

Nishant Baxi

**Time
Management
For College
Students**

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«Издательские решения»

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Who Else Wants To Track Your Time Efficiently, Determine The Best Time Of Day To Schedule Your Homework, And Become More “In Tune’ With Your Partying Time In Just 5 Days?

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Time Management For College Students

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TIME MANAGEMENT FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS

How to Manage School, Work, and Fun!

Nishant Baxi

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WELCOME TO COLLEGE!

You've walked across the stage, collected your diploma and spent a summer dreaming of the freedom you'll enjoy in college! Congratulations! You're embarking on a journey sure to be filled with fun, new friends, new experiences, and knowledge beyond your dreams.

Some questions you might be asking yourself include:

- How do I get everything done I need to get done?
- How do I fit all MY stuff in the room with ALL my roommate's stuff?

- Where's the cafeteria?
- Where's the party?

While all of these questions are of extreme importance, the one you need to focus on the most is the first one.

At first, you will have more time available to you now than you will know what to do with. Even if you take a huge class load, run a marathon a day, start a quilting bee, and even sleep, I guarantee that you are going to have more time than you can really believe. It's maximizing that time that makes all the difference in succeeding in college or struggling.

For many college freshmen, this experience can be a difficult transition. Your parents aren't around anymore to make sure you get up for school. You go from being a "big" senior to a "greenie" freshman again. College is more than just an excuse to party. It's a beginning for your adult life. You will be learning what you need to know to succeed in the real world. That, alone, can be overwhelming!

But it doesn't have to be. All you need to do is learn time management skills along with ways to cope with stress and maximize your college experience. How do you do that? It's not always easy, but it can be easier – with the help of this valuable guide.

Inside these pages are valuable tips to learn how to schedule your time effectively, how to stop procrastinating, how to shut out distractions, and how to manage your studies and work with your personal life. A huge part of this experience is stress management, and we've provided many valuable tips and tricks to minimize stress and enjoy the whole college experience.

We all probably wish that there were more hours in a day, but since that is impossible, we must make the best use of the hours that we do have. By utilizing the tips in this book, you will be on your way to achieving better time management skills and becoming an all-around better college student.

It doesn't matter if you're an 18 year old freshman right out of high school, a senior almost ready to graduate, or a 40 year old returning to classes for the first time in 20 years, these tips can apply to everyone. And, they will apply to your life after college as well! Learning effective time management skills makes life much easier and allows you more and more time for yourself, which is as equally important.

You deserve to enjoy everything about college life – the parties, the camaraderie, the fun. You can accomplish this and not sacrifice the real reason why you're here – for an education. We can show you how!

Goal Setting

What are your goals? Really, what are your goals? Do you want to lose 10 pounds, have shinier hair, land that cute guy in your Algebra class, or get an “A” in basket weaving? Goals are important for everyone and identifying them up front helps you keep your eye on the prize.

Why set goals? Life is tremendously varied. At any given moment, there are thousands of things you could do. When you’re driving, you could turn left, turn right, speed up, slam on the brakes, stop for lunch, stop for gas, decide to drive to Alaska to see what Kodiak bears look like, and on and on. But what is it that keeps you from ending up in Alaska every time you get into your car? Why don’t you end up at random locations all the time? The answer is that you got into your car with a clear idea of where you wanted to go. You knew at the beginning.

Life is the same way. If you know at the beginning where you want to go, you’ll probably get there. Even if detours and delays arise, eventually you’ll get there. But if you don’t know where you’re going, you probably won’t get there.

It might help to divide your goals into time frames (immediate goals, short-mid-term goals, and long-range goals). You don’t have to have firm answers to those gripping questions about what you want to be or do when you’re done at college to make this work; your goals are likely to shift and change over time anyway. All you need to do right now is think of a handful of goals to get started. Write down a list of goals now before reading further.

Take a look at your list of goals. How many of the tasks you intend to do today contribute to accomplishing the goals you have set for yourself? Are you actively working on these goals? Are you putting any of them off for a later time? What would you have to change in your life to make it possible to work on these goals?

