

Schedule your Day with a To Do List

"The bad news is time flies. The good news is you're the pilot."

Michael Altshuler, (professional leadership coach)

Get Things Done

This is commonly abbreviated as GTD and is an action management method created by David Allen (2001). He identified that a person can reduce their anxiety and be more productive by moving tasks out of the mind and recording them externally. This frees you from the job of remembering everything that needs to be done and allows you to concentrate on actually performing those tasks.

All you really need is:

- A semester schedule (see the Semester Scheduling Learning Aid)
- A weekly schedule (see the Weekly Scheduling Learning Aid)
- An ordered To Do list.

This can be done on paper, on your computer, or any electronic device that you choose.

Once you know the big picture things that are coming up (your Semester Schedule) and the things that must be done each week (your Weekly Schedule) you can get down to listing what you need to do today. Some of these are likely to include:

- Time to review notes (pre and post reading), and do examples/questions, quizzes.
- Time to revise for exams.
- Time for exercise.
- Time for recreational activities.
- Employment?
- Time to do things needed for longer term goals (your CV's, job applications, meetings etc.)
- And don't forget time to reflect on progress and to re-schedule things!

Plan Now Before Things Get Any More Complicated

Plan your day each morning or the night before and set priorities for yourself. Start by making a list of all the tasks you would like to complete today, if time permits. This list gives you a focus on all of the work to be done and allows you to schedule using the big picture.

Then, prioritize the list. Start with the most important item – as if it was going to be the only item – and label it '1'. Next, select the second most important item and label it '2', etc. Prioritizing ensures that you focus on the more important items rather than trying to do less important ones in the hopes of "clearing the desk". Write what you do into your Weekly Schedule so you can see the progress.

Finally, do this process every day. Avoid getting caught up in what you think you "should" have done yesterday by trying to complete the list today. It will just bog you down. Even more important, a low priority item yesterday may have shifted priority to being high priority today. Daily planning will sharpen your focus as priorities are aligned with the changes that happen in even a short period of time. Start each day with a new, prioritized list using the "Today's Tasks" sheet on the next page.

At the end of the day review your progress and revise as needed for the next day.

And Good Luck with your Studies!

