

## Chapter 2

# Setting Goals and Managing Your Time: Before, During, and After



## Chapter Outline

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class Days and Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**WHAT DOES YOUR IDEAL FUTURE LOOK LIKE?**

*Directions:* Put a check mark next to any of the following items that you'd want to have as part of your ideal future lifestyle. Mark as many items as you'd like.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. A great income.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Opportunities for career advancement (promotions).
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Sense of independence/self-sufficiency (able to take care of yourself and live on your own).
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. That great car or truck you've had your eye on.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Your own home.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Living in a safe neighborhood.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Being in a healthy, loving, intimate relationship.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Health insurance benefits for you and your family.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Taking vacations throughout the year.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Being able to buy the clothes that you like.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Dining out at nice restaurants on a regular basis.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Having up-to-date technology (smartphones, tablets, game consoles, TVs, etc.).
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Having extra money in your checking and savings accounts.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. Investments (stocks, bonds, mutual funds, land, etc.).
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. Your own swimming pool and spa.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. Job stability (little chance of being let go or fired).
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. Company-funded retirement account.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. Paid vacation and sick time from your employer.

If you put a checkmark next to three or more of the items above, then you have to put checkmarks next to the **six** items below as well, because it'll take all of those things to get what you want.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Good study skills.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. High grades—"A's" and "B's" only.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. College education/degree(s).
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Motivation and determination.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Willingness to make sacrifices.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Commitment to achieving goals.

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In this chapter, you'll be learning two important skills that'll make your pursuit of any dream much more successful: setting meaningful goals and managing your time efficiently. Why are these skills so important? Because you have to have a goal in mind—something that you're working toward—or you won't be motivated to get something better for yourself. You also have to know how to manage your time so you'll be able to accomplish any goal you do set.

"One half of knowing what you want is knowing what you must give up before you get it."

—Sidney Howard

## I. BEFORE You Can Set Goals and Manage Your Time

Before you can learn how to more effectively manage your time, you must clearly define **what** it is that you have to get done and **when** it has to be finished. This process is referred to as **"goal setting."**

"If you don't know where you're going, you will probably end up somewhere else."

—Lawrence J Peter

### A. What Do You Want?

It's not enough to simply **want** the items you selected on the "What Does Your Ideal Future Look Like?" assessment. **"Wanting" alone won't make it happen.** In real life, people don't necessarily get what they want, just because they want it. It's only human to want things, but you have to be willing to work for them because no one will hand them to you on a silver platter.

The beauty of putting in the extra effort to get what you want is that the harder you work for something, the more you'll appreciate and value it when you finally do get it. Things that are given to you, without you having to work for them, you'll typically take for granted and undervalue. Only those items that you work hard for will have any real meaning to you.

For example, when I turned 16 years old, my parents bought me a car (thank you Mom and Dad), but it wasn't exactly the car of my dreams. I definitely appreciated the gift—I'm not crazy after all—but it never meant as much to me as the car I eventually purchased for myself. The car I eventually purchased still wasn't the car of my dreams (I really wanted a convertible Mercedes Benz), but it was what I could afford at the time and it was all mine. It was the first major purchase I'd ever made on my own.

I worked a lot of extra hours at my part-time job to pay for it, but it was worth every minute I'd sacrificed when I finally got to drive it off the sales lot. That car was my baby and I even gave her a name—Sandy (she was the color of sand). Granted, it wasn't a very creative name, but that didn't matter to me at the time. I took better care of her than I ever did the one my parents bought for me. She got car washes, oil filter changes, tire pressure checks, new air filters, tune-ups, and anything else I could afford at the time. I had Sandy for over 14 years and the day she "died" was a sad day for me.

The point I'm trying to make is that anything you work hard for will always be more meaningful and important to you than anything you're given. **Earning a college degree won't be easy.** There will be days when you'll think there's no way you can do it; days when you'll get discouraged and think about giving up. It's on those days that you've got to remind yourself that **the more you sacrifice, and the harder you work, the more that your graduation ceremony and degree will mean to you.** You'll be able to frame that diploma, hang it on your wall, stand back, and beam with pride. **You** earned it, therefore, it'll have a lot of meaning and value to you. This will be your "Sandy."



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### B. What Are Your Goals?

According to Locke and Latham (2002), **people with clearly defined goals consistently outperform those who fail to set or define their goals.** Therefore, if you want to have certain things as part of your future lifestyle, and you want to be successful, then you must establish clearly goals of your own.

The goals you set for yourself will fall into one of two categories: "short-term" goals or "long-term" goals. Let's take a few minutes to discuss each type of goal in greater detail.

1. **Short-term goals:** Short-term goals can be **accomplished within a semester or less.** For example, you might say, "My goal is to submit my psychology

assignment on time next week"; "My goal is to earn an "A" on my next math exam"; "I want to cut back on the number of sodas I'm drinking by the end of the month"; "I want to start drinking more water each day so I'll have more energy to take my kids to Disneyworld next month"; and so forth. Short-term goals have a sense of urgency about them because they're supposed to be accomplished in a relatively short amount of time.

Think about your own short-term goals. Is there a habit you'd like to break? Is there a healthy or productive habit that you'd like to establish or do more frequently? Is there a homework assignment or exam coming up that you need to prepare for? Take some time to decide on a short-term goal that you'd like to accomplish in the next few days, weeks, or months. Then write it down on the blank lines (*Note: Putting a goal in writing will also increase the likelihood that you'll accomplish it.*).

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"I don't care how much power, brilliance and energy you have, if you don't harness it, and focus on a specific target, and hold it there, you're never going to accomplish as much as your ability warrants."

—Zig Ziglar

2. **Long-term goals:** Long-term goals **typically take more than a semester or two to accomplish.** They require greater determination and patience because they're more remote in time than short-term goals. For example, "I want to earn an associate's or bachelor's degree"; "I want to save enough money to buy a car in 2 years"; "I want to learn a second (or third) language"; and so forth. Do you see the difference?

Think about your own long-term goals. Is there an educational goal that you'd like to set for yourself? Is there a particular career or position within a company that you'd like to have within the next 5 years? Would you like to buy a house in the future? Take some time to decide on a long-term goal that you'd like to accomplish over the next few years. Then write it down on the blank lines—remember, putting it in writing will increase the likelihood that you'll complete this goal.

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Now that you've established your own short- and long-term goals, let's go one step further and make them as clear and specific as possible. How do you do that? Good question, I'm glad you asked.

If you really want to accomplish a goal, any goal, then you have to do a little bit more than simply writing

a sentence or two on a piece of paper. You have to make sure that you're setting S.M.A.R.T. goals, if you expect to reach them (Doran, Miller, & Cunningham, 1981). "S.M.A.R.T." is an acronym that stands for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time based. Let's talk about each of these terms individually, and then we'll go over some examples of how you use all of them to create S.M.A.R.T. short- and long-term goals.

**Specific:** The specific aspect of goal setting **answers the questions: Who? What? And Where?** In other words, who will be involved in helping you accomplish your goal? What will you be doing in order to accomplish your goal? And where will you be working on your goal?

**Measurable:** The measurable part of S.M.A.R.T. goal setting involves making sure that your goal can be quantified (measured) in some objective way. It's the "**How much?**" component of goal setting. Without this information, you won't be able to determine whether or not you've actually reached your goal.

**Attainable:** Attainable goals are those that can be **realistically achieved.** In other words, they're not based on fanciful wishes or dreams. They're actually something you'd be able to accomplish in real life.

**Relevant:** You won't be able to accomplish any goal you set for yourself if it's not personally meaningful and important to you. You can't accomplish a goal that you're setting because someone else wants you to do it. It has to be something that comes from within you. Relevant **answers the "Why?"** question of goal setting. It forces you to explain why you're trying to reach this goal; why it's so important to you.

**Time Based:** Time-based goals are those that have **clear starting and ending points.** This aspect of S.M.A.R.T. goal-setting helps you answer the "**When?**" question. If you don't establish an exact starting point, in particular, you'll be tempted to put it off for another week, month, year, or longer. It'll be like that savings plan you're always talking about starting, but never actually do. You definitely don't want that to happen, especially if your goals involve making a better life for yourself by earning a college degree.

"Goals are dreams with deadlines."

—Diana Scharf Hunt

Okay. Now that you know a little bit more about the "S.M.A.R.T." acronym, let's take a look at some examples of S.M.A.R.T. goals. We'll start with a fairly common short-term goal: "You want to lose some weight." That's a worthwhile goal, but it doesn't provide the Who? What? When? Where? How much?

and Why? questions about your weight loss plan? The answer is obviously, no, so here's what a S.M.A.R.T. version of your short-term goal might look like:

**Specific:** You and your friend (Who?), will walk on treadmills three times per week for 30 minutes each time (What?). You'll both meet at the college's fitness center at 4:00 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays (Where?).

**Measurable:** You'll lose a total of 15 pounds (How much?), and you'll use your home scale to measure your progress. More specifically, you'll weigh yourself every Monday morning at 9:00 a.m., while wearing nothing at all.

**Attainable:** You've researched what the most realistic and healthiest weekly weight loss totals should be for someone who's your sex, height, and age, so that's what you're going to do. You're going to lose 1 pound each week for the next 15 weeks.

**Relevant:** This goal is important to **you** because you want to feel more comfortable in your clothes and have more energy so you can play with your children or bike ride with your friends on the weekends (Why?).