Sub-dividing those goals into manageable pieces can help. Once you have a set of goals, it is useful to decompose the goals into manageable steps or sub-goals. Decomposing your goals makes it possible to tackle them one small step at a time and to reduce procrastination.

Consider for instance the goal of obtaining your degree. This goal can be broken down into four sub-goals. Each sub-goal is the successful completion of one year of your program. These sub-goals can be further broken down into individual courses within each year. The courses can be broken down into tests, exams, term papers and such within the course or into the 13 weeks of classes in each term. Each week can be further subdivided into days, and each day can be thought of in terms of the hours and minutes you’ll spend in your classes and doing homework for today.

While it may seem challenging to take in the whole scope of that convergent goal, thinking of your goals in this way helps to reinforce the idea that there is a connected path linking what actions you take today and the successful completion of your goals. Seeing these connections can help you monitor your own progress and detect whether you are on track or not. Take some time now to think through the goals you’ve set and to break them down into their smaller constituent parts.

Now that you have a list of goals, pre-experience them in your mind. Visualizing the steps you will take to obtain the goal increases the probability of actually reaching it. Successful athletes pre-

experience over and over in their minds how they are going to perform in a game so they can be at their peak effectiveness once the game begins.

One mistake made in seeking a goal is to focus so much on reaching the goal that we fail to enjoy the process of getting to it. We enjoy life more when we find satisfaction in our immediate efforts rather than thinking how nice it is going to be when we finally arrive at our distant goal.

For example, we enjoy a trip more if we decide to take an interest in the landmarks along the way rather than just enduring the ride until we arrive at our destination.

Similarly, we enjoy a class more if we explore the content beyond what is required rather than just do the bare minimum to pass the class.

Don't make the mistake of setting unrealistic goals or having so many that it is impossible to reach them. We frequently do this at the beginning of the semester. We soon become discouraged when we realize we have neither the time nor the energy to accomplish all of our goals. Recognizing our physical, mental and emotional limits is an important component to realistic goal setting.

Now that you have your goals in mind, the next step is walking the road toward achieving them. That begins with time. Let's explore how to become aware of the time you have available to you

TIME IS ON YOUR SIDE

It will help you manage your time well if you know where your time actually gets spent. One very helpful way of determining your actual usage of time is to track your time. The process here is like making a schedule, but it works in reverse. Instead of writing things in that you are planning to do, time logging is a process of writing down the things that you have already done. Doing this is sort of a get-to-know-

yourself exercise because this procedure will highlight many of your habits that you might selectively ignore currently.

For instance, some people find that every time they plan to do math homework they end up watching television. Instead of studying for that Psych test, they play Internet poker. Other people just can't seem to follow their schedule until the week before finals.

Whatever your time habits, time tracking will help you adjust and fine-tune your time management practices. Having accurate information about your time usage patterns can serve as another important point of reference for self-monitoring. Following are a few ways to track your time. Take a moment to do this – it will truly help you open your eyes and take control of your time.

– Time tracking is fairly straightforward. At the end of every hour jot yourself a quick note about how you actually spent your time for that hour. The note needn't be long – one sentence or less should suffice. If how you spent your time doesn't match an already planned activity, simply enter a comment as to what you really did during that time. This way you will be able to review patterns that emerge in your use of time and make adjustments to improve your productivity.

– Some people find it helpful to modify the planning page to facilitate tracking time. The modifications are easy enough: make two columns on your paper for each day of the week. In one column, write down the plan you are trying to follow; in the second column, make notes on what you actually did with your time. The side-by-side comparison is very telling and an excellent way to figure out where you're not using time in the way you intend.

– Another effective way to make changes and get results from your time management strategies is to summarize your time use by time category such as: sleep, study, work, travel and so on.

