Time Management Tips

1. **Complete most important tasks first.**

   This is the golden rule of time management. Each day, identify the two or three tasks that are the *most crucial* to complete, and do those first. Once you're done, the day has already been a success. You can move on to other things, or you can let them wait until tomorrow. You've finished the essential.

2. **Sleep at least 7-8 hours.**

   Some people think sacrificing sleep is a good way to hack productivity and wring a couple extra hours out of the day. This is not the case. Most people need 7-8 hours of sleep for their bodies and minds to function optimally. You know if you're getting enough. Listen to your body, and don't underestimate the value of sleep.

3. **Devote your entire focus to the task at hand.**

   Close out all other browser windows. Put your phone *away*, out of sight and on silent. Find a quiet place to work, or listen to some music if that helps you (I enjoy listening to classical or ambient music while writing sometimes). Concentrate on this one task. Nothing else should exist. Immerse yourself in it.

4. **Get an early start.**

   Nearly all of us are plagued by the impulse to procrastinate. It seems so easy, and you always manage to get it done eventually, so why not. Take it from a recovering chronic procrastinator — it's so much nicer and less stressful to get an earlier start on something. It isn't that difficult either, if you just *decide firmly* to do it.

5. **Don't allow unimportant details to drag you down.**

   We often allow projects to take much, much longer than they could by getting too hung up on small details. I'm guilty of this. I've always been a perfectionist. What I've found, though, is that it is possible to push past the desire to constantly examine what I've done so far. I'm much better off pressing onward, getting the bulk completed, and revising things afterward.

6. **Be conscientious of amount of TV/Internet/gaming time.**

   Time spent browsing Twitter or gaming or watching TV and movies can be one of the biggest drains on productivity. I suggest becoming more aware of how much time you spend on these activities. Simply by noticing how they're sucking up your time you'll begin to do them less.

7. **Delineate a time limit in which to complete task.**

   Instead of just sitting down to work on a project and thinking, "I'm going to be here until this is done," try thinking, "I'm going to work on this for three hours". The time constraint will push you to focus and be more efficient, even if you end up having to go back and add a bit more later.

8. **Leave a buffer-time between tasks.**

   When we rush from task to task, it's difficult to appreciate what we're doing and to stay focused and motivated. Allowing ourselves down-time between tasks can be a breath of fresh air for our brains. While taking a break, go for a short walk, meditate, or perform some other mind-clearing exercise.

9. **Don't think of the totality of your to-do list.**

   One of the fastest ways to overwhelm yourself is to think about your massive to-do list. Realize that no amount of thought will make it any shorter. At this point in time, all you can do is focus on the one task before you. This one, single, solitary task. One step at a time. Breathe.

10. **Exercise and eat healthily.**

    Numerous studies have linked a healthy lifestyle with work productivity. Similar to getting enough sleep, exercising and eating healthily boost energy levels, clear your mind, and allow you to focus more easily.

11. **Utilize weekends, just a little bit.**

    One of my favorite memes depicts a gentleman casting his work aside, declaring, "It's Friday! F#%$88u this shit." The following image reads "Monday", and the man is stooping to pick up the papers he'd tossed to the ground. This is comical, but I've found that it's amazing how doing *just a little bit* on weekends can really lessen the workload during the week. Aim for 2-4 hours per day. You'll still leave yourself plenty of free time for activities.

12. **Create organizing systems.**

    Being organized saves tons of time, and you don't have to be the most ultra-organized person in the world either. Systems aren't complicated to implement. Create a filing system for documents. Make sure all items have a place to be stored in your dwelling. Unsubscribe from e-mail lists if you don't want to receive their content. Streamline, streamline, streamline.

13. **Lock yourself in.**

    No distractions, no excuses. Sometimes, the only way I'm going to get something done is if I'm under lock and key, alone in a room. If you're like me, realize it, and act accordingly.

14. **Commit to your plan to do something.**

    I kind of mentioned this already, but it's worth repeating. **Don't flake on your own plan to do something!** Be resolute. Be committed. Be *professional* about it, and follow through. A firm will to accomplish what you decide to accomplish will take you anywhere.

Academic Success Time Budget Sheet

Total number of hours available each week   **168**

Minus hours in class each week   -_____

Minus hours of study time per week   -_____

Minus hours of sleep time/personal hygiene per week   -_____

Minus hours of committed time per week   -_____
(e.g. job, church, clubs, meetings)

Minus hours of meal time per week   -_____
(*include coffee stops*!)

Minus hours of exercise per week   -_____

Minus hours of family time per week   -_____

Minus hours of laundry, shopping, personal errands per week   -_____

Minus hours of television per week   -_____

Minus hours of Facebook, video games, etc.   -_____

Minus hours of other recreation per week   -_____
(movies, parties, etc.)

Minus other (*miscellaneous*)   -_____

Final Balance (+ or -)   _____

Where Do You Procrastinate?

It is extremely rare for anyone person to procrastinate in all areas of life. Most people are selective in their procrastination. The following checklist had been adapted from Burka and Yuen (1983). Mark those areas where procrastination seems to affect you most.

Personal	
☐ Eating well	☐ Health care (doctors' visits, dentist, etc.)
☐ Exercising	☐ Balancing bank account
☐ Getting enough sleep	☐ Relaxation and hobbies
☐ Bathing and hygiene	☐ Other:

School/College	
☐ Going to class	☐ Finding a study group
☐ Doing your reading	☐ Talking to an instructor
☐ Studying for tests	☐ Making an advising appointment
☐ Doing homework	☐ Registering for next term
☐ Writing papers	☐ Going to the library
☐ Starting long term projects	

Shopping, Home & Maintenance	
☐ Paying bills	☐ Cleaning
☐ Finding a new place to live	☐ Grocery shopping
☐ Getting financial aid taken care of (FAFSA, forms, etc.)	☐ Doing dishes
☐ Doing laundry	☐ Other:

Social/Relationships	
☐ Talking with friends	☐ Ending a relationship
☐ Writing email responses	☐ Calling relatives
☐ Going out/socializing	☐ Other:
☐ Asking someone out on a date	

Work	
☐ Going to work	
☐ Preparing a resume	
☐ Other:	

What areas in your life tend to be most affected by procrastination?_____

Time Log Worksheet

Use this sheet to arrive at a more accurate accounting of your time than your initial guesses on the Time Budget sheet might have shown. Take time to do this each day – if you try to do it all at once, you'll have difficulty remembering how you spent your time!

Activity	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Total
Class hours								
Study hours								
Sleep								
Meals/Eating								
Exercise								
Family								
Facebook or Random Internet								
TV, Movies, Videos								
Miscellaneous Personal								
Miscellaneous Recreation								
Commuting/Travel								
Other:								
Total:	24 Hours	24 Hours	24 Hours	24 Hours	24 Hours	24 Hours	24 Hours	

Check your math – each vertical column (i.e. Monday entries) should total 24 hours. Each activity (i.e. sleep) should be added horizontally to get your weekly total. Bring this sheet to class next week.