**Time Based:** You'll start working toward your weight loss goal this coming Monday and your target end date will be 15 weeks from then (When?).

Using Exercise 2.1, revise your original short-term goal to make it S.M.A.R.T.

"Shoot for the moon. Even if you miss, you'll land among the stars."

—Les Brown

Now we'll take a look at an example of a long-term goal: You want to earn an Associate of Arts degree (AA) in psychology. Well, that's a pretty vague (unclear) goal, so let's turn it into a S.M.A.R.T. goal by being more specific about the parameters (boundaries and guidelines).

**Specific:** You're going to meet with your academic advisor in the Psychology Department (Who?) to create a detailed course plan that'll include everything you'll need to take (What?) at the college (Where?) in order to earn the degree.

**Measurable:** Your advisor tells you that you'll need to complete 60 college credit hours in order to graduate with your AA in psychology (How much?). You're going to keep track of your progress by checking off the required courses on your degree plan as you complete each one.

**Attainable:** This is certainly a manageable and realistic goal, but you'll have to limit the number

## Exercise 2.1: Your S.M.A.R.T. Short-Term Goal

**Directions:** Go back and review the short-term goal you wrote down when we began this discussion about short- and long-term goals. Then take that goal and turn it into a S.M.A.R.T. goal by filling in the blanks:

**Specific:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Measurable:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Attainable:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Relevant:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Time Based:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



of hours you'll work each semester and make the commitment to really focus on your coursework.

*Relevant:* You've seen your sister go through the trauma of being in a physically and emotionally abusive marriage and you want to be able to help other women the way the shelter helped your sister. In order to work at the shelter, however, you first have to earn an Associate degree (Why?).

*Time Based:* You've just been admitted to the college, so you'll be beginning this semester, and you plan to graduate at the end of 2 years (When?).

Using Exercise 2.2, revise your original long-term goal to make it S.M.A.R.T.

Now that you've written S.M.A.R.T. short- and long-term goals, the next step is to learn how to manage your time so you'll be more likely to accomplish those goals. After all, without good time-management skills, you won't be able to meet the deadlines you've set for yourself.

## C. Who's in Charge of Your Time?

"We are kept from our goal not by obstacles, but by a clear path to a lesser goal."

—Robert Brault

If you learn how to use your time more efficiently and effectively, it'll make the pursuit of your goals much easier. You'll discover that you have the time to meet all of your academic commitments, as well as have more time to spend doing the things you enjoy. It all comes down to whether or not you're willing to take control of your time.

According to Downing (2013), people tend to fall into one of two categories when it comes to time management. They're either **"victims" who are powerless over their lives**, incapable of making changes, and are unable to manage their time; or they're **"creators" who maintain personal control over their lives**, welcome the challenges that change brings, and manage their time well. In other words, creators take personal responsibility for their behavior, their choices, and the way they spend their time, while victims make excuses and feel helpless. So which one are you? Are you a victim or a creator?

Are you a victim who would blame the traffic jam for making you late to class, or are you a creator who leaves the house 15 to 20 minutes earlier every day to allow time for traffic delays? Are you a victim who couldn't study as long as you'd hoped because some friends dropped by and asked you to go out, or are you a creator who thanks them for the invitation and schedules a different day and time to join them? Are you a victim who's bullied by your supervisor to work extra hours when you really need to be working on a paper, or are you a creator who stands up for yourself and refuses to work the extra time? (*Note:* Be prepared

### Exercise 2.2: Your S.M.A.R.T. Long-Term Goal

*Directions:* Go back and review the long-term goal you wrote down when we began this discussion about short- and long-term goals. Then take that goal and turn it into a S.M.A.R.T. goal by filling in the blanks:

**Specific:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Measurable:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Attainable:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Relevant:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Time Based:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



to look for another part-time job if your employer is unwilling to accommodate your school schedule, because a college degree is much more valuable than a job making french fries.)

"There is nothing so useless as doing efficiently that which should not be done at all."

—Peter Drucker

**Only you can decide whether you're going to be a victim or a creator.** Before you make up your mind, however, you should also know that victims rarely attain their goals, but creators usually do (Downing, 2013). So which one do you want to be? Do you want to be a college graduate and have a successful career? Or do you want to drop out of college and work a dead-end job for the rest of your life? It's time to make a choice.

Complete the worksheet, Assignment 2.1, which is based on Downing's (2013) work. It challenges you to turn victim statements into creator statements.

## D. Learning to Say, "No."



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An important part of being a successful college student, and creator, is knowing when and how to say, "No" to a request. Saying, "No" to a friend or

someone you love may be difficult, but it's necessary to do it sometimes. This is especially true if their request would prevent you from attending one of your classes, completing an assignment, or preparing for an exam. If they truly care about you, they'll understand that your education has to come first. If it's absolutely necessary, you could spend a few minutes trying to brainstorm a list of other people who might be able to help them, but your name **cannot** be on that list.

Sometimes it's not a matter of saying "no" to a favor; it's about having to say "no" to an invitation. This is especially difficult when it involves going somewhere or doing something that you'd really enjoy doing—which includes just about everything other than studying. **Your creator self is going to have to stand up, be strong, and help you do what needs to be done; not give in to the victim who wants to play.** After all, your friends will go out again next Saturday night; your favorite performer will be in concert again next year; you can see that new movie another time; and so forth. Rarely are these distractions a once in a lifetime opportunity or event, despite your feelings to the contrary, so prioritize your goals and make the right decisions.

Let's see how good you are at speaking up for yourself and telling people, "No." Answer the questions in Exercise 2.3 as honestly as you possibly can. Remember, as with any of the other assessments in this book, the more honest you are with yourself, the more you'll learn from them.

It's never easy to be assertive and tell someone "No," especially when they're people you're close to, but you're going to have to start doing it more often if you want to reach your goals of earning a degree and having a successful career. Believe me, the people who really care about you will continue to care about you even if you do say, "No." They might be temporarily angry or frustrated, but they'll get over it. Start saying, "No!" **today**—but not to this suggestion (grin).

## E. Where's Your Time Really Going?



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Hopefully, you've decided that you want to be a creator, rather than a victim, which means you'll be taking personal responsibility for your time. Before you can begin to manage your time, however, **you have to figure out how you're currently using it.**

"If you don't have time to do it right, you must have time to do it over."

—Author Unknown

Most people are completely unaware of where their time is going and it's quite possible that you fall into this category as well. Do you frequently reach the end of your day and wonder where the time went? Why you don't seem to accomplish what you'd wanted to do? Why deadlines always seem to sneak up on you? If so, then you're not managing your time effectively either.

In order to get a clearer picture of where your time is **really** going, you need to complete Assignment 2.2. This assignment will help you track your activity for an entire week, so you can see what's really going on during an average week.

While you're keeping track of your **"Real Time"** this week, I want you to begin Assignment 2.3. In this assignment you'll be asked to estimate where you **think** your time is going each week (**"Estimated Time"**).

As you look at this list of activities you engaged in during the week, ask yourself if the time you spent on each one was well invested and worthwhile. In other words, **were these activities "productive" and getting you closer to the S.M.A.R.T. short- and long-term goals** you established for yourself? Or were they simply **"distracting"** you from what you should have been doing instead?

"Never be too busy mopping the floor to turn off the faucet."

—Author Unknown

If you spent more time on productive activities (e.g., studying, attending classes, participating in student activities) than you thought you did, that's a good thing. You're steadily progressing toward your goal of earning a college degree, so keep doing what you're doing. Or, as my father would always say, **"Don't fix it if it ain't broke."** If, on the other hand, the activities you're engaging in are distracting you from the things you need to be doing in order to reach your goal, then you have to take charge—be a creator—and reduce the amount of time you're doing them.

One way to cut back on the amount of time you may be wasting is to set a specific limit on each distracting activity. For example, I have a tendency to get carried away when I'm surfing the Internet. I intend to spend only 15 to 20 minutes looking for a particular piece of information, but, without realizing it, 90 minutes have gone by and I never did find the information I was originally looking for. Not only do I not have what I needed, but I've run out of time to accomplish the other three tasks I meant to do that day.

I finally wised up and realized that I had to set a specific time limit on my surfing if I wanted to get other things done. I decided to put a kitchen timer next to my computer and, when I go online to find something, **I set the timer for 15 minutes.** If I haven't found the information I need by the time I hear the timer **"ding,"** then I have to move on to a more productive activity. Admittedly, it's difficult to stop surfing sometimes, but if I want to call myself a **"creator,"** I have to confront my urge to continue looking, and simply stop.

Try using this 15-minute rule (timer technique) and you'll see just how effective it can be. I have to warn you, however, that you have to use a kitchen timer, **not** your cell phone's built-in timer. Why, you ask? Because if you're like most people, you'll either get distracted by a new text message or e-mail before you get to set the timer. Having a cell phone within arm's reach exposes you to a slippery slope toward procrastination.

"To think too long about doing a thing often becomes its undoing."

—Eva Young

## **II. DURING the Time-Management Process**

I told you about the importance of setting S.M.A.R.T. short- and long-term goals; about becoming a creator instead of a victim; and about understanding where your time is **really** going; but that's only the beginning. Now it's time to talk about how you can manage your time.

