*. A daily planner is a place where you plan your day and record specifically **what** you want or need to do and **when** you are going to do it. The planner can be a sheet you make up on the computer, a notebook you use for this purpose, or a store-bought planner. A sample daily planning sheet is provided at the back of this handout for you to copy if you wish. Using a daily planner effectively is not easy and takes practice.

## Using a Daily Planner

1. Make time each morning to plan your day.
2. Make a list of all the things you need or want to do that day. Include important personal tasks as well as school related tasks.
3. Prioritize these tasks using an **A, B, C** system. **A: tasks** must be completed today and take top priority. **B: tasks** should get done today but can wait until tomorrow if necessary. **C: tasks** are the lowest priority tasks and can be put off with the least immediate consequence.
4. Look at your top priority tasks and estimate how much time each will take.
5. Use your daily planner and determine which task you will accomplish when and write these into your planner. In essence, you are making an appointment with yourself to accomplish a desired task. If you still have time available in your day, determine which of your **B** priority tasks you want to accomplish and write these into your planner also.
6. Once you have completed one of your tasks, cross it off so you can see the progress you are making in accomplishing your goals for the day.

## Managing Time for Large Projects and Assignments

All students will have to write a term paper, give an oral presentation, or participate in a group project at some point during their studies. Students tend to procrastinate on these types of assignments as they seem overwhelming or tend to run out of time to complete them due to poor time management. One way students can start, organize and complete large projects is by making a **Project Outline**.

### How to make a Project Outline

1. Read the assignment directions carefully and make sure you understand what is required. Check your understanding with another student or the teacher before proceeding.
2. Break the assignment down into a series of smaller steps that can be accomplished individually. Brain storm the steps with another student to make sure you thought of ALL the things you will need to do to complete the assignment. Write these steps down in the order you will complete them in to create your Project Outline.
3. For each step, establish how long it will take and set a deadline/date by which you want to complete that particular step.
4. Write the due dates for each step down on your Project Outline as well as on your Term Calendar or in your Daily Planner. Check each step off as it is completed.
5. Plan to have the project finished one day early to allow for any unexpected events such as your printer breaking down.

## Conclusion

Like any new skill, learning to manage your time and use time management tools takes time and practice. At first, using these tools will feel awkward and unnatural; however, if you persevere, managing your time will quickly become habit and you too can reap the benefits of being organized and in control of your time. **See overleaf for sample copies of a Term Calendar and a Weekly Schedule. You may photocopy these sheets for your own use.**

For more information or help with Time Management, please email [studyskills@capilanou.ca](mailto:studyskills@capilanou.ca)

**Weekly Calendar**

	<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>	<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Sunday</b>
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