

MANAGING YOUR TIME



AGENDA

- Starter
- Time Savers and Time Wasters
- Taking Care of the Minutes
- Daily Planning
- Conclusion
- Student Assessment

Objectives

Students will identify time management strategies and barriers to effective time management.

Students will recognize that effective time management can help them accomplish their goals.

Students will demonstrate effective time management strategies by prioritizing tasks and creating schedules.

Materials Needed

- One copy of the “Luis’s Story” activity sheet for each student (Part I)
- One copy of the “Daily Planner” activity sheet for each student (Part III)
- One copy of the “Weekly Planner” activity sheet for each student (Part III)
- One copy of the “Term Planner” activity sheet for each student (Part III)

Starter (3 minutes)

Write the following quote on the board:

“Take care in your minutes, and the hours will take care of themselves.”

Elicit opinions from students about the meaning of this quote. Mention that most people “waste” small amounts of time (about five to 10 minutes of every waking hour) in a variety of ways, such as waiting in line, looking for misplaced objects, and so on. Explain that although this may not seem like much time, it can add up to many hours—almost a whole day each week.

Tell students that this lesson is about learning to take care of the minutes—in other words, effective time management.

Part I Time Savers and Time Wasters (15 minutes)

Purpose: Students consider barriers to effective time management and develop an understanding of strategies that can help them manage their time more effectively.

1. Students read a story that illustrates poor time management and compare the story to their own experiences.

Divide students into groups of four. Give each student a copy of the “Luis’s Story” activity sheet. Explain that they will have 10 minutes to read the story silently to themselves and then discuss the questions that follow with their groups. Suggest that one student in each group keep track of time. Another group member should serve as a reporter and share the group’s responses with the class.

While students read, draw a two-column chart on the board. Label one column “Time Wasters” and the other “Time Savers.”

2. Groups share their responses to the questions.

After 10 minutes have passed, ask the reporters to summarize their groups’ answers to each question.

While discussing the first two questions, encourage students to relate the story to their own experiences, recalling how difficult and frustrating it can be when there doesn’t seem to be enough time to accomplish everything they want to do. Point out that feeling discouraged can lead to ineffective use of time.

Questions three and four ask students to list specific time wasters and time savers. List the groups' ideas on the board in the appropriate columns. Time wasters might include distractions (such as TV), urges (such as snacking), not having materials in a convenient location, and excuses (such as being too tired). Time savers might include writing assignments in one place, prioritizing tasks, breaking down large tasks into manageable activities, and scheduling.

Part II Taking Care of the Minutes *(15 minutes)*

Purpose: Students practice prioritizing tasks.

1. Students recognize that effective time management helps them achieve their goals.

When the list of time savers and time wasters is complete, ask students to identify Luis's goal in the story. Ask students if they think Luis is on his way to achieving his goal. Lead students to identify the relationship between time management and goal achievement.

2. Students recognize that spending time wisely means deciding what is important.

Ask students what it means to spend money wisely. Lead students to understand that spending money wisely means not wasting it on items that are unimportant. Point out that how one person chooses to spend money may be very different from how someone else chooses to spend it. Encourage students to realize that individuals must decide on what is most important for themselves.

Ask students what was more important to Luis—passing his classes or watching TV. If students are unsure, rephrase the question by asking, "What might Luis have done if he had been given the choice to pass all of his classes or watch TV for an hour?" Point out that Luis's actions don't reflect what is important to him. Luis did not prioritize his tasks for the day. Effective time management requires prioritizing. Elicit definitions for "prioritize" from the class.

3. Students make to-do lists of their tasks for the day.

Tell students that in order to prioritize, they must consider all of their tasks. Instruct students to use a blank piece of paper to make a to-do list for that afternoon. Tell them to list the activities and tasks they must do after school. Remind them to include everything, including extracurricular activities, phone calls, household chores, and homework assignments.

4. Students prioritize their tasks for the day.

Instruct students to go through the list and prioritize their tasks. They should number each task according to how important the task is to them, with number one being the most important.

Part III Daily Planning (15 minutes)

Purpose: Students use their prioritized to-do lists to create daily schedules.