Researchers have discovered that students' time-management skills are actually a better predictor of their future college success than ACT or SAT scores (Britton & Tesser, 1991). Therefore, no matter how intelligent you are, or how great you are at taking tests, being an effective time manager is **the** most important skill you can possess.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class Days and Time: \_\_\_\_\_

## Assignment 2.1: Victim Statements Versus Creator Statements

*Directions:* Practice being a creator by rewording the following self-defeating victim statements.

The first three statements under the “Victims say...” column are translated into “Creators say...” statements in the first three examples. Your job is to take on the role of the **creator** and revise the rest of the victim statements.

VICTIMS SAY...	CREATORS SAY...
1. I'd get to bed earlier if my brother wouldn't challenge me to another game.	1. If I set a limit of two games per night and ignore his challenges, I'd get to bed earlier.
2. I have to return a text message to my boyfriend, even if it's during class.	2. My boyfriend knows my schedule and knows that I'm in class right now. I'll text him when the class is over.
3. I would do better in the class if the professor was better.	3. The professor might not be the best, but I can meet with someone in the learning center who can help me understand the material.
4. I couldn't come to class because I had a dental checkup scheduled at the same time.	4. _____ _____
5. I didn't bring my books to class because I left them in my friend's car.	5. _____ _____
6. I would've studied for the exam, but my friend was upset about his/her dating partner and needed to talk last night.	6. _____ _____
7. I tried to call the professor about the assignment, but he/she didn't answer, so I'm going to have to turn it in late.	7. _____ _____
8. I don't have my homework finished because my boss made me work late.	8. _____ _____

**VICTIMS SAY...**

9. I couldn't get the assignment details because I was absent.

10. I wanted to study, but my children/family wouldn't leave me alone.

**CREATORS SAY...**

9. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Create five of your own victim and creator statements on the next set of blank lines.**

(Note: Try to think of some of the excuses you've used in the past or perhaps those that you've heard other students use.)

11. \_\_\_\_\_ 11. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

12. \_\_\_\_\_ 12. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

13. \_\_\_\_\_ 13. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

14. \_\_\_\_\_ 14. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

15. \_\_\_\_\_ 15. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Exercise 2.3: Willingness to Say, “No.”

*Directions:* Using the following options, complete statements 1 through 10.

1 = I would definitely say, “No.”

2 = I would probably say, “No.”

3 = I would probably say, “Yes.”

4 = I would definitely say, “Yes.”

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. If a friend asked for my homework answers because he/she didn’t do theirs, I...
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. If a friend asked to see my test answers during an exam, I...
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. If a friend repeatedly asked to borrow money for the snack machine, but never pays it back, I...
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. If a classmate wanted to take my notebook home for the weekend, I...
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. If I have to study for a test, but my sister wants me to babysit, I...
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. I have an assignment due tomorrow, but my children want me to take them to see a movie tonight, I...
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. If a friend wanted to stop by to visit for a while, but I had reading to do, I...
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. If a friend wanted to borrow my car again, but he/she never puts gas in it, I...
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. If someone asked me out on a date, but I really liked him/her only as a friend, I...
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. If my little sister wanted to spend the night at my apartment, but I was having a group of students over to study, I...

Add up the numbers for the answers you gave. What’s the total? \_\_\_\_\_

In most, if not all of these scenarios, it would’ve been appropriate for you to say, “No.” Therefore, the lower your score the better you are at standing up for yourself, and the more successful you’re likely to be in college.

If you scored between 10 and 20 on the “Willingness to Say ‘No’” Assessment, you’re good at saying, “No,” so keep up the good work. If, however, your total was greater than 21, you’ve got some work to do in this area. Try going back to the situations where you responded with a 3 or 4 and brainstorm some ways that you could change those responses into a 1 or 2.

For example, if you said, “Yes” to the friend who wanted your homework answers, consider ways that you could have said, “No” without hurting your friendship. Something like, “I want to help you out, but the professor checks our homework, and if she sees that we’ve got identical answers, we’ll both get a zero.” This would be an honest, and wise, response to his/her request. A “true” friend will respect your answer because they wouldn’t want you to get a zero on the assignment.

Now you give it a try with the other 3’s and 4’s you answered. Think of at least one way that you could’ve said, “No” without feeling bad for not helping or angry because you were being taken advantage of by someone.

I said yes to this...

I could’ve said...

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class Days and Time: \_\_\_\_\_

## Assignment 2.2: How I *Really* Spend My Time Each Week

*Directions:* You'll be using this blank schedule to help you keep track of how you're **really** using your time during the next week.

1. The time sheet is broken down by day (Sunday through Saturday) across the top, and 30- minute increments (segments) of time along the left-hand column.
2. Your job is to record **everything** you do, from the time you wake up in the morning until the time you go to bed each night, for 1 full week. The more detailed you can be about each time segment, the better measure it will be of where your time is **really** going.
3. **Keep this assignment sheet with you everywhere you go and fill in the time blocks as they occur.** If you wait until the end of the day to make your entries for the last 24 hours, it won't be detailed enough to give you a true understanding of how your time was spent.
4. Be as **detailed** as you possibly can. For example, indicate what you did immediately after you woke up each morning, and then every 30 minutes after that (e.g., took a shower, ate breakfast and watched TV, drove to the campus, parked and walked to class, sat in history class for 90 minutes).
5. **Be honest** about what you **really** did throughout the day. You're not going to be judged for how you spent your time. If you played video games, surfed the Internet, posted updates on Facebook, or played Candy Crush for four hours, then write it down. If you went out on Friday night to "play" with your friends (whatever that means to you), then write it down.
6. This will be a tedious assignment to complete, but it's essential that you follow these directions and be as specific as possible.



Time	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
12:00 A.M.				
12:30 A.M.				
1:00 A.M.				
1:30 A.M.				
2:00 A.M.				
2:30 A.M.				
3:00 A.M.				
3:30 A.M.				
4:00 A.M.				
4:30 A.M.				
5:00 A.M.				
5:30 A.M.				
6:00 A.M.				
6:30 A.M.				
7:00 A.M.				
7:30 A.M.				
8:00 A.M.				
8:30 A.M.				
9:00 A.M.				
9:30 A.M.				
10:00 A.M.				
10:30 A.M.				
11:00 A.M.				
11:30 A.M.				
12:00 P.M.				
12:30 P.M.				
1:00 P.M.				
1:30 P.M.				
2:00 P.M.				
2:30 P.M.				
3:00 P.M.				
3:30 P.M.				
4:00 P.M.				
4:30 P.M.				
5:00 P.M.				
5:30 P.M.				
6:00 P.M.				
6:30 P.M.				
7:00 P.M.				
7:30 P.M.				
8:00 P.M.				
8:30 P.M.				
9:00 P.M.				
9:30 P.M.				
10:00 P.M.				
10:30 P.M.				
11:00 P.M.				
11:30 P.M.				

Time	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
12:00 A.M.			
12:30 A.M.			
1:00 A.M.			
1:30 A.M.			
2:00 A.M.			
2:30 A.M.			
3:00 A.M.			
3:30 A.M.			
4:00 A.M.			
4:30 A.M.			
5:00 A.M.			
5:30 A.M.			
6:00 A.M.			
6:30 A.M.			
7:00 A.M.			
7:30 A.M.			
8:00 A.M.			
8:30 A.M.			
9:00 A.M.			
9:30 A.M.			
10:00 A.M.			
10:30 A.M.			
11:00 A.M.			
11:30 A.M.			
12:00 P.M.			
12:30 P.M.			
1:00 P.M.			
1:30 P.M.			
2:00 P.M.			
2:30 P.M.			
3:00 P.M.			
3:30 P.M.			
4:00 P.M.			
4:30 P.M.			
5:00 P.M.			
5:30 P.M.			
6:00 P.M.			
6:30 P.M.			
7:00 P.M.			
7:30 P.M.			
8:00 P.M.			
8:30 P.M.			
9:00 P.M.			
9:30 P.M.			
10:00 P.M.			
10:30 P.M.			
11:00 P.M.			
11:30 P.M.			

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**RESERVED**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class Days and Time: \_\_\_\_\_

## Assignment 2.3: My “Estimated Time” Versus My “Real Time”

*Directions:*

1. Use the first column “Estimated Time” to make your best guess about how much time you spend on each activity during an average week.
2. After you’ve completed Assignment 2.2: How I **Really** Spend My Time Each Week, you’ll add up the total amount of time you **really** spent on each of the activities.
3. Lastly, you’ll **subtract** the “Real Time” from the “Estimated Time” for each activity. Then enter each resulting number under the “Difference” column.

(Note: Be sure to include a minus sign if the difference between the two columns is less than zero. For example, if the “Estimated Time” is 3 hours, but the “Real Time” is 5 hours, then your calculation would look like this:  $3 - 5 = -2$  ).

ESTIMATED TIME	REAL TIME	DIFFERENCE	ACTIVITY
_____	_____	_____	1. Time with your parents, siblings, or other family.
_____	_____	_____	2. Time with your children (if applicable).
_____	_____	_____	3. Time sleeping at night.
_____	_____	_____	4. Time napping during the day.
_____	_____	_____	5. Time outside of school with friends.
_____	_____	_____	6. Time working somewhere for pay.
_____	_____	_____	7. Time in and between your classes.
_____	_____	_____	8. Time doing homework or studying.
_____	_____	_____	9. Time playing video games or cell phone games.
_____	_____	_____	10. Time surfing the Internet.
_____	_____	_____	11. Time on social sites (Facebook, Instagram, etc.).
_____	_____	_____	12. Time at religious services or with groups.
_____	_____	_____	13. Time involved in a student organization.
_____	_____	_____	14. Time spent exercising or participating in sports.

