After going through this lesson, you will be able to:

- Recognize benefits of practicing time management skills; and
- Identify strategies for getting and staying organized, planning a weekly schedule, and balancing priorities.

Is it possible to balance social life, work, and academics?

**Video Transcript**

Mark: They all kind of interconnect with each other, and we're just trying to find the balance.

Liz: It's all about balance. You can do all three. I promise. Just balance out your time, make priorities, and you'll be fine.

Sigin: When I first came here, my first semester was all just about meeting new people, because that's what everyone wants to do; they want to have friends, they want to have like a support group. But there's kind of a line between knowing your priorities. Like academics should come first. For me, it was just social, you know. Like I wanted to meet everybody, and if I had a paper due, I'd just be like, "Oh, I can go hang out for a couple hours," but the hours would, you know, add on, and then I would be staying up late, and then I wouldn't be getting enough sleep, and it just kind of was perpetuating. And so I would say time management is huge.

Abi: It's always great to have a social life as well, because you can be stressed out about school. Ain't nothing wrong with partying; just make sure you know when to stop.

Melissa: It's healthy to have social interaction. It's necessary to have social interaction. But you need to make sure that you're not taking too much time away from your homework.

Annie: I think it's really important to always remember that your academics should come first and that you shouldn't put too much on your plate. But I think also having friends that understand when you need to do things for academics is really important, and I think you should be able to have a job if that's something that fits into your schedule. But if your social life and your job are starting to affect your academics, then maybe you need to take some time to balance things out again.
Most Americans want to lead healthier lives; however, many struggle to make daily choices that will help them achieve that goal.

Getting enough exercise and sleep and eating a well-balanced diet are repeatedly rated as the biggest challenges.¹

Why the disconnect? If being healthy is important, and people know that getting more exercise and sleep and eating a balanced diet will lead to better health, then why are so many people falling short of the recommendations for physical activity, sleep, and nutrition?

When we asked undergraduate college students this question, they cited school—going to class and studying—work, and distractions such as television, Internet, Facebook, video games, and friends as competing with their time to be active, prepare meals, and sleep. Many of them have to work to pay for school and afford social activities, and there can be a lot of pressure to do well academically. Plus, an irregular workload throughout the semester makes it
difficult to develop and maintain a consistent schedule that includes regular activity, nutrition, and sleep patterns. There's less structure and accountability from parents, teachers, coaches, and others than there was in high school. All in all, the students we talked to said that a general inability to manage their time and priorities is the primary barrier to good nutrition, activity, and sleep habits. In college, you may find that you have the opportunity to choose how you spend your time much more than you ever have before or may have in the future.

However, with that freedom comes responsibility. If you don’t manage your time, you could quickly find yourself dealing with imbalance—either all work and no play, or all play and no work. While all play may sound very appealing, it probably won’t help you reach your ultimate goals. A healthy balance between the two is more likely to foster happiness and success.

Some people may view the concept of time management as restrictive. However, each day offers a set amount of time; we can’t change that. We can’t create more time, but we can use the time we do have wisely. We can prioritize.

This lesson will provide you with suggestions for planning so that you can fit the things that are most important to you into your schedule.

You really can make it to class, study, sleep, eat, exercise, and have fun and relax—if you plan appropriately. If you can’t, then maybe that’s a sign that you’re trying to do too much. Remember: there are 24 hours in each and every day—no more, no less!

What do you value? What’s important to you?

Take a few moments to list your values. Shoot for five things. For example, you might value relationships, education, honesty, nature, health, or a variety of other things. Think about what’s really important to you. It might be different than your roommate’s or best friend’s or parents’ values. That’s OK.

As you begin to plan for how you’ll use your time, you’ll find that you are able to devote more time to the things that really matter to you instead of spending it
on those that don’t mean much. Planning will allow you to balance your commitments to school, work, family, friends, and yourself. That’s right; don’t forget to include yourself! Caring for yourself is probably your most important role; after all, the better you take care of yourself, the better you’ll be able to help others and contribute to your community.

