5

Self-Management Skills

Academic success is influenced by ability and opportunities, but also by attitudes and behaviors. How you view yourself and the world and how you approach problems influences your success in college and life. Improving your study habits requires taking a hard look at yourself. Knowing yourself—your motivations, habits, preferences, and needs—is critical to devising study strategies that work for you. In this chapter we discuss self-management and how to regulate your behavior to achieve goals. The most successful students

are self-aware. They understand their motivation, manage their time well, and are organized.

Attitudes, Beliefs, and Achievement

Students differ in their academic performance. In addition, most students perform better in some subjects or types of assignments than others. How you make sense of these differences influences how you approach problems and how you account for your successes and failures. How well you do in college and life is not just a matter of your ability. Your beliefs, attitudes, and motivation also matter.

Motivation, Attributions, and Mindset

What motivates you to achieve your goals? Why do you want to earn good grades? Why read, study, and do the work involved to succeed in school? Is your academic behavior motivated by intrinsic or extrinsic goals? The source of your motivation influences your success. For example, is your primary reason for reading to get good grades on quizzes? Do you stick it out to complete difficult math problems because you like the challenge? Students who are *intrinsically motivated* focus on the internal rewards of completing tasks, such as mastering the material and increasing knowledge. Other students are *extrinsically motivated* and focus on the outside rewards that come with success, such as earning good grades, rewards, and positive attention (Ryan & Deci, 2000). People tend to be more highly motivated and persist longer when they find a task personally interesting or gratifying, when they are intrinsically motivated to succeed. In contrast, the outside rewards that fuel extrinsic motivation often aren't enough to sustain activity in the face of overwhelming challenges. The best students study not just to earn good grades but to master the material. Generally speaking, students who are intrinsically motivated tend to perform better in college than those who are extrinsically motivated (Taylor et al., 2014).

A second factor associated with success in college and life is one's beliefs about the causes of success and failure. How people attribute their successes, failures, and circumstances of their lives is influenced by the degree to which they believe that internal or external forces control their lives. This pattern of beliefs is known as *locus of control* (Rotter, 1990). People who adopt an *internal locus of control* believe that they have the power to influence most aspects of their lives. They gravitate toward internal attributions, emphasizing their own role in academic achievement, such as through skills or choice of study techniques. In contrast, people with an *external locus of control* tend to believe that outside forces are more important contributors to their circumstances. Performance is attributed to outside factors such as test difficulty, instructor quality, or luck. Students with an external locus of control may lose their motivation to improve because they view their success or failure as out of their control. They feel powerless (so why try?).

In addition to attributing success or failure to internal or external causes, students vary in their *mindset*, the degree to which they believe that their abilities

and characteristics are modifiable (Dweck, 2017). Can you improve your own abilities or are they set in stone? Some students show a *growth mindset*, viewing their skills and characteristics as malleable or changeable. In contrast, others show a *fixed mindset*, believing that their characteristics are enduring and unchangeable. Students who believe that they are able to learn and improve their skills and abilities (growth mindset) tend to persist longer in challenging tasks and ultimately earn higher grades than other students (Richardson, Abraham, & Bond, 2012).

What does all of this mean? These qualities—motivation, locus of control, and mindset—contribute to students' academic tenacity, the tendency to persist in order to achieve goals (Dweck, Walton, & Cohen, 2011). Successful students tend to be intrinsically motivated. They are motivated to master the material for its own sake rather than to simply earn a grade. They tend to adopt an internal locus of control, attributing grades to factors within themselves such as effort rather than luck. They have a growth mindset, believing that they have the ability to improve their performance. Successful students believe that they control their academic destiny, their effort makes a difference in their performance, and they have the ability to succeed.

Self-Talk and Motivation

Beliefs about yourself and your abilities matter in determining your success. Change the way you view your competence and the tasks you face, and you will be more likely to meet success. It requires patience, but you can train yourself to think in empowering ways. Pay attention to how you talk to yourself. We all engage in self-talk and have an inner critic, a voice that monitors and comments on all that we do. Self-talk influences your self-esteem, confidence, motivation, and success.