ESTIMATED TIME	REAL TIME	DIFFERENCE	ACTIVITY
_____	_____	_____	15. Time eating out at restaurants.
_____	_____	_____	16. Time preparing and eating meals at home.
_____	_____	_____	17. Time on personal care (showering, dressing, etc.).
_____	_____	_____	18. Time watching TV or movies.
_____	_____	_____	19. Time spent traveling to and from work and school.
_____	_____	_____	20. Time shopping (grocery store, clothing, etc.).
_____	_____	_____	21. Time for regular medical appointments.
_____	_____	_____	22. Time cleaning your apartment or house.
_____	_____	_____	23. Time with dating partner or spouse (if applicable).
_____	_____	_____	24. Other: _____
_____	_____	_____	25. Other: _____

(Note: Each of the first two columns should add up to 168, because there are 168 hours in a week.)

Which activities had the greatest difference between your estimate and what you really did? And what, if anything, do you think you need to do about the differences? Write your answers on the blank lines.

ACTIVITY	WHAT WILL YOU CHANGE?
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

## A. What's Really Important to You?



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In the opening self-assessment, “What Does Your Ideal Future Look Like?” you identified the things you value and desire. You declared that these things were important to you and that you want to have them in the future. If that’s truly what you want, then the only way to create your ideal future is to **prioritize the behaviors that put you closer to making that “ideal future” a “reality.”** This means that you have to establish good study skills, earn high grades (“A’s” and “B’s” only), complete a college degree, have self-determination and motivation, commit to accomplish your goals, and be willing to make difficult choices and sacrifices.

As I mentioned previously, whenever you find yourself spending a significant amount of time on any task, you need to ask yourself if **this activity is putting you closer to your ideal future or not.** For example, if your goal is to become a computer technician, then the time you spend fixing your friends’ computers might be well invested. If it’s not your goal, however, then you’ll need to limit the amount of time you spend repairing their equipment and focus more on your studies.

If your goal is to become a psychologist, then setting aside time to volunteer at a mental health clinic or crisis hotline is well invested. If it’s not, however, then no matter how kind and generous that gift of time might be, you must focus on your studies and find a volunteer opportunity that’s related to your chosen field. (Note: Colleges typically offer credit hours for work you do in your chosen major/field. They typically call these opportunities “internships” or “cooperative education.” Be sure to check out these options before you volunteer anywhere.)

“Many people think they want things, but they don’t really have the strength, the discipline. They are weak. I believe that you get what you want if you want it badly enough.”

—Sophia Loren

## B. Writing To-Do Lists

One of the best tools for keeping you on track and working toward your goals is a “To-Do” list. This is a **list of the tasks you hope to accomplish during any given day or week.** If you don’t have a written To-Do list to follow, then you’re likely to get distracted or forget one or more things that you have to do. Writing things down, rather than keeping them all in your head, will make it less likely that you’ll forget to do something.

Many people write To-Do lists, but they don’t necessarily use them the right way. Writing a well-planned To-Do list involves more than just brainstorming a laundry list of tasks; it’s about knowing what’s most important, and it’s about prioritizing.

Human nature will make you want to put off larger, more complicated, and challenging tasks in favor of completing smaller, less difficult ones. After all, it feels good to cross things off your To-Do list each day, so you’ll tackle the easy stuff first. Unfortunately, focusing on the easy tasks, and ignoring the more difficult tasks, will only create problems for you in the long run. For example, you may put off an important assignment until “another day,” which eventually becomes the night before it’s due. Now you’ve increased the amount of stress and pressure you’re under, and decreased the quality of the work you’ll be submitting to your professor. It’s a bad move.

One way to improve upon this tempting and destructive way of managing your To-Do list is to begin using the “ranking” or “prioritizing” technique. This particular technique involves taking your To-Do list and **rank ordering the tasks according to their importance.** Those items that are critical, and must be done that same day, are given priority and put at the top of the list. Those items that you might like to do, but don’t necessarily have to do that day, are placed at the bottom of the list. This means you’ll have to start studying for your psychology test today and put off shopping for new shoes or a new Xbox game until tomorrow.

Remember, the question you should always be asking yourself is whether or not any particular activity is getting you closer to your goals. If it is, it takes priority. If it isn’t, it moves to the bottom of the list. It’s as simple as that. However, there are some obvious exceptions to this rule, and they have to do with the health and well-being of you and your family. Taking your daughter to see the doctor, for example, might not get you closer to graduation, but it’s nonetheless a priority. As a creator, you must use your judgment when you rank order your To-Do list. You must plan it in such a way that you have some “wiggle room” for any emergency that pops up or any sudden illness you might contract.

"Successful people are successful because they form habits of doing those things that failures don't like to do."

—Albert Gray

Rank ordering or prioritizing your To-Do list won't be easy at first, but you'll get the hang of it. Get some practice by completing Exercise 2.4.



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"You cannot expect to achieve new goals or move beyond your present circumstances unless you change."

—Les Brown.

## C. Creating a Master Schedule



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If you're going to gain control of your time and use it effectively, then you'll need to create what's called a "master schedule." A master schedule contains the

### Exercise 2.4: Prioritizing a To-Do List

**Directions:** You have a long list of things to accomplish this week, but some of the tasks are more urgent and important than others. Keeping your goals in mind, prioritize the following To-Do list by placing a "1" next to the most important item—the one that should be done first; a "2" next to the second most important item, and so forth, until you get to the tenth item.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Call and make a dental appointment for next month.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Talk to your professor about dropping her class before the deadline next week.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Return the library book that's due today or pay a \$1.00 per day late fee.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Go to the Learning Center and meet with a math tutor because you have an exam tomorrow.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Go to the grocery store and buy items for dinner this weekend (3 days from now).
- \_\_\_\_\_ Stop by Jimmy's house to see his new car.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Re-alphabetize my DVD collection.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Spend 1 hour reviewing notes for all four of my courses—15 minutes per course.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Buy a gift for Suzie's birthday next month.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Come up with an idea for a paper topic before my next English class (2 days from now).

Starting with the first item in the list (Call and make...), and ending with the last item in the list (Come up with...), a creator's rank ordering would likely be: 7, 2, 4, 1, 6, 9, 10, 5, 8, and 3. How close to this ranking did you come?



**weekly commitments** you've made to participate in certain activities at **specific times**. For example, each of your courses commits you to specific days and times; your employer has negotiated a specific work schedule with you that consists of particular days and times; you may have regularly scheduled religious activities on another set day(s) and time(s); and so forth.

"I don't know the key to success, but the key to failure is trying to please everybody."

—Bill Cosby

I call these regularly scheduled commitments "immovable objects," because they have to be done on the exact days and times that they're scheduled. Therefore, you have to write them down on a master schedule, so you don't double-book yourself. Once you've filled in your scheduled commitments, you can more easily identify where the gaps in your schedule are, and then use those gaps to complete some of the items on your To-Do list. Create your own master schedule using the Assignment 2.4 time table and see where your free time gaps are each day.

Once you've completed Assignment 2.4, you'll be able to see the **pockets of free time** that are located within your schedule. You have to think like a creator and use those pockets of time to work on the items that are on your **To-Do list**. Start taking advantage of the pockets of time between classes, the time you spend waiting for a professor to arrive in class, the time you spend waiting for your daughter to finish ballet class, and so forth. You'd be surprised by all the things you can complete in as little as 10, 20, or 30 minutes (See Table 2.1 for some suggestions).

By using those pockets of time in a productive way, you're actually freeing up time later in the day to do whatever you want to do. The truth is, time management isn't about doing more each day; it's about using your time more effectively so you'll have more **free time** later in the day or over the weekend. If you waste that valuable time during the day, your evenings and weekends will be spent doing things that you're not likely to enjoy doing. The choice is yours.

"We're still not where we're going, but we're not where we were."

—Natash Jasefowitz

## D. Using Weekly and Monthly Calendars

During the first week of classes you'll get a copy of the **syllabus** for each course you're enrolled in that semester. Each syllabus includes a summary of

what you'll be covering over the next few months. It provides a summary of the course requirements and a detailed timeline for the readings, assignments, exams, and so forth. Looking at the endless stream of requirements can overwhelm even the most confident student. It seems like it'll be impossible to get all of those things done. Then add on the blur of due dates and your head will begin to spin.

When I was a student, the only way I could maintain my confidence—and sanity—was to collect all of my course syllabi (plural of syllabus), and sit down with two different calendars to help me plan out the entire semester. One calendar was organized by individual weeks and the other calendar was organized by months. If it weren't for those two basic organizational tools, I never would've completed my course requirements on time. Let me explain how each type of calendar can help you.

1. **Weekly Calendars:** Weekly calendars typically use two pages to display all 7 days within each week. They'll usually show Monday through Wednesday on the left page and Thursday through Sunday on the right page. (See Figure 2.1 for a sample of a weekly calendar page.)

A weekly calendar gives you enough space to **write down all of the detailed due dates** you have for your courses. For example, if you're required to read Chapter 4 in your history class by Monday, you'd write, "History - Chapter 4" on Monday. If you had to submit an outline of a paper in your English class by Thursday, you'd write, "English paper outline due" on Thursday. Get the idea? You might even want to use different colors for each course. For example, you could write your history due dates in green, your English due dates in blue, and so forth. That way you'll be able to distinguish between classes and deadlines at a glance.