1. Students understand the importance of schedules.

Tell students that writing down and prioritizing their tasks is only the first step to effective time management. It is important to create systems that will facilitate effective time management. Explain that people without effective systems often waste time looking for items such as assignments, keys, passwords, and so on.

Remind students that one of Luis's difficulties was that he had written down his math assignment but couldn't find it. He had no system for keeping his tasks organized.

Speculate with students how a calendar or planner might help organize such items. Ask, "Why do we use calendars and planners?" (*Students might respond: to keep track of due dates, to keep all assignments in one place, to schedule time for responsibilities and activities, to plan ahead for projects or exams.*)

2. Students write their to-do lists on the daily planner.

Distribute the "Daily Planner" activity sheet, "Weekly Planner" activity sheet, and "Term Planner" activity sheet to students. Explain that using planners is an important time-management strategy. Encourage students to describe other planning tools with which they are familiar.

Instruct students to write their to-do lists on the "Daily Planner" activity sheet. Point out the space for materials needed and encourage them to write down specific books or materials that they must remember to bring home. Instruct students to use the schedule space to write all scheduled activities. Allow them several minutes to complete the task.

Remind students that the tasks they have identified as most important should be completed first, even if the other tasks are more appealing.

3. Students observe the benefits of using both short- and long-term planners.

After students have written their assignments on their "Daily Planner" activity sheet, ask them to speculate what problems might occur if they do not follow up by also using the weekly or term planners. (*Students might respond: it would be difficult to plan ahead, to see when long-term projects were due, and to allocate time properly.*)

Ask students to consider what problems they might encounter if, on the other hand, they used only a weekly or term planner. (*Students might respond: there is not enough room to write detailed information, they might forget about smaller daily tasks.*)

Explain that most people use a combination of planners to manage their time. A daily planner should be reviewed every day, either at night or first thing in the morning. A weekly planner should be reviewed at the beginning of each week. Encourage students to suggest ways to set up routines for planner reviews.

4. Students commit to trying out a scheduling system for three weeks.

Mention that one of the biggest difficulties people have with time management is that they try using a planner, yet they stop after only a week. Invite students who have had this experience to share reasons why they did this. (*Students might respond: too time-consuming, too bulky to carry around, they didn't like feeling so strictly scheduled.*)

Share with students that they have many options about the type of planner to use and that the samples you provided are only suggestions. Encourage students to personalize their planners by choosing layouts that make sense to them and to find systems that complement their learning styles.

Brainstorm with students places where people can buy planners. Elicit ideas about what they could do if they wanted a planner but did not want to buy one.

Tell students that psychologists say it takes three weeks for something new to become a habit. For this reason, ask students to commit to using their planners for three weeks, at the end of which you will measure their success with the planners. Encourage students to write that date in their planners.

Conclusion (2 minutes)

Refer to the quote from the starter. Ask students how using a planner and prioritizing tasks allow them to “take care” in their minutes and save hours in the end. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- Effective time management helps people to accomplish their goals.
- Managing time effectively requires prioritizing.
- Using planners is an important time-management strategy.

Student Assessment

1. List as many time wasters as you can from your day.
2. What time-saving techniques can you use to cut down on your time wasters?
3. List four time-management strategies. Which of these strategies do you already practice?

LESSON EXTENSIONS

Using Quotations

“One thing you can’t recycle is wasted time.”

Have small groups of students brainstorm ways in which they waste time during the day. Have them write these time wasters on large strips of paper. Post them on the bulletin board.

Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

As a class, discuss the history of timekeeping. Refer to <https://www.nist.gov/pml/time-and-frequency-division/popular-links/walk-through-time>.

After a short discussion, have students write about their own philosophy of time. How much time do they need to relax and think? What’s the most important part of their day? What would they like to accomplish?

Writing in Your Journal

Have students write about how they would spend an ideal day.

As a class, discuss strategies for “building more time” into the day for the activities that students enjoy.

Using Technology

Have students use the internet to investigate time-management software programs (e.g., Microsoft Outlook).

Have students write quick software reviews on index cards and share them in small groups. Tell each group to choose the best software and share it with the rest of the class.

Homework

Have students create a chart that divides their waking hours into 15-minute increments. Have them record their activities for one day.

Have students discuss the results in small groups. How are they spending most of their time? Is there anything they want to change?