Positive self-talk contains words of encouragement and support. Positive self-talk is the voice inside you telling you that you can do it. It helps you to persevere, boosts self-esteem, and is motivating. *Negative self-talk*, on the other hand, is deflating. It is discouraging, belittling, and negative. It pulls you down, creating and sustaining self-doubt. Negative self-talk is the nagging voice telling you that you don't have the ability, you aren't smart enough, or you will not succeed. Negative self-talk makes us more likely to quit.

Try to pay attention to your inner voice, your self-talk. As you work on challenging math problems or read a lengthy passage, what does your inner voice say? Train yourself to recognize when you're using negative self-talk, then turn it around into positive self-talk. When you find yourself saying, "I'm just not good at this. There's no point trying," reframe your negative self-talk into motivating positive self-talk. Instead tell yourself, "I can do this. I've done so in the past and I've learned from my mistakes. I'm willing to work hard." The self-talk you use doesn't need to be sophisticated. A simple "I can do this" is motivating. Becoming aware of and changing self-talk is challenging but is well worth it because self-talk influences our motivation, sense of control, and efficacy (Exercise 5.1).

EXERCISE 5.1

BECOME AWARE OF YOUR POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE SELF-TALK

1. Identify examples of negative self-talk that you have used. In what situations did they occur?

2. How might you reframe negative self-talk into positive self-talk?

3. Identify specific positive self-talk phrases that you will use during your next challenging situation.

Time Management

At one time or another, most of us feel overwhelmed, like there is not enough time in the day to get it all done. Although we can't add more hours to the day, we often have more free time than we realize. How do you find those free hours and allocate them as you choose? Use time management strategies to regulate your use of time. *Time management* refers to planning how to divide your time between activities and tasks. Become more efficient at using your time and you'll get more done and make time for friends, family, and—most importantly—yourself.

How Do You Use Your Time?

The first step toward gaining control over time is to understand how you use it. Most people could use some help in managing their time. Take the time management quiz in Exercise 5.2 to examine your use of time.

EXERCISE 5.2

TIME MANAGEMENT SELF-ASSESSMENT

Indicate your response (true or false) to each item below.

1. _____ I do a lot of my work at the last minute.

2. _____ I use a calendar to keep track of my work and activities.

3. _____ I struggle to begin unpleasant tasks.

4. _____ At this very moment, I can identify three things that I have planned to do today.

5. _____ I often find myself daydreaming when I should be working.

6. _____ I have a workspace that I can go to that requires minimal planning or setup.

7. _____ I feel like my friends are much more organized than me.

8. _____ I have a to-do list for this week.

9. _____ I check e-mails and texts as I hear the delivery notifications.

10. _____ I know what time of day I work best.

11. _____ I often feel overwhelmed with work.

12. _____ My calendar lists all of the important deadlines that I face this semester and year.

13. _____ I often attend class unprepared and wish I had done more reading.

14. _____ I prioritize my work and activities.

15. _____ I often find myself on Facebook, Instagram, or online when I should be working.

16. _____ I have time set aside to relax and have fun with my friends.

17. _____ I often forget to complete assignments.

18. _____ I write down what I need to do.

19. _____ I often lose important papers or articles.

20. _____ I rarely hand work in late.

Scoring

Exercise 5.2 assessed the time management and organization skills that we will discuss in this chapter. Give yourself 1 point for each even item marked "true" and 1 point for each odd item marked "false." Sum your points for a total score. Higher scores indicate greater use of time management strategies.

Prompt

1. Is your score as high as you'd like? Look over your answers. What aspects of time management seem most challenging for you? Why?

2. Choose three items in which you'd like to improve. Explain your choices.

3. After reviewing this chapter, discuss specific ways of improving the items you identified.

Before you can begin studying, you must gain control over your time—be its master, not slave. Many students and professors are poor judges of their time use. One of the most accurate ways to learn about how you spend time is to keep a time log. There are 168 hours in a week. How are you spending yours? If you're like most people, you will find the results of Exercise 5.3 ("Keep a Time Log") surprising. That 10-minute coffee break might really be closer to 40 minutes! You might not like to admit the amount of time you spend on social media or playing video games, but it is important to construct an accurate picture of your time use so that you can identify areas to change (and those to keep).

EXERCISE 5.3

KEEP A TIME LOG

For several days or a week, record how you spend each half-hour of the day. As your day progresses, record what you're doing as you're doing it. There are many apps that can help you log your time. Run a search for time-tracking or time-logging apps for some options. Or use a spreadsheet. Set an alarm to ring every 30 minutes and record what you're doing. You may find it difficult to remember to record your activity but do the best that you can. After a few days or a week, analyze your patterns of time use.

