

PLANNING A BETTER STUDY SCHEDULE

The success of your study schedule will depend on the care with which you plan it. Careful consideration of some of these points will help you to make a schedule that will work for you.

Plan a Schedule of Balanced Activities. College life has many aspects. Some of the most common which you must consider are:

Fixed: eating, organizations, classes, church, work

Flexible: sleeping, recreation, study, relaxation, personal affairs

Plan enough time for studying to do justice to each subject. Most college classes are planned to require about three hours work per week per credit in the course. By multiplying your credit load by three you can get a good idea of the time you should provide for studying. Of course, if you are a slow reader or have other study deficiencies, you may need to plan more time for studying. Of course, you may also find that some classes require less time.

Study at a regular time and in a regular place. Establishing habits of study is extremely important. Knowing what and when you are going to study saves a lot of time in making decisions and retracing your steps to get necessary materials, etc. Avoid generalizations in your schedule such as "study chemistry" at certain regular hours. Instead, plan to "complete ten equations" or "read and take notes on chapter 6".

Study as soon after your lecture class as possible. One hour spent soon after class will do as much good in developing an understanding and memory of materials as several hours a few days later. Check over lecture notes while they are still fresh in your mind. Start assignments while your memory of the assignment is still accurate.

Use off hours of the day for studying. The scattered one or two hour free periods between classes are easily wasted. Planning and establishing habits of using them for studying for the class just finished will result in free time for recreation and other activities at other times in the week.

Limit your blocks of study time to no more than two hours per course at any one time. After 1 ½ to 2 hours of study you begin to tire rapidly and your ability to concentrate decreases rapidly. Taking a break and then switching to another course will provide the change necessary to keep up your efficiency. Do difficult work when your mind is freshest.

Trade time—don't steal it. When unexpected events arise that take up time you had planned to study, decide immediately where you can find the time to make up the study missed and adjust your schedule for that week. Note the three weekend evenings. Most students can afford no more than two of them for recreation, but may wish to use different evenings on different weeks. This "trading agreement" provides for committing one night to study, but rotating it as recreational possibilities vary.

Provide for spaced review. Schedule a regular weekly period when you will review the work in each of your courses and be sure you are up to date. This review should be cumulative, covering briefly all the work done thus far in the semester.

Practice recitation as a way to improve memory. Organize your notes in a question and answer form, and think in terms of questions and answers about the main ideas of the material as you review weekly. When preparing for exams, try to predict the questions the instructor may ask.

Keep carefully organized notes on both lectures and assignments. Good notes are the best bases for review. Watch for key ideas in lectures and try to express them in your own words in your notes. Know when assignments are given and when they are due.