5 Key Skills for College Time Management

By Kelci Lynn Lucier

Everyone knows that good time management skills are important for students if you're going to do well in school. But what skills are needed for good time management?

The 5 skills listed below just might be the most important time management skills you'll learn during your time in school. Sure, they seem easy on the surface – but executing them on a daily basis can be harder than it looks. If you're having trouble, just try one a week until they've all become habit.

1. The ability to say "no." Party this weekend? Cool club to join? Overnight trip on Saturday? Quick pizza with your roommates that turns into 3 hours of just hanging out? Helping that cutie you have a crush on with the chemistry homework? Learning to say "no" can often feel darned near impossible during your time in college – but saying "yes" to everything can often be impossible, too. Learning how to say "no" is difficult but important for good time management.

2. Spacing things out. Translation: Don't procrastinate. Do you know you have an ugly midterm/paper/lab report/research project due in, say, one month? Don't wait until the last week to get started. Space things out a bit so you manage your time and workload in a steady flow instead of one gigantic wave.

3. Using social time wisely. College is amazing because there is always something fun going on that you want to be a part of. Unfortunately, college is also incredibly challenging for this exact same reason. Instead of feeling like you're missing out on something whenever you try to do your homework, work your on-campus job, etc., remind yourself that there will be something fun to go do once you're done. And then you won't have to feel guilty about enjoying yourself, since you'll be all caught up.

4. Prioritizing and reprioritizing – constantly. No matter how on top of things you are, life just happens sometimes ... which means, of course, that you'll get sick, your computer will crash, your roommate will have some kind of drama, and you'll lose your cell phone. Good time management often requires the ability to prioritize and reprioritize and reprioritize again as things come up. And having good time management skills also means that, when things shift around, you'll be able to deal with it instead of suddenly finding yourself in a crisis.

5. Keeping your health/sleep/exercise in check. Sure, you have about 25 hours worth of work to do each day – and that doesn't count the time required to sleep, eat, and exercise. Yet filling in those 3 little things can really make all the difference in your ability to manage your time well in school. Staying up a little too late here or there? Maybe not eating a healthy dinner every night of the week? Usually okay. Making those actions not just exceptions but patterns in your college life? Bad idea. In order to stay on your game, you have to be physically and mentally able to play your game. Practicing a little self-care can really go a long way to making sure you can take care of all you need to do with your limited time while in school.