1.   What do you spend the most waking time on?

2.   What do you spend the least waking time on?

3.   How much time did you spend on school work? With friends? At work? Online?

4.   Does your time use reflect your priorities? Is there an area where you'd prefer to spend more time? Less? Explain.

5.   Do you think you are using your time most efficiently? What can you change?

Make Choices About How to Spend Your Time

Many of us let too much time slip through our fingers because we aren't taught how to manage it. Keeping a time log can increase our awareness of how we spend our time and the need for a solid plan for managing this limited resource. Juggling school, a job, extracurricular activities, and a social life is difficult and nearly impossible to manage successfully without a plan. I often hear students say that if they just tried harder, they'd be able to do it all. They resign themselves to all-nighters and walk around campus like zombies. This approach of trying to do everything without acquiring the skills to manage

your time will lead to burnout. Life may seem busy now, but it doesn't suddenly get easier after graduation. In fact, demands on time often increase with career and family responsibilities.

Planning your time isn't about squeezing more activities into your schedule; it's about taking a serious look at your commitments and priorities. Take a moment and analyze the demands on your time. Now that you've listed all of your activities, you might realize that you are quite busy—and perhaps overextended. Are you committing yourself to too many activities? You might love music, but can you juggle jazz band, a guitar trio, and an off-campus rock band? Can you write for the school paper and maintain several blogs at once? Recognize that sometimes you can't do it all. Decide what is important and what isn't. Difficult as it might be, you must remove activities that aren't meaningful to you in order to devote time to those that are. Don't eliminate all fun activities, but prioritize them and make decisions about what's important to you and what will help you meet your goals. Make conscious choices of how to spend your time so that you have more control over your days and your life, rather than running late on everything and constantly feeling harried and behind.

Time Management Is Project Management

Time management is about more than schedules and time logs. It is about planning and strategizing how to divide your time between activities and tasks in order to achieve your goals. It's not just time that we're wrangling when we engage in time management techniques: It's really our tasks that are managed. Time itself is not the problem. Instead, the problem is our ability to get everything done (our tasks) that we need to get done.

The first step in getting a handle on your time is determining what has to be done. Create a to-do list. To-do lists can be created from the perspective on the day, week, month, semester, year, or even as a 5-year plan. Most students will find it most helpful to consider the semester as a whole. Look over all of your course syllabi. Record assignments, exams, and due dates. Add other tasks and dates to remember for work, outside activities, and your personal life. This is your master to-do list. Most of the tasks on this list, however, are likely huge and cannot be completed in one sitting. For example, the term paper due on the last day of class requires more than one work session the night before.

Create a plan for each large task, such as paper assignments. These big tasks are often referred to as *projects*. List the actions that are required to complete the project. In the case of a paper, those actions might include brainstorming topics, reading to choose a topic, selecting a topic, gathering sources, reading and taking notes, preparing an outline, writing a draft, and so on (see Chapter 7 for more on writing papers). Think about how much time you need for each task and work *backwards* from the due date. For example, if the paper is due December 15th, complete your first full draft of the paper by December 5th, write your outline by November 30th, finish reading and note taking by

November 15th, and so on. Create multiple informal personal due dates for each part of each project. Backwards planning ensures that you make progress on your project over a stretch of time, which gives you time to think it through, find errors and ways to improve, and ultimately turn in a better assignment. This process sounds like a lot of work, and it is; but planning will make your semester run much more smoothly because you will know what you need to do for each assignment and when you will do it. You'll also hone an important career skill. Devising a plan to accomplish a project is known as *project management*, a key skill that employers seek.

Apply this same approach to each week. Determine what tasks you'll complete to make progress on your major projects and record specific assignments and tasks for the upcoming week. Consider the following questions: What reading is due when? Do you have any homework assignments? Is there anything you need to prepare for group assignments? Then determine which of these tasks needs to be completed on each day. It takes some planning to ensure that your semester-long to-do list gets done and that you keep on top of the rest of your life and enjoy it. The rewards of planning include feeling in control, reducing stress, and making time for the people, events, and activities that are important to you. Table 5.1 presents additional benefits of time and project management.