By taking time to write down all of your due dates in a weekly calendar, you can virtually eliminate the risk of forgetting something important. If you don't take time to create a detailed weekly calendar, you'll constantly be referring back to each course syllabus to keep you on track. Trust me, this approach almost always leads to missed deadlines, so spend an hour or so at the beginning of each semester and record all of the due dates from your syllabi. It's a somewhat tedious task, granted, but it'll be well worth it in the end.

Now you might be thinking about using your smartphone or tablet's calendar to keep track of all of this information, but those types of calendars typically limit the amount of text you can write on any given day. Therefore, they might not work as well. As technology progresses, and applications improve, digital calendars may become more useful, but for now, weekly calendars work best.

2. *Monthly Calendars:* A monthly calendar shows an entire month on one page (See Figure 2.2). There isn't much room in a daily box, so you should reserve your monthly calendar for the **"major deadlines" and exam dates** that you have in each course. Examples of a major deadline might be the day that a final draft of your English paper is due, the day you're scheduled to give a lengthy presentation in your government class, or the day a semester-long project in your psychology class is due.

I used to write each of the major requirements in red, so they'd stand out easily, but you could also write each one in the same color you're using in your weekly planner. It's completely up to you. What's most important is that you do it and then hang it in an area that you'll look at frequently. For example, you could hang it on the wall next to your desk, post it on the refrigerator door, or tack it to the bathroom wall. It doesn't matter where you hang it, as long as you'll see it regularly. By doing this, you're much less likely to miss a major deadline or have an exam sneak up on you at the last minutes.

"Know what you want to do, hold the thought firmly, and do every day what should be done, and every sunset will see you that much nearer the goal."

—Elbert Hubbard

## E. Getting Organized

Now that you've gotten your calendars and due dates taken care of, it's time to talk a little bit about the importance of becoming more organized. You might not realize how big of an impact your study area can have on your ability to focus and be productive, as well as on your stress level. If you **surround yourself with clutter and chaos, then your mind will also become cluttered and chaotic**. As a result, you'll likely end up spending more time looking for what you need than you'll be able to spend using those items. This in turn will create added stress, which can then have a negative impact on your physical and emotional well-being. With that in mind, let me share with you a few suggestions I have for getting yourself more organized.

1. *Designated Work Space:* The first step is to establish a designated work space within your home. It could be a desk in your room or the dining room table that's used only on special occasions. It doesn't matter what you choose, as long as it's a **place that's reserved for you to use when doing school work**. After all, if you have to keep packing up your books and papers every day and moving them, you'll waste a lot of valuable time. Worse still, if other people are putting their stuff in the same place, you'll not only

waste time moving their things out of the way every day, but you're also more likely to have things "disappear." The key is to find a place where you can sit down and begin working right away.

Bear in mind, however, that a dedicated workspace is useful only if you keep it **free from clutter**. If you have stacks of loose papers, old snack wrappers, dirty glasses, and so forth all over the place, you won't be very productive. So clean up the mess and allow only the most necessary "tools" to be on top of it: pens and pencils, a calculator, a stapler, paper, your calendar, a dictionary, and a timer.

2. *Create a Tool Kit:* If you don't have a dedicated workspace, then you'll need to put together a **"tool kit"** that can travel with you whenever you leave the house to do your homework. I recommend that you buy an inexpensive plastic box with a handle that has different sections inside for the study supplies you'll need: **pens and pencils, a calculator, a small stapler, papers, your calendar, a dictionary, and a timer**. This way you can use your time effectively, rather than wasting time by having to gather up all of your supplies each time.

By the way, if you have children or other inconsiderate roommates who "borrow" things from your tool kit, but fail to put them back, I recommend that you either keep the box hidden and/or locked by a key, or you give them a kit of their very own as an early birthday present. Hopefully, then they'll leave your kit intact.

3. *Organize Your Notebooks/Binders:* You need to have a **different colored notebook or binder for each course** that you're taking; and it should have **pockets inside that can hold your handouts, graded assignments, returned exams**, and so forth, so they don't end up loose and mangled in the bottom of your backpack or in the back seat of your car. It's **crucial** that you keep anything that's been graded. Professors are human beings, and sometimes we make mistakes in our grade books. If you have proof of your grades, then the oversight can be easily corrected. If you don't keep your graded work, however, then we'll have to assume the zero is correct.

If your professor is using a textbook that is three-hole punched, like this one, then you definitely need to keep it in a binder. I would also recommend that you keep all of your reading and in-class notes with each corresponding textbook chapter in your binder. If you really want to keep your binder organized, you should buy a set of dividers with plastic tabs on the edges, and insert them between each chapter. That way you'll be able to flip to the section you need without having to search through all of the pages.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class Days and Time: \_\_\_\_\_

## Assignment 2.4: My Master Schedule for the Week

*Directions:* Use the weekly layout to create your own personal master schedule.

1. Fill in your class schedule for the week. For example, if you have PSYC 1300 on Mondays and Wednesdays from 11:00 a.m. until 12:20 p.m., then draw a box around that time frame on those 2 days, and shade it in. Follow this same process to fill in all of your courses this semester.
2. Draw a box around your work days and times in order to reveal your uncommitted times. Then shade in each box. (*Note:* If your schedule changes each week, you'll have to go through this process each week).
3. Box in any other standing commitments you have each week, for example, religious services, dinner with family every Wednesday, student organization meeting every Monday, and so forth. Then shade in those boxes as well.
4. Box in and shade the time you typically go to bed each night until you normally wake up each morning, so you'll know that those time slots are also taken.
5. Box in the times you typically spend preparing and eating meals, and then shade them in.
6. Box in the time you spend commuting (driving or walking) to-and-from work, school, and so forth. Then shade those in.
7. Box in the times you typically dedicate to your regular hygiene routine (showering, dressing, etc.), and shade those in.
8. Lastly, box in any time commitments that I've not already included in this list. Then shade those times in as well.

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
5:00 A.M.							
5:30 A.M.							
6:00 A.M.							
6:30 A.M.							
7:00 A.M.							
7:30 A.M.							
8:00 A.M.							
8:30 A.M.							
9:00 A.M.							
9:30 A.M.							
10:00 A.M.							
10:30 A.M.							
11:00 A.M.							
11:30 A.M.							
12:00 P.M.							
12:30 P.M.							
1:00 P.M.							
1:30 P.M.							
2:00 P.M.							
2:30 P.M.							
3:00 P.M.							
3:30 P.M.							
4:00 P.M.							
4:30 P.M.							
5:00 P.M.							
5:30 P.M.							
6:00 P.M.							
6:30 P.M.							
7:00 P.M.							
7:30 P.M.							
8:00 P.M.							
8:30 P.M.							
9:00 P.M.							
9:30 P.M.							
10:00 P.M.							
10:30 P.M.							
11:00 P.M.							
11:30 P.M.							
12:00 A.M.							

**Table 2.1** Things That Can Be Accomplished in As Little As 10, 20, or 30 Minutes

- Review the notes you took during the previous class period before you start taking new notes.
- Review one or more math formulas.
- Look through the last chapter you read before class begins.
- Write or revise your To-Do list.
- Create or review a set of flash cards for a course.
- Call and schedule an appointment with an advisor.
- Work a few math problems.
- Quiz yourself over course material or past lecture notes.
- Brainstorm ideas for a paper or speech.
- Review the diagrams in your textbook.
- Read a section or two in your textbook before tomorrow's class.
- Proofread a draft of your paper.
- Create an outline for a paper or speech.
- Read an assigned article or handout.
- Begin working on a homework assignment.
- Stop by the learning center to get help with a homework assignment.
- Visit your professor during his or her office hours to ask a question.
- Rewrite your class notes so they're more organized.
- Talk with your study group before class begins to set up your next meeting time.

[illegible]

**Figure 2.1** Weekly Calendar

4. *Declutter:* If “stuff” is taking over your life, and it’s making you feel stressed out and scattered, then it’s time to declutter. Take the time to sort through your papers, clothes, old books, and so forth and **get rid of anything that you don’t want or need**. A good rule of thumb is that if you haven’t used something for a year or more, then you can obviously live without it. Don’t hoard unnecessary items because there’s always someone less fortunate who can use them. By decluttering your surroundings, you’ll be

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

**Figure 2.2** Monthly Calendar

## 20 Ways to Study When You Have Children

Being a student is hard enough, but throw children into the mix and it really gets challenging. Here are some suggestions for managing both commitments.

1. Accept that studying will be more challenging when you have children, but it can be done.
2. Study while they're napping.
3. Get them started on a board game together then slip away to do your homework.
4. Arrange for play dates to occupy their time.
5. Have them do homework with you at the dining room table—you'll be a great role model!
6. Set a timer for 15 minutes (30 minutes if they're older), and tell them they can't interrupt you until the bell rings. Then give them 5 minutes of your undivided attention. Repeat the process until you're finished with your homework.
7. Assign them a chore like cleaning their room to occupy their time.
8. Ask them to go through their toys and decide on one toy they'd like to give to a needy child.
9. Take turns babysitting with another student who has children. That way you'll each get free time to study.
10. Ask someone from your support group to babysit your children while you study for an hour or so.
11. Tell family and friends that you want them to give you babysitting duty for your birthday, rather than things.
12. Have your significant other, or other family member, take the children to the park or just outside to play.
13. Ask a neighbor to watch your children for a period of time, then return the favor after your project is finished or your exams are over.
14. Look for after-school programs that your children can attend.
15. Use television or video games (appropriately) to occupy them for short periods of time.
16. Praise and reward them with your attention when they do let you study.
17. Study after they've gone to bed at night.
18. Relax your housekeeping expectations so you'll have more time to study.
19. Bribe them with money if they leave you alone to study. Young children could earn a penny for every minute that they don't interrupt you and older children could be given a dime per minute.
20. Run away from home. Just kidding. That's not an option.

helping others, as well as yourself. You'll begin to feel more in charge of your life and less stressed out.

