

Time Management

An essential skill for student success in higher education

Introduction

Time management represents the ability to effectively and efficiently control time in order to maximize productivity.[1] For students it involves prioritizing tasks and minimizing distractions. Time management is essential in academic settings to ensure all tasks are handled in a timely manner and thus reduce the stress that comes with them.

Time Management in Academic Settings

Time management is a major skill that all students should be able to have in order to easily achieve success in higher education. Prioritizing tasks, scheduling study sessions and reaching deadlines are all handled with efficient time management skills.[2] Deadlines can be stressful events, no matter the setting, which can also affect one's personal wellbeing. According to an article on the Stress Management Society's website, good time management helps reduce long-term stress by providing direction when there are many tasks. As in an academic setting students have multiple subjects to study for and automatically assignments, it is an essential skill to know how to properly plan and execute on plans.

If we are to consider time management a skill like writing or drawing, there are multiple ways to harness and improve upon this skill. There are multiple tried and true methods that have been implemented by people before us and that are still very popular and used today and some people are even implementing their own personal ways that are curated for their current timeline and setting. The simplest way to start working on this skill is by using a calendar. Simply marking down diverse deadlines and then time blocking tasks in the days leading up to that deadline can be a humble beginning for time-management. To-do lists are linked with tasks time blocked on the calendar; some students prefer using generic to-do titles for their tasks, while others break down their bigger tasks into smaller ones. This way, students focus on one part of the assignment at a time, without looking at the bigger picture, which will help them stay motivated and reduce the amount of stress that comes with work. Time blocking methods, such as the classic Pomodoro Technique help create blocks of time for deep work focus followed by short breaks.

Another important aspect regarding time management is prioritization. With prioritization, students decide the order in which tasks should be completed. The most popular method of prioritization is the Eisenhower Matrix[4] which aids the user to organize and prioritize tasks by urgency and importance. In an academic setting, urgency is determined by deadlines. This method allows students to increase productivity by focusing their attention on their most urgent task. Important tasks are usually determined by length, assignments that might take more than a day to complete. These tasks should be broken down into smaller pieces of work that can be done in a predetermined amount of time.

As we live in a continuously growing digital world, it became natural for time management hacks to move onto our phones. There are multiple apps that help us achieve success by relying on the 'don't break the chain method'[3]. This method relies on a visual record of consecutive days when a task was completed. The human brain is designed to see patterns so, by working on a task and marking it as complete, students

create a chain and once a chain has started, it will become harder and harder to break the pattern. Apps such as Habitify, Habithub, Habitica and Beeminder gamify the process of time management in order to make task work and completion as enjoyable as possible.[5]

Although there are multiple advantages to navigate the digital age, many students can face multiple challenges. The main challenge that can occur when it comes to time management is, of course, distraction.[6] The pressure to meet multiple deadlines can be stressful and overwhelming, which can cause procrastination. Social media is probably the main distraction for multiple students. The concept of “doom scrolling” can cause even more anxiety and stress. Turning the phone off can be a simple solution. There are multiple apps available, such as Grow a tree - Forest app in which grows a tree while you focus on your work and creates a forest. Online gaming can also be a problem, as users can lose track of time and thus procrastinate work. A solution can be, just like time blocking work to complete tasks, students can time-block gaming sessions with their friends once a number of tasks have been completed. Gaming sessions can be considered rewards after completing a predetermined amount of work.

Time management is an essential tool for students to achieve academic success. Discipline and motivation go hand in hand in order to prioritize and complete assignments in line with deadlines. Still, breaks and relaxation times are important in order to avoid burnout which is caused by excessive stress from a heavy workload.

Conclusion

In conclusion, time management is one of the most crucial skills in order to achieve academic success. With multiple demands from professors, deadlines and personal goals, students can effectively time block their tasks using multiple techniques, from simple ones such as using a calendar, to gamification apps such as Habitica. This is a skill that will take time as tasks are completed and also depends on each student's knowledge of how long it takes to complete tasks. It is important for each student to try multiple techniques that exist and tweak them to suit their needs and environment.

References

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