Additional Resources

Have students read the “Out of Time” activity sheet.

Have students write a review of the article.

WEEKLY PLANNER

Week of: _____

Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	
Sunday	

LUIS'S STORY

Luis's alarm began blaring at 6:00 in the morning. He had decided to get up early to finish an oral presentation that was due that day. Thinking that a few extra minutes of sleep would make him feel well rested and help his presentation, Luis reached out and pressed the snooze button.

After dozing for what felt like seconds, Luis reached over to hit the snooze button again and saw that it was 7:00, his usual wake-up time. He jumped out of bed and got ready for school. He had about five minutes to look over his presentation before he ran out the door.

When school ended at 3:30, Luis's day hadn't gone well. Not only had he been unprepared for his presentation, but he had also forgotten about an essay that had been due that day. Luis really wanted to pass his classes this semester. He needed good grades in order to get into the school that his brother attended. Frustrated, Luis decided that he needed a break from schoolwork. He walked home and turned on the TV to help him unwind.

At 4:30, he realized that he only had 30 minutes before he had to leave for work. He lugged his backpack to his room and dumped his books out on the desk. Luis knew that he had written down his math assignment somewhere, but he couldn't find it. When Luis finally found the assignment, he realized that he needed a pencil

and went to the kitchen to get one. In the kitchen, Luis saw a bag of chips sitting on the counter and started eating. His boss never let him eat on the job, so he decided to fix himself a sandwich.

Glancing at the clock, Luis sat down with his sandwich and realized that he only had 10 minutes before he had to leave for work. He knew that he could never get anything done in such a short time. He felt as if he'd never catch up with his homework.

When Luis got home from work at 9:00, he was exhausted. His favorite show was on, so he watched TV with his brother. When the show ended at 10:00, he sat down at his desk to do homework. He had to complete the essay and that math assignment. Luis figured he could rush through the math assignment because his teacher didn't always check homework, so he started with that. Luis finished the math and moved on to the essay. As he was digging through his papers looking for the right text and notes to answer the question, the phone rang—it was his girlfriend. They'd had an argument the day before, and Luis hadn't spoken to her since. He talked to her for a while.

When Luis finally got off the phone, it was close to midnight. He looked at the papers scattered on his desk. There was no way he could finish this tonight anyway.

1. Did you relate to Luis's story? Why or why not?
2. How did Luis's own feelings of frustration affect his studies?
3. What things distracted Luis from getting his homework done? Give specific examples from the story.
4. What could Luis have done differently to better manage his time?

DAILY PLANNER

Today's Date: _____

SCHEDULE	MATERIALS NEEDED (E.G., BOOKS, SPORTS EQUIPMENT, ETC.)
7:00 – 8:00	
8:00 – 9:00	
9:00 – 10:00	
10:00 – 11:00	
11:00 – 12:00	
12:00 – 1:00	
1:00 – 2:00	
2:00 – 3:00	
3:00 – 4:00	
4:00 – 5:00	
5:00 – 6:00	
6:00 – 7:00	
7:00 – 8:00	
8:00 – 9:00	
9:00 – 10:00	
10:00 – 11:00	
Don't forget:	

TERM PLANNER

DATE	MONTH:_____	DATE	MONTH:_____
DATE	MONTH:_____	DATE	MONTH:_____
DATE	MONTH:_____	DATE	MONTH:_____
DATE	MONTH:_____	DATE	MONTH:_____
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DATE	MONTH:_____	DATE	MONTH:_____

OUT OF TIME

When work and activities take up all your so-called free time, how can you find a minute to be yourself?

"I feel like I'm indoors all the time," says Michael Colley, 18, a junior at Mount Vernon High School in New York. "I miss going to the park, seeing movies and relaxing."

Megan Thornton, 17, a junior at Cumberland Valley High School in Mechanicsburg, Pa., says: "People always tell me that life is only going to get more hectic in college. But I know it can't possibly get any worse than it is now."

Michael and Megan have the same problem: overbooked schedules. They spend more time on their extracurricular activities and jobs than on their homework, and more time on their homework than with their friends. And they're just two members of a generation of time-challenged teens: 66 percent of you told a *React* poll that you don't have enough free time.