PRACTICAL TIP
TO-DO LIST MANAGERS

Paper to-do lists are easy to maintain. Some students prefer digital to-do lists. If you're looking to go the digital route for maintaining your to-do list, you're not limited to text files or the standard app that comes with your phone. There are hundreds of to-do list apps to help you get organized and manage your time. Some of the most popular apps include:

Any.do: http://any.do/

Asana: http://asana.com

Remember the Milk: http://rememberthemilk.com

Todoist: http://todoist.com

Toodledo: http://toodledo.com/

There is a dizzying array of ways to organize and keep up with your to-do list. However, be warned: It's easy to let searching, trying, and playing with new to-do list apps become a form of procrastination. Don't let yourself fall into the trap of spending more time searching for a way to organize your list than actually acting on the list.

TABLE 5.1 ● Benefits of Time Management and To-Do Lists	
You'll know where to begin.	One of the primary benefits of creating a schedule is that you won't waste time deciding what to do. Removing the thought and planning can free your energy to actually complete what's on your list and spend your time productively.
You'll be less likely to avoid distasteful tasks.	It's human nature: we spend time on activities that we like and that we are good at. Many students put other tasks first and find that they've run out of time to study subjects that they dislike. A schedule prevents this type of forgetfulness.
Planning frees your mind.	Recording your to-dos (tasks that you need to complete) relieves them from your mind. Once you've written an item down, there's no need to worry about forgetting it, so you're free to focus on other things.
You'll set priorities.	What is important to you? How important is each of the classes that you are taking to your academic standing and future plans? How many assignments does each of your courses entail? What is the relative weight or value of each assignment? It's easy to spend lots of time doing busy work that is not worth much of your final grade while not allocating enough time to study for a test or prepare a major paper.
Planning ensures time for fun.	Good time management skills permit you to make time for friends and enjoy leisure without feeling guilty that you're not studying. If you schedule time to do your work, you know that it will get done. Then you can enjoy "play time" without worrying or thinking about studying.

Create Your Schedule

After creating to-do lists to manage all of your projects and assignments, the next step is deciding when you'll complete the tasks on your list. Selecting specific times to work on specific tasks will ensure that they get done. Some students and faculty balk at the idea of a schedule, instead preferring to keep their days open and allow for spontaneity. The philosophy behind time management is that by controlling or planning *part* of your time, you are able to be more flexible with the rest of your time. Create a schedule and determine when you're in class, working, or engaging in other activities, and mark specific times for completing your tasks.

We can all benefit from keeping a schedule and working on time management. However, the form that the time management system takes will vary.

Look over the possibilities and decide what works for you. Is there one approach that you prefer more than the others?

- An old-fashioned analog paper set of daily, weekly, and monthly calendars

- A plan notebook that you fashion into a personal calendar

- A simple text file that you sync among your devices

- Your phone's basic calendar and to-do list app

- An app that can sync with your phone, laptop, and tablet computers

Whatever format you choose, make sure that it works for you, is easy to use, and is always present so that you will be motivated to use it. You may find that it takes time to figure out what works, and you may try more than one system.

Once you settle on a system, use it consistently. Create a plan or a schedule for each day. That is, choose what tasks to accomplish and when to accomplish them.

- Schedule time for your reading and class assignments.

- Think ahead and schedule time for work on major projects early in the semester. As we discussed, work back from the due date and create mini-deadlines. Work on these each week.

- Plan short blocks of time, preferably half-hour or (at most) hour-long blocks. Give yourself breaks.

- Schedule the most difficult tasks during daylight hours, when people tend to be most alert and awake.

- Don't schedule every moment. Allow for some flexibility, last-minute changes, and play. For example, you might decide to end the scheduled part of your day at 4 p.m., leaving open time for whatever you choose.

- Allow time for sleep. You need 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night (this is supported by psychological research: Hirshkowitz et al., 2015). Without sleep, you are less likely to remember material, which means that you're less likely to learn (Landmann et al., 2015).

- Know your arousal pattern and work with it. We all have a natural rhythm of times in which we are alert and awake and times in which we are less alert. Arrange your study times around your natural rhythm. Study when you're alert and sleep when you're sleepy.