5. *Create a Filing System:* If you're like a lot of people, then you've got stacks of loose papers closing in around you. Some of the papers you may have looked at and then set aside to deal with later—as if “later” would actually ever come around (grin). Some of them were just put on the stack without even looking at them, so you don't even know if

they're important or not. It's a big, jumbled, paper monster mess.

It's time to **take charge of the paper monster and create a filing system.** You have to create separate, designated files for all of your paid bills, your unpaid bills, the greeting cards you insist on keeping for sentimental reasons, bank statements, and so forth. Organizational experts will tell you that you shouldn't handle a piece of paper more than one time. When a



bill comes in you either need to pay it right away and file the statement or place it in a file folder labelled “unpaid bills” and return to it when you have the money to pay it.

Creating a filing system will help you tame the paper monster, and it’ll also lower your risk of becoming a victim of identity theft. Why? Because anytime you leave a bill, a bank statement, or a pre-approved credit card application lying around, a so-called “friend,” your sister’s boyfriend, a refrigerator repairman, or any other visitor, can steal your account information and use it illegally. Therefore, you have to commit to the habit of handling each piece of paper one time. File it or toss it. Those are your only options.

6. *Prepare in Advance:* Do you wait until the morning to decide what you’re going to wear that day? Do you wait until the morning to figure out what you’re going to pack for lunch that day? Do you wait until the morning to gather up all of your school supplies and put them in your backpack to go to class that day? Do you wait until the morning to locate your wallet/purse and keys that you’ll need to use that day? Do you set your alarm and get up extra early each morning so you’ll have plenty of time to do all of these things each day? I’m guessing that you do leave these tasks until each new day begins; and without making any claims about having psychic powers, I’m getting an image of you frantically racing around the house throwing random items into your lunch sack, blindly gathering your class materials and shoving them into your backpack, and desperately searching for your wallet/purse and keys just minutes before your first class begins.

If my image is correct, then you’re asking for trouble. You’ll end up wearing mismatched clothes, eating a can of sardines, a stale piece of bread, and a bruised apple for lunch; grabbing the wrong book for class; forgetting the assignment you completed; causing your blood pressure to rise; and walking dangerously close to the edge of a nervous breakdown cliff. You can’t continue to operate this way.

One of the best ways to avoid these high stress, morning situations is to **get all of your things together before you go to bed each night**. That way, when you wake up, you’ll already have your clothes picked out, your lunch will be packed, all of your class materials will be in your backpack, and your wallet/purse and keys will be on the table by the front door. Now you’ll be able to enjoy a leisurely breakfast and leave for class on time.

7. *Use Multiple Backpacks:* If you have trouble remembering which books and notebooks you need on any given day, then consider buying **two backpacks—one for your Monday and Wednesday classes and one for your Tuesday and Thursday**

classes. It’s an inexpensive way to make sure that you never get your books confused or leave something at home. Just make sure that you label each one with a marker, or bedazzle them differently if that’s your thing, so you’ll be able to tell them apart.

“It is a rough road that leads to the heights of greatness.”

—Seneca

## F. Overcoming the Temptation to Procrastinate

You’ve set your S.M.A.R.T. short- and long-term goals; learned how to manage your time; and gotten yourself more organized; so why aren’t you getting your work done? Why are you putting off that paper, those math problems, or your reading assignments? Why? Because you’re human. It’s in your nature to postpone things you don’t enjoy doing, in favor of doing the things that bring you pleasure. The problem, however, is that much of what you’re required to do in college will not be as much fun as hanging out with your friends, taking your children to the park, playing video games, or taking a nap; but that doesn’t mean those unpleasant tasks will magically disappear. They’ll still be there, hanging over your head like a ton of bricks.

Being human isn’t the only reason you may find yourself procrastinating. In fact, there are numerous reasons why students, like yourself, sometimes put things off. The following list includes some of the more common ones.

1. *Feeling Overwhelmed:* You might procrastinate because you’re simply overwhelmed by a particular homework assignment and **don’t know where to start**; so you don’t start at all. If that sounds familiar, then you might want to take the “elephant” approach. Bill Hogan (2011) wrote a book titled, *How Do You Eat an Elephant? One Bite at*





*a Time.* In his book, he talks about **taking large tasks and breaking them down into smaller “bites” or steps.**

For example, if you have to read a 45-page chapter in one of your classes, don’t view it as 45 pages or you’ll never get started. You’re more likely to use that textbook as a doorstop, or a platform for your video game controller, than you are to read it. Instead, try using Hogan’s elephant approach and break it down into smaller bites. Go through the chapter and count how many major headings or sections there are, then commit to reading just one section at a time, rather than the entire 45 pages. That way you’ll have a sense of accomplishment after you’ve finished each section and you won’t feel so overwhelmed by the task.

If you have a five-page essay due in your English class, don’t view it as five pages. Instead, take the elephant approach and look at it as a series of small bites. For example:

- Step 1: Brainstorm a list of potential topics.
- Step 2: Develop a thesis statement (the point you’re trying to make or position you’re going to argue).
- Step 3: Go to the library or look online for books and journal articles that support your thesis statement.
- Step 4: Develop an outline of the major points you’d like to make.
- Step 5: And so forth until you’re finished.

If you have 30 math problems to solve before your next class, then break that assignment down into six parts and do five problems at a time. That way you can use the pockets of free time you have throughout the day to work on each part. Before you know it you’ll be done and ready to move on to something else.

Get the idea? Any assignment you have can be broken down into smaller bites; you just have to take a little bit of time to come up with a strategy. If you’re still struggling to get started, ask someone on your support team to help you break it down. I used to go and visit my mother when I was feeling overwhelmed by an assignment, or multiple assignments that were due at the same time. I’d usually end up on her doorstep in tears, to tell you the truth. She’d give me a hug and let me cry it out. Once I’d calmed down, she’d have me list everything I had to accomplish, and together we’d prioritize the bites. (Thank you Mom.)

On a side note, now that I’m thinking back, I seemed to have at least one “melt down” every semester when I was in college. I thought I was the only one feeling this way, so I never mentioned it to my friends. Years later I found out that most of them were having melt downs too, but they didn’t say anything either for the very same reason.

As a result of this discovery, I’ve come to the conclusion that any student who’s truly committed to earning a college degree, as my friends and I were, is entitled to at least one major melt down per semester. So go ahead and allow yourself to cry it out, or throw a temper tantrum, if you’re feeling overwhelmed; but then you’ve got to pull yourself together and tackle those assignments—one bite at a time. That’s what I did every semester, and I managed to make it through 9 years of college, and earn a doctorate degree (Ph.D.). By the way, I created an honorary doctorate diploma on my computer and awarded it to my Mom, because I never could’ve done it without her.

2. **Distractions: You might procrastinate because you’re surrounded by too many distractions.** You’ve got your cell phone on, your video game controller is within reach, your friends are calling to invite you out, and so forth. The only way you’re going to be successful in college is to tackle these distractions head on. You have to eliminate as many of them as you possibly can. Period.

As painful as it might be, you’ve got to turn off your cell phone while you’re studying. Your dedicated workspace cannot contain your video game console. And you’ll need to tell your friends that you’re focusing on your homework and you won’t always be available to go out with them. It’s all about prioritizing what’s most important to you and eliminating anything that might keep you from reaching your goals.

3. **Fear of Failure:** According to Maggie Wray (2014), some students are unable to begin an assignment because they’re **afraid that they won’t be able to do it correctly or that they won’t be able to do it at all.** Does this sound familiar? If you’re afraid you might make a mistake, then why not meet with your professor and make sure that you understand what he or she is asking you to do? Or take the assignment sheet over to the learning center and ask one of the tutors to help you get started?

Regardless of what you decide to do, you have to accept the fact that you’re human, and as such, you’re 100% guaranteed to make mistakes from time to time; but you’re also capable of correcting them when they do occur. Remember, just do the best you can, and know deep down that no one is expecting perfection, except you; so give yourself a break.

4. **Underestimating the Time Requirement:** You might be tempted to **procrastinate if you think an assignment won’t take very long to complete.** This tendency to underestimate the amount of work that’ll go into completing a college assignment is common among freshmen because they didn’t have to spend a great deal of time doing

homework in high school. Take it from me—please—when I tell you that college assignments are much different than high school assignments. You may have been able to throw something together at the last minute when you were in high school, and still get a passing grade, but college professors won't be that generous with their grading.

You may think that a history assignment will take about an hour to complete, but when you sit down to work on it the night before it's due, you'll suddenly discover that it's much more difficult and involved than you thought it was going to be. Suddenly you'll find yourself in a state of panic and then one of two things is going to happen. One, you'll stay up all night to finish as much of it as you can before your class meets in the morning, but still have to turn it in unfinished. Or two, you'll finish it just in time, but it'll be a mess. And when your professor sits down to grade it, he or she will immediately see that you've put very little time and effort into your work, and the grade you earn will clearly reflect that lack of effort.