Priorities
Video Transcript
Jon: Know that you can’t do everything. You’re not Superman.
Aby: You know what you want. You know what you want for yourself. Be able to manage your time. And sometimes it’s going to be a lot of load on your shoulder. Just know you can do it. You are the one person that can—that you know yourself right, you know yourself the most, and you can always tell yourself, “I want my education. At the same time, I don’t want to be stressed. At the same time, I want to have a social life.” Believe me, you can do all of this. But at the end of the day, you have to know your main priority.
Liz: Always make time for yourself. You are your first priority. If you’re not healthy, the rest of your life isn’t going to be healthy.

Finding balance is about finding a way to incorporate all the things that are important to you, but it doesn’t mean always doing the same amount of everything that’s important to you.
Establishing priorities means setting boundaries and saying no to some things, including things that may have value. Keep in mind that, every time you say yes to doing something, you’re inadvertently choosing not to do something else during that time. It’s important to learn how to say no to other people and opportunities sometimes—or at the very least get into the habit of checking your schedule and to-do list before responding—so that you can avoid becoming overloaded and overwhelmed.

“I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do the something that I can do.”
Edward Everett Hale

There’s a rhythm to life, and sometimes certain things need to take more priority than others. Thus, achieving balance often involves making difficult
decisions between competing values.

To make things even more challenging, next week’s priorities might not be the same as they are this week, and what you value most now may not necessarily be what you value most 10, or even 5, years from now. Your values and priorities will continually change throughout your life, which means that you will continually need to readjust the way you spend your time based on your current life circumstances.

This doesn’t mean that you should cut out things that have value; it just means that some of them may have to be put on the back burner once in a while. The trick is making sure that you’re not completely neglecting certain dimensions of wellness for extended periods of time. For example, it’s not really a good idea to put off healthy behaviors until after you graduate.

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**Rocks in a Bucket**  
**Video Transcript**

Sarah Sevcik: This bucket demonstration is an analogy for your life. And this bucket is your life, and we are going to fill your life with all the different things that you do every day. The first thing we’re going to do is take this bag of sand, and we’re going to put it into our life. This bag of sand stands for all the little things that you do on a day-to-day basis, such as surfing the Internet, checking Facebook, playing video games, watching TV, doing normal chores. The next thing we’re going to do is take the bag of pebbles. And the pebbles will go into our life. And these pebbles stand for the different things you are involved in, such as clubs, going to events, coaching, and volunteering. Last, we’re going to put the rocks into the bucket—our life. These rocks stand for all of the essential parts of our life; such as taking care of ourselves and our family and creating and working towards a life that we want for ourselves and the people we love. So now you’ll see that your life, this bucket, is overflowing. We have too much going on, too many things to do, and you are feeling overwhelmed and without enough time to get everything done. So, let’s start over. We will take out everything from our life and this time we will start with the rocks. So again, the rocks are all the essential parts of your life, the things that are most important to you—your values, your priorities—in order to keep you and your family, healthy and happy. Next I’m going to put the pebbles into the life. Again, the pebbles are the different activities and things that you do in your life. Last, but not least, we have the sand. And again, the sand are all the little things you do from a day-to-day basis: surfing the internet, watching TV, checking Facebook. So
Rocks in a Bucket Video Transcript Cont’d…
Sarah: …now, what you find is that your life is just right. You have all of the things that you wanted to do and need to do in your life, and it fills it up just right. So one thing that you will notice when you set up your life this way, is that everything works out. You put the rocks in first, and the pebbles and sand just work themselves in. Planning is essential so that when all of the pebbles and sand of your life start to clog up what’s going on, you’ll be able to identify them and decide how you want to re-structure things. Burning the candle at both ends, where you get up too early, stay up too late, not use enough time for socializing or personal time, or skip meals, all take a large toll on your emotional, physical, and mental health. So the question for you is, what are your rocks?

Miller Value Cards
Please visit page 10 of the online lessons or visit the following link directly for an interaction that helps you prioritize your personal values:
http://www.ritechhub.umn.edu/interactions/SEE/miller/miller.html

Based on what we’ve covered so far, here are some suggestions for how to plan a weekly schedule.
Sometime on Saturday or Sunday, or perhaps first thing Monday morning, sit down and plan your schedule for the upcoming week. First, make sure that all of your appointments are recorded. This includes classes, meetings, work, or other things that are at a specific time. For example, maybe you have a doctor’s or dentist appointment coming up. Be sure to also account for travel time to and from your appointments.