Before doing the summary, make a sheet with different columns for each category. Your log sheet might look something like this:

Activity	Expected Time	Actual Time

Estimate the amount of time that you think you spend on the various activities listed and enter these in the “expected” row of the summary sheet. Feel free to add any additional categories that might be helpful. Then log your time for one week on an hour by hour basis. When the week is over summarize your time by category for each day, add up the values for all seven days of the week, and write the totals in the “actual” row of the summary sheet.

Summarizing your time use allows you to understand how much time you really spend in the various areas of your life. It is almost certain that you will see a notable difference between the number of hours you expected to use in certain categories and the actual number of hours you spend.

If you find that you spend more time in one area than you wanted, and less in another, the weekly summary of time use clearly indicates which activities to reduce to find the extra time you want for that neglected area of your life.

However you choose to understand the differences between your expected use of time and your actual use of time, your focus should be on trying to detect and adjust patterns in your own real use of time that spell trouble for you reaching your goals.

For those of you freaked out by knowing exactly where you spend your time because it only seems to reinforce your sense of time pressure, here’s something to think about.

We have 168 hours available in a week. Various published reports and informal studies report that fully half of those 168 hours – 84 hours – are used up for the “basics” like sleeping, eating, washing, etc. How do your own numbers compare? How will you spend the remaining 84 hours per week?

One valuable component of a time management program involves the use of a planner. Let’s explore that next.

YOUR PLANNER IS YOUR BEST FRIEND

When you are organized, that will help you achieve your goals in a timely manner. You need to organize your tasks so you will know what needs to be accomplished and when they need to be accomplished. No student should be without a daily planner.

You have probably used various kinds of planning tools before, including a daily or weekly planner, a month-at-a-

glance planner, and so on. It is important to keep in mind that the purpose of scheduling is not to enslave you to your planner, but rather to record your decisions about when certain things should happen.

Planners can be found in many places and in many different formats. Most college students find that a daily, week-at-a-glance planner works best as it is easier to see information for a whole week and gives plenty of room to track what needs to be done that week. Check your campus bookstore or local discount store for a variety to choose from. You can even make your own with the help of Microsoft Word or Excel. Below is an example of a sample planner page created in Excel:

March 13 - Monday

March 16 - Thursday

March 14 - Tuesday

March 17 - Friday

March 15 - Wednesday	March 18/19 - Saturday/Sunday

Your planner should include your schedule for classes, study time, social events, club meetings, exercise time, and any other time necessary to achieve your goals. Keep the planner with you during

class and note all assignments along with the due dates of those assignments. Check them off as you complete them so you know where you are at all times with your projects.

Refer to your planner often – multiple times a day. Make this a regular part of your routine. When you get up in the morning, look at your planner to see what needs to be done for that day.

If you have an appointment, be sure to include a phone number next to the notation in case you have to cancel or change times.

Use a highlighter. Color-coding can help differentiate between appointments and assignments. For example, highlight in blue your classes, yellow for assignments, and green for everything else. The key here is easy recognition. When you open your planner, you can easily see what needs to be done.

Keep your planner in one specific place. Organizing your time with a calendar depends on always being able to easily put your hands on this guide. Keep it in your backpack or by your bedside table. If you use your computer a lot, keep it beside the computer when it's not in your backpack or purse.

Write due dates, and then a few days before the assignments are due, write yourself a reminder. This is especially important for large tasks that take more than a few hours to complete.

Abide by this calendar every week so you will develop a regular routine while learning how to manage your time.

The planner can be used as a time-bound memory aid, tracking major deadlines and exam dates, appointments, important anniversaries, birthdays, holidays, vacations and so on. But, you can get more out of your planner if you use it to record interim deadlines and forecast upcoming busy periods as final deadlines approach. A properly completed planner will indicate upcoming busy periods, show whether there is room in the plan for new tasks, and help you assess whether you are on target to achieve your goals.

Let's say for example that you had an upcoming exam in your Introductory Microeconomics class. Start by entering the date of the exam so you don't forget it. Next, think of the tasks that comprise the goal of doing well in the exam, think about how long each step of the task should take, and enter a series of interim deadlines for each step between the start of your preparation for the exam and the exam date itself. Use these interim deadlines as milestones to indicate the progress of your study.