5. *Not Caring*: Perhaps you decide to put off an assignment because you **simply don't care if you get it done or not**. According to Kendra Cherry (2014), some students don't do their work because they just don't care about the course, the topic, or college in general. If that rings a bell with you, then you might want to consider dropping your courses altogether, and not returning to college until you do care. That probably sounds harsh, but it's the best piece of advice I can give you. If you don't care about your college education right now, then don't waste your time and money signing up for classes and then failing them because you didn't do the assignments or didn't study for the exams. Work full time for a while and, when you're ready to focus on your education, come back to school. The college isn't going anywhere. It'll be right there where you left it. I promise.
6. *Not in the Mood*: Cherry (2014) also found that students sometimes don't start assignments because they're just **not "in the mood" to do homework**. The problem with waiting until you're "in the mood," however, is that no student is **ever** in the mood to do homework. My friends and I weren't ever in the mood to do homework when I was in college, and after spending 20-plus years as a professor, I can tell you that I haven't met a student yet who's ever been in the mood to do it either. The fact of the matter is that your mood is irrelevant when it comes to completing college assignments. You just have to discipline yourself to sit down and begin, regardless of how you feel.

7. *Better Under Pressure Fallacy*: You might procrastinate because you **think you do your best work when you're under the pressure of a deadline**. If this sounds like you, you'll actually be in good company because the majority of students believe this same fallacy (false or incorrect belief) (Lenker & McAndrew, 2014).

You may think you're doing your best work at 3:00 a.m. on the due date, but you're just fooling yourself. Take it from me, professors can spot a rush job from a mile away. We can easily distinguish between those assignments that were submitted by students who put time and effort into their work, and those that were submitted by procrastinators. The difference in the quality of the work is obvious, and the difference in the quality of grades will be equally obvious when they're handed back.

We've looked at some of the most common reasons students, and even you, might procrastinate, and I've given you a few suggestions for combatting those specific reasons, but there are two more techniques you might want to try. For example, you can reduce the amount of time you spend procrastinating if you get into the habit of thinking about the goals you've set for yourself. In fact, what you really should do is remove Exercises 2.1 and 2.2 from your book and hang them somewhere that you'll look at on a regular basis. That way you'll have a daily reminder of the S.M.A.R.T. short- and long-term goals you created. Then you can ask yourself if what you're tempted to do, rather than doing homework, is going to help you accomplish your goals. If the answer is "No," then you'll need to focus your energy on something that will.

Another technique that almost always worked for me was my **"15-minutes rule."** When I had an assignment to do, and I was tempted to procrastinate, I'd get out my kitchen timer and set it for 15 minutes. For those 15 minutes, I'd have to sit at my desk with the materials I needed to do the assignment, and not get up until the timer went off. Somehow knowing that I didn't have to work on it for hours, just 15 short minutes, made it easier for me to sit down and start.

You can do almost any task for 15 minutes—even the most feared ones. So when you have a project due, and you either don't know where to start, or you're simply not interested in doing it, set your timer for 15 minutes and sit down to work. When the timer dings, you're done. You can stop working if you want to, but you'll probably find yourself willing to work for at least another 15 minutes. The key is to commit to focusing on the task for the entire 15 minutes. That means no texting, no phone calls, no surfing the Internet, no video games, and so forth for the entire 15-minute session.

### III. AFTER You've Learned to Manage Your Time

Once you've mastered the necessary skills for time management (setting S.M.A.R.T. goals; writing, and prioritizing your To-Do lists; saying "No" when you need to; creating a master schedule; using weekly and monthly calendars; getting organized; and managing procrastination), it doesn't mean that your work is finished. Good time management takes diligence (constant attention). You have to keep using these skills until you've reached your goals and created the lifestyle you've always wanted to have.

#### A. Continue Prioritizing What's *Really* Important

Make sure you tackle the most important things first. If your college degree is important to you, then you have to make it a priority, and give it your all. Don't let less important things keep you from accomplishing your goals.

#### B. Formulate New To-Do Lists Every Day

You'll never run out of things to put on your daily To-Do lists; that's just life. And there will always be more items on the list than you can possibly accomplish in one day. Therefore, you have to re-evaluate your To-Do list every day, and make sure that any new tasks are rank ordered by their level of importance. When in doubt, ask yourself if doing that particular task will put you closer to your goal or not. If it won't, then move it to the bottom of the list. It can wait until another day.

#### C. Recreating Master Schedules Every Semester

Every semester you'll need to make a new master schedule because your class schedule and outside commitments will likely change. Just remember that it's your master schedule that reveals your pockets of free time throughout the day. If you continue taking advantage of those pockets of time, you'll have more time to do the things you enjoy in the evenings and over the weekends. It's an essential part of the time-management process, so please take the time to do one each semester.

#### D. Keep Up With Weekly and Monthly Calendars

Each semester you need to sit down with your new course syllabi and record all of the detailed due dates and quizzes in your weekly calendar. Then write down the major due dates and exams on your monthly calendar. This way you'll never miss a deadline or be surprised by an exam.

#### E. Stay Organized

A cluttered workspace will result only in a cluttered and stressed out mind. Therefore, it's crucial that you keep your work area neat and organized. Remember to keep only your important study tools on top of the desk, and everything else gets filed, addressed, or tossed. No exceptions. It takes only a few minutes, and a commitment to maintaining your sanity, to keep everything organized. So, do it. You're worth it.

### The Negative Impact of Procrastination

1. Increased stress level as the delayed task hangs over your head.
2. Point deductions for assignments that are late will lead to lower grades.
3. Haunting knowledge that you didn't submit the quality of work that you're capable of doing.
4. Lost opportunities that may have helped you reach your academic and professional goals.
5. Missed deadlines that can lower your final course grade or cause you to lose your job.
6. Loss of respect from professors and employers as you miss deadlines or submit inferior work.
7. Reduced self-esteem.
8. Feelings of shame and regret.
9. Self-deception and denial about how long a task will take to complete will produce panic.
10. Self-directed anger for breaking the promise you made to yourself about not procrastinating.

(Source: Donovan, 2014.)



## F. Continue Combatting Procrastination

Procrastination is part of human nature, but that doesn't mean it's inevitable (unavoidable) or that it can't be overcome. Keep reminding yourself that your assignments are important and successfully completing them will not only make you feel better about yourself, but it'll bring you one step closer to achieving your goals. Remember, too, that you're entitled to at least one melt down each semester, but then you need to pick yourself up and move on. If you get stuck, try using the 15-minute rule and eat that elephant one bite at a time.

### \*\*Goal Setting Humor\*\*

"If you try to fail, and succeed, which have you done?"

—George Carlin

## Chapter Summary

### I. BEFORE You Can Set Goals and Manage Your Time

- A. *What Do You Want?* If you know what you want your future life to look like, then you'll know how hard you have to work to make it a reality.
- B. *What Are Your Goals?* If you want to establish achievable goals, then you have to make sure that they're S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time Bound).
- C. *Who's in Charge of Your Time?* Are you a "victim" or a "creator"? Do you want to let others decide how your time will be spent or do you want to make your own decisions? Only you can answer this question.
- D. *Learning to Say, "No":* You've got to be assertive and learn how to say, "No" when you need to. Your education has to come first, and the people who truly love and support you will understand if you have to set limits on your time.
- E. *Where's Your Time Really Going?* Before you're able to manage your time, you have to figure out where your time is really going. That way you'll know what changes you'll need to make.

### II. DURING the Time-Management Process

- A. *What's Really Important to You?* You have to always keep in mind what's most important to you, and then you have to put that task first. Don't waste

your time doing things that are simply distracting you and keeping you from making progress toward your goals.

- B. *Writing To-Do Lists:* Begin each day with a brand new To-Do list that details everything you need to accomplish that day. Just make sure that the most important items are at the top of the list.
- C. *Creating a Master Schedule:* It's important to identify where the pockets of free time are located throughout your day, because you can use these pockets to accomplish things on your To-Do list. That way you'll have more free time in the evenings and over the weekends to do the things you enjoy doing.
- D. *Using Weekly and Monthly Calendars:* Weekly and monthly calendars will help keep you organized throughout the semester. Your weekly calendar will include the smaller details of your syllabi, and your monthly calendar will keep your major due dates and exams in your line of vision, so you'll never forget about them.
- E. *Getting Organized:* Set aside a designated workspace and keep it neat and orderly. Organize a notebook or binder for each course you're taking, and make sure it has pockets to hold handouts and graded assignments. Create a tool box that contains all of your school supplies. File papers as soon as they come into the house. Lastly, consider using different backpacks for your Monday and Wednesday classes and your Tuesday and Thursday classes. Taking all of these measures will reduce your stress and help you to be more productive.
- F. *Overcoming the Temptation to Procrastinate:* Procrastination is part of human nature. Human beings naturally avoid things that they don't enjoy doing or that frighten them. You've got to break down large tasks into manageable steps and commit to using the 15-minutes rule.