Next, designate blocks of time that you want to set aside for specific activities—things that are important to you and you want to keep in your schedule even though they don’t necessarily have to be done at a specific time. For example, you may designate blocks of time for studying, sleeping, exercising, and eating, among other things. Really think about how much time you want or need to devote to each of these things and when you can do them; then add them to your schedule around your appointments.

Finally, create a list of goals and tasks that you need or want to accomplish throughout the week and identify which day you plan to complete each of them. Be realistic about what you can get done in a day, and prioritize your to-
do list based on what is most important and what needs to be done first. For example, which assignments or exams do you have coming up that you need to start preparing for now?

This is just one strategy for planning and managing time. It will be helpful for you to experiment with a variety of strategies to identify what works best for you. See the resource tab below for ideas.

**Resources**
- Google calendar
- Time Management Tips
- Study Guides and Strategies
- Putting Off Procrastination modules

*It can be important to ask yourself if your expectations are realistic.*
Are you expecting too much or too little of yourself with regards to how much you can get done in a day?

If you often feel overwhelmed or frustrated with what you’re able to accomplish in a day, or you’re constantly running from one thing to the next and feeling three steps behind, you may need to examine your schedule and to-do list. Maybe you’ve got too much on your list. If so, what could you delete, postpone, or delegate to someone else?

Remember: Every day has 24 hours. The key is to identify the things that are the most important and block off time to make sure that you can get those done, avoiding distractions that may seem urgent but really aren’t that important. Then you can be flexible with the time that’s left. For example, if you’ve scheduled three hours to work on a project but get it done in two, then you can choose how to spend that extra hour. It’s generally a good idea to plan a bit more time than you think something will take, as oftentimes things take longer than we initially expect.
**Time Tips**

**Video Transcript**

Samantha: The best thing for you to do if you’re really struggling and not knowing what to do is to start a schedule. Just start marking times of, you know, what you do for each activity, and then you’ll realize, once you start marking those times, that you’re able to balance it more, just because you see how much time and effort you put into each activity.

Carlene: Put in time in your schedule. Like if you have to work or you know, you have school, classes, try and, you know, fit in and schedule out like when you’re going to exercise or when you’re going to go grocery shopping or when you’re going to do your homework.

Michael: Just make a schedule. Think of when you’re busy. Think of when your homework’s due, when you got to go to work, and then base everything off of that, and then whenever you have extra time, that’s your social time. So there you go.

Ashley: Make lists, and make sure that you are aware of what’s going on in your like everyday agenda. Like pretty much every day I make a to-do list of the important things that need to happen, and then I make sure I incorporate that with, of course, the fun things that I want to do on different days and stuff like that. But just keeping aware of what needs to be done is really important.

Alicia: Look forward, in your life and in your schedule. If you see things that are just not going to fit, don’t try to pack things in that are just going to make you miserable. You know, give yourself some breathing room with tests and important events in your life.

Liz: Plan out your time wisely. You’re going to have to make sacrifices. You’re not always going to get to go out on Friday night if you have an exam the next Monday. So just be prepared to make sacrifices.

Jacob: Set a schedule and manage the time for things you know you need to get done that day. Because if you let things go and you decide to watch TV or play videogames for hours on end, most time you’re going to let your homework go, and which is going to end up getting your stress level up, you know, through the roof.

Mary: If you procrastinate, then generally everything else goes downhill from there. So if you have a paper to do, don’t start it at midnight, and just not get distracted by things around you. If you have roommates and they want to hang out and you know you have to get to sleep, say you can’t, and just focus on what you have to do.
Are you spending more time than you realized on things that aren’t related to your key priorities?
This can be another source of frustration. Try to identify anything that might be contributing to inefficient or wasteful use of your time.

For example, do you procrastinate, spend unnecessary time performing trivial tasks, or attempt to multitask? While some believe that multitasking—trying to focus attention on multiple things at the same time—helps them accomplish more in less overall time, that’s actually not the case. Research has shown that multitasking leads to inefficiency.\textsuperscript{3,4} It’s actually better to focus on one thing at a time and minimize switching back and forth between tasks.

