Time Management

Introduction

- There's no such thing as time management! So why should you read the rest of this handout? Because there is such a thing as self management and that's the key to making time your ally rather than your enemy.
- There are only 24 hours in your day, just the same as everybody else's. So how do you end up frustrated, angry, behind in your work, and dead on your feet? Maybe because you don't know how to use those 24 hours to your advantage.

Step #1

- If using your time wisely is a problem for you, you probably don't have a very good idea of where it all goes. It just seems to go! A good place to start, then, is to keep track of how you use your time. Get a Weekly schedule and faithfully keep track of how you use your waking hours for one week. The results will probably surprise you.

Step #2

- The next step is to pick up several more of these Weekly Schedules and do some planning. You'll discover, among other things, that if you get seven hours sleep a night, you have 119 hours per week to do everything you need to do. That, of course, includes going to class, eating, athletic events, social activities, personal hygiene, time-in-transit, studying, student organizations, telephone and TV time, etc. Be sure to schedule time for all these in your 119 hours. Then try sticking to your schedule for a week. This should give you a good idea of where your real priorities are!

Procrastination

- If you have trouble, chances are there's a culprit lurking somewhere, dodging your every move. Chances are this culprit's name is Procrastination. Procrastination masquerades in a million disguises. Among the more common of these are:
  - "One more day won't make any difference; I'll just put that off until tomorrow."
  - "It won't matter if I'm a few minutes late; no one else will be on time."
  - "I can't start on this paper until I know just how I want the first paragraph to read."
  - "I work best under pressure."
  - "I'll watch just 15 more minutes of TV."
  - Fill in the blank:"_______________________."

Interruptions

- Learn to say NO once your priorities are set. Turning down an invitation doesn't mean you'll never be asked to do something again. Weigh the consequences. Making a decision based on what you know is best for you at the time, leads to greater respect from your friends, not to a reputation as a party-pooper.
- Stay away from the telephone when you're trying to get work done. Turn off your cell phone or pager. If it's really important, they'll call back.
- Stay away from email and instant messaging. Limit how often you check these things.
Schedule / Plan Ahead

- Use a monthly calendar to help you allocate your study time on the Weekly Schedule. At the beginning of each quarter, spend an hour with your calendar to enter all important dates. As you receive course syllabi, enter the dates for quizzes, papers, etc., on your calendar. Then estimate the time needed to prepare for each of these. If your history paper is due the eighth week of the quarter and it usually takes you four weeks to do a paper, start work on the paper the second week of the quarter, allowing yourself an extra week for typing and an extra week for disaster. If you stick to this schedule, you'll amaze yourself by having the paper finished in the seventh week. The rule-of-thumb is "Plan ahead by working backwards."

- By counting backwards like this, you'll be surprised how well you're using your time and how much better your grade will be when you're not under pressure. And, by being really honest with yourself and taking account of all your priorities, you'll be able to go to the football game and not feel guilty.

- At the start of each week, transfer important items from your calendar to your Weekly Schedule. This helps you to avoid things that might otherwise sneak up on you.

- An alternative to a paper calendar is to use an electronic calendar. You could use the one on your desktop computer (e.g., Microsoft Outlook), or better yet, on a PDA (e.g., Palm Pilot). Set alarms to remind you when to do things.

- Be sure to schedule time for your fitness routine and for study breaks. Your brain works best when it has sufficient oxygen. Your concentration is enhanced when you go hard at a task until you feel yourself fading. Then Break! A good rule-of-thumb is to work for 45 minutes and then break for 15. But watch yourself! More than 15 minutes is more than a break!

Conclusion

- Suggestions such as these don't lead to enslavement by a calendar. It may sound awful, especially if you're a skilled time mismanager. But it actually leads to a greater sense of freedom and accomplishment because you're in control. That's all self-management is--managing your life more effectively. By following these suggestions, you'll be happier, more satisfied, and more productive. Try it--you'll like it!

- One last thing: WEAR A WATCH!