### III. AFTER You've Learned to Manage Your Time

- A. *Continue Prioritizing What's Really Important:* Never take your eye off of the prize—your degree. Always ask yourself if what you're doing is putting you closer to your goal, and if it isn't, it's time to stop and do something that will.
- B. *Formulate New To-Do Lists Every Day:* Update your To-Do list every day and rank order the items according to how they fit with your goals.
- C. *Recreating Master Schedules Every Semester:* As your work or class schedules change, so too must your master schedule. Keep it up-to-date because it's

the only way to identify the pockets of free time throughout your day that you can use to be more productive.

- D. *Keep Up With Weekly and Monthly Calendars:* Weekly and monthly calendars are essential survival tools when you're a college student. They'll keep you on track and make sure you don't miss any deadlines or be surprised by an exam.

E. *Stay Organized:* The more organized you are, the less time you'll spend looking for the things you need, and the calmer you'll feel.

- F. *Continue Combating Procrastination:* Set S.M.A.R.T goals to realize the time of the task at hand and to combat the feelings of failure and being overwhelmed.

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## Review Questions

1. People with established goals will consistently outperform those who fail to set goals.
  - a. True
  - b. False
2. Wanting to earn an associate's degree is an example of a(n):
  - a. Short-term goal
  - b. Unrealistic goal
  - c. Long-term goal
  - d. Mid-term goal
3. Knowing when pursuit of your goal will begin and end means that it's \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Attainable
  - b. Time limited
  - c. Specific
  - d. Measurable
4. Goals that are important to **you** are
  - a. Attainable
  - b. Specific
  - c. Do-able
  - d. Relevant
5. The Specific part of a S.M.A.R.T. goal explains which of the following questions?
  - a. Who?
  - b. How?
  - c. What?
  - d. All of these answers are correct.
6. College students have to be good at setting limits and saying, "No" if they want to be successful.
  - a. True
  - b. False
7. Which of the following tasks could be completed in as little as 20 minutes?
  - a. Return a phone call
  - b. Work a few math problems
  - c. Review class notes
  - d. Develop an outline for a speech
  - e. All of these answers are correct.
8. Which type of calendar should be used to keep track of weekly reading assignments and quizzes?
  - a. Weekly
  - b. Monthly
  - c. Biweekly
  - d. Daily
9. The best way to tackle a big assignment is to just sit down and work on it until it is done.
  - a. True
  - b. False
10. Effective time management involves all of the following **except**
  - a. Organization
  - b. Procrastination
  - c. Prioritizing
  - d. Calendars

Please refer to Appendix section for Answers.

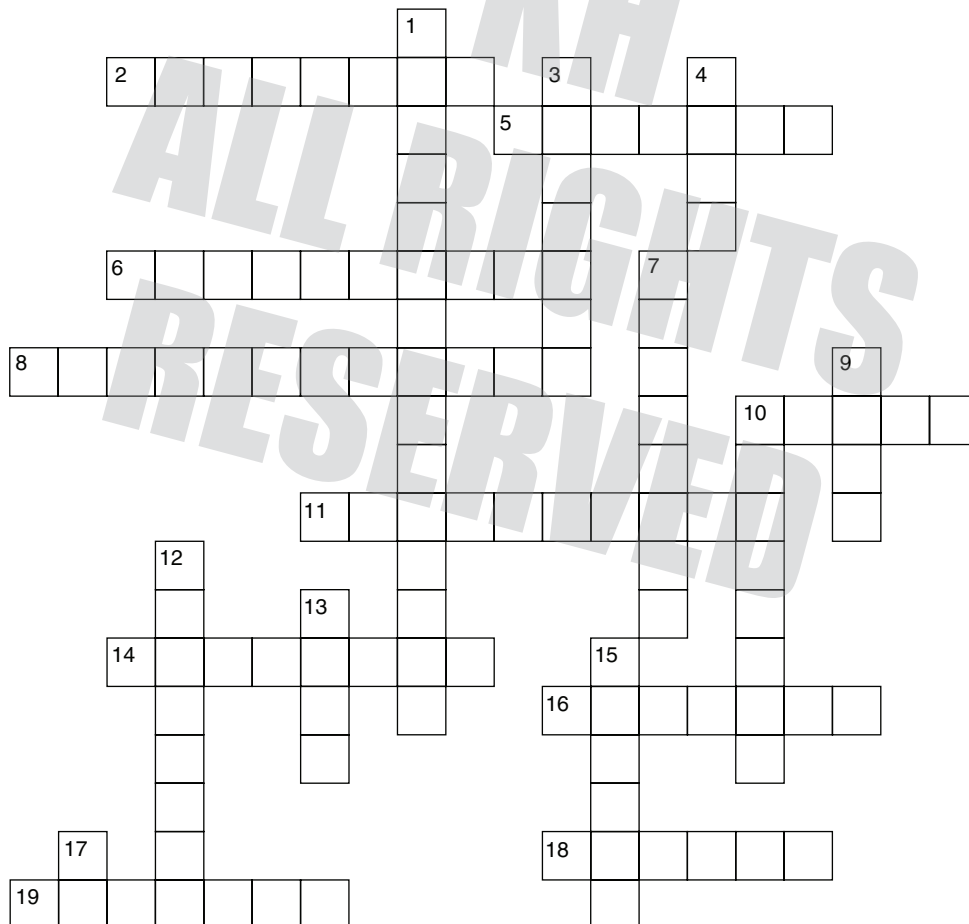
## Review Crossword Puzzle

### ACROSS

- 2 \_\_\_\_\_ take charge of their schedules
- 5 \_\_\_\_\_ let others take charge of their time
- 6 \_\_\_\_\_ goals can be realistically achieved
- 8 Putting things off
- 10 \_\_\_\_\_ -term goals can be met in less than a semester
- 11 \_\_\_\_\_ goals can be quantified
- 14 Must be eaten in bites
- 16 Prioritizing technique
- 18 \_\_\_\_\_ calendar for detailed assignments and due dates
- 19 \_\_\_\_\_ calendar for major due dates and exams

### DOWN

- 1 Putting things off
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_-minute rule helps you avoid procrastination
- 4 \_\_\_\_\_ management
- 6 Name of the tutoring site on campus (two words)
- 7 Summary of due dates, readings, and exams
- 9 \_\_\_\_\_-term goals can be met in more than a semester
- 10 The Who? What? and Where? of a goal
- 12 \_\_\_\_\_ goals are worthwhile and important to you
- 13 Time-limited part of a goal
- 15 Schedule that shows your weekly commitments
- 17 Speak up for yourself and say \_\_\_\_\_



Please refer to Appendix section for Answers.



## Review Word Search

U V I U Q Z X X O J G S D R H Z D Z S E P T  
D F I Y M I T C I V O B I Y B E N S C I O E  
T J M E K P M G U U M Y J U M N C P A U R Z  
L A P V G N O V A U J A A W Z W R E H S G I  
I E O N W E P Y V H E P N Q I M S C V M A T  
F L R G E H C R S R S A P A B D S I Z L N I  
E B T K L C O K O L A H G R G C E F Z Z I R  
S A A R B D S U A C X N N R H E H I X Q Z O  
T R N E A L P O S J R S K E V Q M C P T A I  
Y U T Y N I G T N T R A D I A T K E M E T R  
L S U Q I S F Y N A E U S R N Z S B N V I P  
E A S M A T O A D A L K O T O G Y S R T O D  
W E L T T S T N S E V Z C V I T X G E R N P  
P M Z A T O E B R U Y E W O I N A O P X B W  
N K K B A L Q V X Y Q H L J P Z A E Q M Z Z  
D O B Q A G D E T I M I L E A D Q T R W S M  
W M V C J D B I D E W V P U R S P E I C Y F  
Y Y W R E S P O N S I B I L I T Y P I O K O  
T F V Q A H S Y L V K T E J S C D G Q X N C  
Y S J B T F S L M J D P A C F I L X F O H W  
R L F O M X Q G Z R K B U L I N Y Q B N L B  
S K R O Z D G V R I N J S G A H Z K G Z E U

- |                |                     |
|----------------|---------------------|
| 1. ATTAINABLE  | 11. ORGANIZATION    |
| 2. CALENDARS   | 12. POCKETS         |
| 3. CREATOR     | 13. PRIORITIZE      |
| 4. GOALS       | 14. PROCRASTINATION |
| 5. IMPORTANT   | 15. RANKING         |
| 6. LIFESTYLE   | 16. RELEVANT        |
| 7. LIMITED     | 17. RESPONSIBILITY  |
| 8. LISTS       | 18. SCHEDULE        |
| 9. MANAGEMENT  | 19. SPECIFIC        |
| 10. MEASURABLE | 20. VICTIM          |

Please refer to Appendix section for Answers.

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- [http://www.counselingcenter.illinois.edu?page\\_id=111](http://www.counselingcenter.illinois.edu?page_id=111)
- <http://www.lib.umn.edu/help/calculator/>
- [http://www.lifescrpt.com/quizzes/personality/how\\_assertive\\_are\\_you.aspx?gclid=CMrG6YfzwLgCFUxo7AodHCEAZQ&trans=1&du=1&ef\\_id=UQKqEwAAUdZzmV0A:20130721152701:s](http://www.lifescrpt.com/quizzes/personality/how_assertive_are_you.aspx?gclid=CMrG6YfzwLgCFUxo7AodHCEAZQ&trans=1&du=1&ef_id=UQKqEwAAUdZzmV0A:20130721152701:s)
- <http://www.montgomerycollege.edu/departments/studev/skills.htm>

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