If to-do lists govern your current approach to time management, then you'll be interested in the weekly objectives list. Think of the weekly objectives list as a muscle-bound to-do list. In essence, the weekly objective list is a to-do list with additional features to further decompose tasks into smaller units and to record time estimates for the task.

Let's say for example that one of your goals for the year was to maintain your honors standing and that you had a series of exams coming up including one for first year Introductory Microeconomics. You might set an objective to score a B+ or A grade on the exam and list this on your objectives list. Your next step would then be to consider a variety of study activities that would prepare you well for the examination.

You might begin by entering your first activity, “complete readings and review lecture notes”, in the activities column. Once you have entered your activity it is important to assign it a time estimate. This block of time reflects an important principle in time estimating; when estimating time you might want to add time to the amount of time you think it will take you to complete the task. Refine your estimates on the basis of your experience with similar tasks.

This is important because we tend to estimate without considering possible difficulties or interruptions. Once you have entered the first activity for study, you would continue with the others you have in mind. The final two columns on the form allow you to track whether or not you have scheduled and completed the activities you have listed. Your next step is to carry the listed activities, along with their associated time estimates, to your weekly planner to be scheduled.

Take a look at your weekly planner. What do you have written in it? Likely, you list lecture times, tutorial times, laboratory times, times for extracurricular activities, and various other appointments.

If this sounds like your schedule then you are probably under-using another very versatile time management tool because many of the most important tasks (homework activities that move you toward your goals) are left out of the picture. The implication of this should be clear: If it isn't on the schedule it won't get done.

Stepping from the weekly objectives list to the weekly planner is easy. Using the time estimates for the activities on the weekly objectives list as guides find a block of time of appropriate duration in your schedule. Then write in the activities one at a time in priority order until you have either scheduled all of your activities or you have run out of time spaces.

A good idea here, if it seems you'll run out of time spaces, is to start scheduling the most important activities first. For instance, consider the following activity: “Complete readings and review notes.” This activity might take 3 hours and could be placed almost anywhere in the week where you have time and where you'll likely be able to work.

You might schedule three one-hour blocks, two 90-minute blocks or one three-hour block, depending on your preferences. The key here is to associate the specific task to specific times, avoiding making a schedule where the tasks are too closely scheduled or where important activities are assigned to unrealistic work times.

Construct a plan for each week, following the rhythm of your courses that meet weekly. To help make planning a routine activity, pick a regular day each week to schedule. Even with unexpected occurrences that can impact your schedule you assist yourself in making decisions that are governed by your desire to reach your goals.

Without using a schedule you may be governed by your moment-to-moment moods which may lead you to make time decisions that take you away from your goals. Once your week is planned you will experience clarity of focus, your tendency to be distracted will be reduced and you will be certain of your reasons for doing the things you had planned. Committing yourself to a plan you've made represents a renewal of your motivation for the goals and tends to increase your time on task.

Another valuable tool you might want to consider is the dry erase board. Hang this over your computer or study area so it is always visible. Write down important dates like that Microeconomics exam, when your English paper is due, and the big party next weekend. Keeping yourself updated

at a glance will help to keep you on tasks as you focus on the reward of studying – that big party next weekend!

Now that you have these valuable tools in your planners, the next step is maximizing on the time you have available.

TIME MANAGEMENT 101

The time you spend on task has some relationship to the quality of work you end up producing. A good gauge to follow is to perform 2—3 hours of schoolwork outside class for every hour of class time. Yes, this means for a full-time student with 15-hours of class per week load the recommendation is to do between 30 and 45 hours of homework each week.

Sure, that's a big jump, especially if you breezed through high school or previous years of college on less. This estimate simply reflects the time it actually takes to learn effectively. It's not steadfast and set in stone. If you find yourself really grasping the concepts of a chapter after a

half-hour, feel free to stop. The key here is to set aside this time exclusively for studying. If you get done earlier than expected – that's a bonus!

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