BOBCAT ACADEMY

Calendars and College

This handout discusses why you need a calendar, shares strategies for managing your time, and connects you with resources to help you make the most of each day in college.

Why you need a calendar.

Between rigorous classes, assignments and studying, new friends and social events, obligations at home, and extracurricular obligations, managing time in college can be a challenge. You may have more freedom, flexibility, and independence, which can lead to overscheduling, procrastinating, or falling behind in classes.

However, managing your schedule in college doesn't have to be overwhelming; with a little planning and structure, you can be better equipped to own your time, live a balanced life, and stay on top of your work. And it pays off: studies have shown that students who plan their time were more efficient in allocating their individual study time, prepared more appropriately for the tutorial group meeting, and achieved higher scores on cognitive tests (Van den Hurk, 2006).

This handout shares several types of planning that you can do to manage your time and connects you with resources to help you make the most out of each day. Note that you can use an online calendar (e.g., Google calendar, iCalendar, Outlook, etc.) for semester planning and weekly planning as well.

Semester planning.

Whether you're using a wall calendar, a hard-copy planner, or an online calendar, it's good to have a way to keep an eye on the big picture for your semester.

The East Georgia State College's semester-at-a-glance calendar is a one-page calendar that displays the big picture of your semester. This can be helpful in identifying and preparing for your busiest weeks and capitalizing on your slower weeks.

Here are some steps to effectively plan for your semester using a calendar:

- Review your syllabi and enter the dates of all exams, papers, projects, events, and travel into your planner or semester-at-a-glance calendar.
- Work backwards from each due date or exam to plan when you want to start working on each task. For example, for papers, you may want to map out when you'll do research, when you'll start your draft, when you want to finish your first draft, and when you want to take your draft to an ACE tutor.
- Add new appointments as they arise! These may include doctor's appointments, meetings on campus, office hours you plan to attend, or social occasions you don't want to miss. Set a reminder on your phone if it would help you remember your appointments.

Need help? Make an appointment with a Student Success Coach for help creating and using a semester plan.

Weekly planning.

Students generally benefit from regularly setting aside time to think ahead and plan for the week ahead. This kind of planning helps you make sure you allocate enough time for each of your courses and helps avoid unforeseen pileups of work.

You can use whatever hard copy or electronic calendar you chose for weekly planning, or you can use one of the ACE's weekly planners to plan on a daily and weekly basis. The Academic Center for Excellence has calendars with 60-minute blocks, 30-minute blocks, and morning-afternoon-evening blocks. Each one serves the same function, so find the one that works the best for you.

Here are some steps to effectively plan for the week:

- Have a regular time each week (budget 15–30 mins) to look at your assignments and obligations and map them out over the week.
- Mark and label time slots occupied by classes, employment, sports, extracurricular activities, chores, and other regular commitments. If you're using an electronic calendar, it's easy to make these occurrences recurring events over many weeks or months.

- Consider which activities have time restraints.
- For each class, create a weekly to-do list, estimating how much time to allot for each reading, assignment, paper, project, and study prep. Insert these tasks into open slots on your weekly planner, building in buffer time (don't forget to eat!).
- Use color to differentiate classes and activities visually.
- You may also want to set aside a shorter amount of daily time to make your plan or to-do list for the day.

Need help? Make an appointment with a Student Success Coach to create your weekly schedule and get accountability on following it.

Tips to make your weekly planning work.

Reduce your tasks to manageable steps or segments, rather than doing assignments in long sessions. Work backwards from a target date and distribute the load across your schedule. Example: Rather than reading 50 pages of a dense textbook in one sitting, try 10 pages at a time.

Know when and where you work best. Plan for your hardest studying when you know you're most alert and focused. Consider your options and select the study location where you can stay productive.

Maximize breaks in your schedule. Set a timer to remind you to take a quick break every hour. Incorporate movement or exercise into your breaks to help you stay focused during study time.

If possible, arrive to class early to review and stay afterward to clarify lecture material while it's fresh. If there isn't time before or after class, record your questions and take them to your instructor during office hours. If you are taking online classes, settle in a few minutes before class starts to review your notes. Use small breaks and down time to incorporate study. For example, review flashcards while standing in line, heating up your lunch, or riding the bus.

Strive for balance. Don't just assume you'll find time to take care of yourself – schedule time for self-care (exercise, meditation, etc.) and even for free time if you want it.

Adjust your schedule as needed. Unexpected events can interrupt even the best-made plans. Flexibility and creative thinking prevent unforeseen circumstances from derailing your daily or weekly goals. If your schedule gets thrown off, readjust and keep going as best you can. Regular interaction with your calendar is important in helping you be realistic and in helping you get into the habit of using a calendar.

Set a stopping time at night. Sleep deprivation affects attention, cognition, and memory. Mark your goal bedtime on your calendar each night and try to stick to that time. Similarly, set a time to wake up every morning, mark that on your calendar, and try to stick to it.

Keep your planner with you. If you're using a hard-copy planner, it's important to have it with you most times so you'll have it when you need it. Refer to it and update as needed. Electronic calendars that are on your phone make this easy.

Connect with other resources.

Check out our other handouts for tips on time management and scheduling:

- Time Management Inventory (Link to Time Management Inventory)
- Survival Skills for College students
- Time Management

Make an appointment with a Student Success Coach. Our coaches can help you create a schedule and a plan for following it, provide accountability, and discuss any other academic issue.

Attend a workshop presented by one of our academic coaches about time management. You can hear helpful tips about planning, use a planner to create a schedule, interact with peers, and ask questions.

How can technology help?

Need some help getting everything planned out? Technology can help you create effective and powerful planners and calendars that are easy to update and that can provide notifications or reminders to prevent a commitment from slipping your mind.

Calendar Apps: Using an online calendar like Google Calendar, iCal, or Outlook can help you manage your time effectively. Many of these online calendars offer the following features:

- Make recurring events
- Set reminders
- Color code events in your calendar
- Share your calendar
- Sync an organization's calendar to your phone or computer
- Adjust your view to see your daily, weekly, or monthly tasks

Task Lists: Whether you use an app or a notebook, to-do lists or task lists can help you create an action plan and track your tasks for the day, week, and month. You'll find dozens of options from minimalist to feature rich if you search for "task list" or "to-do list" wherever you normally find apps.

Works consulted.

Van den Hurk, M. (2006). The relation between self-regulated strategies and individual study time, prepared participation, and achievement in a problem-based curriculum. *Active Learning in Higher Education, 7*, 155-169.