Time Management

One of the best metaphors for a student's life is that of a circus performer who balances many plates in the air at once. The plates twirl precariously atop poles as the harried performer works frantically to keep them in motion and aloft. Patience, perseverance, practice and planning are all necessary for performing the trick successfully.

Consider the following suggestions — or habits — that can help you balance your semester and your workload effectively.

Habit 1: Be Proactive

Being proactive means taking initiative, rather than waiting for others to act first or to make decisions for you. The opposite of proactive is **reactive**; reactive people tend to react to whatever is going on around them. Proactive people, on the other hand, act based on principles and purpose.

Habit 2: Begin with the End in Mind

Remember the carpenter's rule: "Measure twice, cut once." Applied to a student's life, this means thinking things through, planning your work, and setting realistic goals.

Habit 3: Put First Things First

Make sure to distinguish the goals that are **truly important** (e.g. completing a research project) from those that may **seem** urgent but are really not important (e.g. organizing a softball game with your friends). Don't spend too much time doing busy work, or work that appears productive but in reality only keeps you occupied.

Habit 4: Look Ahead

An essential part of being proactive — as opposed to reactive — is looking ahead. One way to effectively accomplish this goal is to keep a calendar for each month of the semester. Fill out each calendar carefully and make note of the times of the semester that will likely be difficult for you.

Keeping a weekly schedule can also be very helpful. First, enter all your fixed activities. This means classes, labs, meetings, meals, chores, and sleep. Also be sure to read your class syllabi carefully and enter all test dates, deadlines, due dates, etc. Use this as a master schedule, and make a copy for each week of the semester.

Then at the end of each week, enter necessary tasks and shifting activities on the **following week's schedule.** That way, you'll be able to take a look ahead to the coming week and see not only what you must do, but also any available blocks of free time.

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TIME MANAGEMENT MATRIX

Every activity can be classified in one of the four quadrants …

	urgent	**not urgent**
important	**1** • crises • pressing problems • deadline-driven projects	**2** • planning and preparation • long-term projects • true recreation/relaxation • relationship-building
not important	**3** • many interruptions • some phone calls • some email or paper mail • many popular activities	**4** • trivial tasks • busy work • some phone calls • junk mail or spam

**Now consider everything you do over the course of a week.
Classify activities in the matrix below:**

	urgent	**not urgent**
important	**1** • • • • • •	**2** • • • • • •
not important	**3** • • • • •	**4** • • • • •