"Adolescence is so much more competitive," says Penny Peterson, psychologist for Montgomery County, Md., public schools. "It's no longer enough to get the lead in the school play or be hockey captain: You have to do those things and be head of the student council and hold down your job at the mall."

Many teens say they overload their high school schedules in a race for college admissions. "I did all kinds of activities in high school and was busy all the time," says Kim Warhurst, 18, a freshman at Butler County Community College in El Dorado, Kan., near Wichita. "My guidance counselor said that activities look good on your transcript—that you've got a better shot at college scholarships if you're extremely well-rounded. And the adults in charge of each activity all expected you to put their activity first."

"I'm still busy all the time," Kim says. Most days, she gets back to her room after midnight, after classes, homework, time at her college newspaper and a part-time job at WalMart. Her schedule, she says, forced her to give up some of her high school activities: "I had to quit violin and softball because I had to focus on future goals."

Megan had been pursuing a career in music, practicing piano, flute and voice each for a half-hour a day, but has now changed her focus. "I know that I'd have to put in more time and effort than I'm willing to at this point," she says. "There's too much time involved in practicing. I'd rather have time to talk on the phone with my friends. There's more to life than practicing piano, flute and voice all the time. I'd rather have more balance."

For other students, social pressures, not schedules, keep them working into the night. "Kids in my school seem really rich—they're wearing a different North Face jacket every week," says Aryanna Fernando, 18, a senior at Beekman High School in New York City. Along with dance practice and pottery class, Aryanna has held a series of jobs to earn the cash she feels she needs to keep up with her peers. "I don't want to be a slacker," she says, "and because I'm a senior, I get much less sleep than ever before."

There are some benefits: Kim says working on school publications is preparing her for a future as a writer. David Skeist, 18, a senior at the Dalton School in New York City, says that his singing group, chorus and school play give him a built-in social life: "Putting on a production with a bunch of people makes me feel proud, part of a team. But by belonging to various groups, I don't

OUT OF TIME

(continued)

get stuck in one clique.”

But there are risks to stressful, fast-paced days, such as skimping on sleep to squeeze in homework late at night or at dawn and then relying on caffeine and junk food to reenergize. “I’m seeing an increasing number of teens with stress-related physical complaints—gastrointestinal problems, insomnia, headaches and trouble staying awake in class,” Peterson says. And when overwhelmed students turn to alcohol, cigarettes or other drugs to stay awake all night, to get to sleep or to reduce emotional stress, an impressive high school transcript can turn into a ticket to the hospital, she says.

To prevent a stuffed schedule from sucking the joy out of life, Peterson says, ask yourself this question: Do I no longer have time for things in my life that give me joy—like time with family or friends or the hobby I used to love? If so, it’s time to make a change.

“It takes courage to turn things down, but you’ve got to do it,” she says. “Eliminate a couple of activities. It’s much better to involve yourself in two or three activities and really excel in them, rather than spread yourself too thin with things you only have time to do halfheartedly.”

TAKE YOUR TIME BACK

If your schedule is threatening to swallow you whole, try following these tips for stopping the stress.

KICK BACK

When you finally make it home, Dr. Peterson recommends that you take some “mental health” time for yourself. Before

starting your homework, lie down on your bed for a few minutes or have a quick chat on the phone. The break will give you a chance to switch gears from soccer to geometry. Kim says she listens to classical music and takes long drives in the country to relax. Michael watches videos. Herbal baths and meditation work for Aryanna.

DON'T PANIC

Are you afraid that if you’re not involved with every activity at school, you won’t make it into the college of your choice? Don’t be. For one thing, Peterson says, “You might juggle all those activities and still not get into your dream school.” On the other hand, many schools are often more impressed by students who did amazing things with one or two time-intensive activities than by those who joined 15 groups they couldn’t have spent that much time with.

FIND A SYMPATHETIC EAR

Megan tells her parents whenever she feels like she’s drowning, and it pays off. But if you can’t imagine making the changes you need in your lifestyle to cut your stress—and your parents can’t help because they don’t understand the pressures you’re under—ask a guidance counselor for help. “Sometimes you need to hear from your parents, your coach or whoever that it’s OK to shift priorities—that it’s crucial for your sanity,” Peterson says.

—Jennifer Kornreich

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