Do you spend hours seeking perfection?
Sometimes we can be our own worst enemies. Consider that it might be OK for something to be just good enough instead of perfect. The Pareto Principle—commonly referred to as the 80-20 rule—applies here. Basically, it suggests that 80\% of a result stems from 20\% of the effort, or vice versa—80\% of the effort contributes to 20\% of the result. It may be helpful to ask yourself whether or not putting that last bit of time, energy, or worry into something is really worth it. Does it get in the way of other important priorities that you’re also trying to balance? For example, how important is it in the grand scheme of things to get a 100\% on that next paper or exam, or a B+ instead of a B, especially if it prevents you from spending adequate time on another class?

Do you mindlessly watch TV, play video games, or spend hours online?
Sure, we need to have some down time and relax, and it’s good to stay connected with friends and family, but the key question to ask ourselves here is, “Is this necessary? Or am I being excessive?” Be honest with yourself. Do you feel more relaxed afterwards? Or, do you end up feeling guilty or frustrated because now you’re going to be up all night writing the paper that’s due tomorrow? This isn’t to say that these things are bad and always need to be avoided, but it’s important to keep in mind that there are a set number of hours in the day. We all need to maintain a balance between work and play.

Once you identify some of the things that might be clogging your schedule, determine whether you can cut them out, or at least reduce the amount of time you spend on them. How can you achieve this? You might choose to set boundaries with your friends or roommate or restrict yourself to checking email...
and social media just once or twice a day. You don’t have to check and respond to every new message that pops up or read everything in your newsfeed. Managing your time really is a form of managing yourself to be more effective. This isn’t always easy. It takes effort, but the rewards are worth it. And who knows, you might find that it’s easier than you thought it would be; you might end up not missing some of the things to which you previously allocated so much time.

**Resources**

*Self Control - App blocks user-determined webpages:*
*The Cognitive Costs of Multitasking Attached to Technology & Paying a Price*

**Why waste time looking for things that have been misplaced, such as your keys?**

Why deal with the stress of missing an assignment or payment deadline, or the frustration of double-booking social events? Why lose sleep because your room is in chaos or because you’ve got a million things floating around in your head?

You’ll save yourself loads of time in the long run if you spend just a little time getting and staying organized. Here are a few suggestions:

- Use a calendar—whether it’s online or paper-based doesn’t matter, as long as it works for you.
- Add your class schedule to your calendar as well as other standing commitments like work or important meetings.
- Go through the syllabus for each of your courses and mark the dates of assignment deadlines and exams.
- Develop a simple filing system to keep track of school-related and other documents.

**Resources**

*Simplify Your Filing System*
*College Schedule Maker*
*College Schedule Maker video description/tutorial*
Staying Organized

Video Transcript

Nicholas: One good thing is I keep my room clean, because every time you come home, you need a place to at least be able to think. The more cluttered it is, the worse it is. I also like to keep—actually use—my planner.

Abi: Freshman year in college I’m like, “Oh, I don’t need no planner. I have everything in my head.” But then as time went by, got me a student planner, actually used that a lot. Even things that are outside of school, like church stuff, home stuff, family stuff, I would put it in. I put everything in there. So get a planner. It helps a lot. Don’t just say, “Oh, I’m smart enough to keep everything in my head.” Because sometimes you will forget. So just get a planner, and if you don’t want a planner you can carry around, just use your phone.

Staying Organized

Share your time management tips with your classmates or return to page 17 of the online lessons to visit this page.

Sometimes you won’t be able to stick to the plan you set earlier in the week.

Forgive yourself. Life happens. It’s not always about how many things you checked off your list that day. It’s really a matter of whether or not you focused on the things that were most important and whether or not you feel good about how you used your time. You will gradually learn what you can reasonably accomplish in a day and what are and are not good reasons for you to stray from your plan. This is where values and priorities come into play. Don’t ignore the real world and the real needs of people around you, and remember to save some time for yourself.

Community Resources

Time management resources on campus
Learning & Academic Skills Courses

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