Introduction

One of the biggest problems students have with learning to manage time is that they know they have a lot to do, but they aren’t sure how to identify and organize their work so it all gets done well.

Without a clear plan, students often study less effectively than they are able to. They lose time, forget work, and have difficulty knowing how to get started on things. It is easier to procrastinate, and far easier to underestimate the amount of work something requires.

The system we are going to discuss boils time management down to its simplest parts. It will help you set up a process that will take less than an hour to start, and less than half an hour each week to maintain. The process will help you to always remember what is coming up, maximize the time you spend studying, and create more genuine free time. This system is designed to be easy to use, it’s doable, and it will make a big difference.

Time Management Made Easy: What you’ll need

All you will need to put the system to work are three things (listed below). In class, you will be given templates you can practice with. But if you own a planner or planner app with the three calendar levels listed below, you can use that instead.

Some people use the same planner to do all three things. Other people use apps, like Google calendar. Other use a wall calendar for dates, a planner for the week, and a notebook for the days. What you use depends on what you feel will be most useful to you, provided it allows you to follow the three steps.

You will need:

- A monthly calendar to record all of the key dates in one place, so you can keep track of the big things, like when exams or graded assignments are due. When practicing this in UCS160, you will use the “Semester at a Glance” calendar.
• A **planner** in which to set a weekly schedule. *When practicing this in UCS 160, you will use the weekly pre-planner and weekly calendar worksheet.*

• A **daily task list** in which to keep track of what specifically you need to do and have with you that day. *When practicing this in UCS 160, you will use a sheet of notebook paper.*

### What you’ll need to do

#### I: Record all dates with exams/projects/work due on Semester-at-glance/calendar

1. You will receive a syllabus for every class, usually in Sakai. Take each syllabus one by one. Go to the section of the syllabus where it lists exam dates, paper dates, project dates, quizzes, etc.

2. On your **semester at a glance**, write a *brief but detailed* entry for each key date (for example, don’t just write “Math 111 exam” if you can write “Math 111 exam ch. 3-4”.) Add to the semester at a glance other important things, too, like doctor appointments, club meetings, etc. Look for conflicts with assignment dates so you can plan ahead.

3. Continue with this for each syllabus, until you have a **calendar showing you every key date that you have in one place**. Students often color-code their dates, so that they can easily tell one class from another.

When the calendar is complete, put it on a cork board or wall, or tape it to your desk. The key is to put it somewhere where you can see it every day. When students make regular use of the semester at a glance, they begin to remember dates better. They immediately cut down the number of dates they forget, and they are able to think about what is coming in the weeks ahead with much greater accuracy. They stop forgetting one assignment because the focused on another. They also can see where to plan in-between dates – like how many days before a paper is due they should have a draft to work with in the writing center.

Finally, the semester at a glance becomes your reference each week when you sit down to plan out the week ahead.
II: Plan what you will need to do in each class and when you expect to do it using a weekly planner

Your weekly planning session is where you can really start thinking about how your week is going to be used. If you can, it is often good to make a template – a fixed weekly schedule that has all of the repeating stuff in the same pace each week, like classes, a job, meetings etc. (you can do this using google calendar’s weekly view, for example, by setting in your class times to repeat each week). Once your regularly scheduled times are blocked out, you can map out study times.

As much as possible, block out study times that you want to be regular. A fixed base schedule with routine study times is really helpful.

1. **Each weekend**, sit down and think about the week ahead. First just take a look at each class. On scrap paper or in a notebook, **write out a quick list what you need to get done for each class**. You might write: “CHM103 Ch2-3” for example, if those are the chapters in your syllabus schedule. If you have an anatomy exam on Thursday it might be “BIO121 exam Ch. 3-5”.

2. Once you have marked down what is being covered in each class, **take all of your classwork together and prioritize a bit**: Have you started your writing assignment, and do you know how long it will take? Do you need to go to the walk-in tutoring for chemistry this week? What is the sociology quiz on?

3. **Look at the weekly calendar view and begin to make decisions about what to study and when.** Remember, even if you have a major exam, you need to plan with an eye on balance. You must do that “24-48 hour check-in” between each class as often as possible, for example.

4. **Try to be as specific as possible.** *Do not* block out time on the calendar for two hours and just write: “study”. You need to be able to think about things in balance, so be clear: “Study Bio ch. 1, & start Calc problems” shows you have had to think about when those things are due, and how long they will take.

Remember, **the weekly plan will never work out exactly as it was written up**. A football team takes the field with a complete plan to defeat their opponent. But **when the game starts, there is a need to re-plan and change and adjust, because nothing can be predicted perfectly**. As you plan you will get better at estimating. But the real work of planning will always be giving you the opportunity to think carefully about what you need to be doing.
III. Each day, check in on your plan, decide what you need to do and make a daily to-do list

This may be the most important step of all, but for many people it is also the hardest to remember to do – and that can be a problem. Work hard to make this a daily routine. It is best to do it before you leave your room in the morning, or the night before, otherwise you might find yourself needing to go back to your room unnecessarily. But you can do it any day as soon as you remember. Just open a notebook, take a look at your weekly calendar if you have it, and begin!

1. **In your notebook, or daily planner, put the date.** Underneath, simply make a list of the most important things you need to do that day. Don’t write *everything* – you don’t to note that you are going to take a shower, or have lunch. But do write everything that has to do with study. **As always, be brief but specific.** For example:

   1. Review notes from 113, make notes from the book
   2. Preview chapter 4 from AVS for tomorrow
   3. Go to Math tutoring before 141
   4. Review notes from CHM, do a few practice probs

2. Once you’ve brainstormed, **mark a number next to each item indicating its importance.** Your goal is to do a little of everything you list, but you should still prioritize (at the end of the day, you’ll feel better having that high-priority item off of your list than you will if you got a bunch of things done but fell behind on a big one).

3. Once in a while, you won’t get to everything you planned to. **Simply make a line through the things you did, and take the things you didn’t do and move them up to the next possible time.**