- Schedule down time, exercise time, and social time. The only way to ensure that all of your needs are met consistently is to plan ahead. Care for yourself by setting aside time just for you.

As a student, the most important activity to schedule is likely your class work. By scheduling regular periods to work, you will have opportunities to think about what you are learning rather than just simply prepare for looming deadlines. Without the pressure of cramming for an exam, you have time to consider what you're studying and how it fits with your experience and perspective. Learning can become more interesting, enjoyable, and meaningful, which contribute to retention.

To summarize, the cardinal rule of time management is that you must capture everything. Record your tasks, assignments, and obligations in one place, including class times, study times, project due dates, assignments, appointments, and social events. Consistently write everything down so that you don't forget and so that you're free to think without worrying that you've forgotten something. Always carry your schedule and to-do list so that you can bring order to your life and have peace of mind. Make no mistake about it; this will take some time and practice, but creating a schedule and maintaining a to-do list produces important returns. You'll feel like you have extra time. You'll feel more in control.

PRACTICAL TIP
CAPTURE LOST TIME

Each day we lose time as we go about the tasks of our day, such as walking from one place to another, waiting in line, and traveling. This time isn't really lost. We can use it, if we choose. For example, while walking from class, try to think of the main points of the lecture and how they apply to what you know. While exercising on the elliptical machine, brainstorm topics or titles for papers or think about how to organize papers. Another way to use in-between time is to carry pocket work (an article, flash cards) that you can do while waiting in lines, standing at the bus stop, sitting, and so on. Cell phones make it easy to always have a task at hand. Ten minutes here, 15 minutes there; it adds up. In addition, cognitive psychology and memory research has shown that we can recall more information if we study in short periods rather than long ones, so you just might learn more. However, also remember that you don't need to be productive all the time. Sometimes staring into space while you wait in line is a good thing!

Strategies for Efficiency

Excellent project management skills can help you plan and schedule your work, but your success is influenced by your organization and self-management skills. The ability to control your attention is one of the most important self-management skills that you can cultivate.

Digital Distraction and Multitasking

You sit down to study, open your books, and then hear a *ding* as a notification pops up on your phone. What do you do? If you're like most people, you peek. You might read the message and reply, read it and decide to reply later, or just mark the notification as read. Regardless of which action you choose, you've distracted yourself and fallen out of the study zone. It may seem like taking 15 seconds to check a notification is no big deal, but it takes you away from your task and regaining your focus takes time. Your study time will be most efficient—that is, you'll learn the most in the least amount of time—if you eliminate distractions.

"But I can multitask. It's no big deal," many people argue. Instead, as you study psychology you will learn that our attention is limited. Contrary to the term *multitasking*, our minds unitask; that is, we focus on one stream of stimuli or information at a time (Monsell, 2003). Multitasking is instead *task-switching*, directing our attention from one stimulus to another and back again. There's a cognitive cost to task-switching or multitasking, and we ultimately perform more poorly on both tasks. Students who multitask while studying tend to perform more poorly on exams (Carrier, Rosen, Cheever, & Lim, 2015; Patterson, 2017). This is true when it comes to reading and studying but is also true in class. That moment you check your phone and read a text or quickly scan Instagram for updates draws your attention away from class. Most multitaskers believe that they can successfully attend to multiple sets of stimuli, such as class, Snap Chat, and a group discussion, but research suggests that they are mistaken and multitaskers tend to perform more poorly on exams and generally score lower in academic achievement (Uncapher et al., 2017; Zureick, Burk-Rafel, Purkiss, & Hortsch, 2018).

So what should you do? You don't need to ignore your phone and social media entirely. Instead, limit your consumption. Set times when your phone is off limits, such as during class and study time. Silence notifications and you'll remove some of the temptation to switch tasks. It's difficult. With practice you'll build stamina and get better at resisting that urge to check your phone. Set a timer to allocate study time (try 30 minutes). Work. Then you might use screen time as a reward. Set a timer to ensure that you don't spend more than 5 to 10 minutes. Repeat. Slowly increase your off-the-grid time to an hour or two. If you're finding it especially difficult, there are a number of apps that can block websites or cell phone use for a period of time. Control your digital devices rather than let them control you.

Create a Study Environment

Improving your skills in time management means that you will set aside consistent periods for reading, writing, and studying. Setting aside time is the first step to ensuring that you keep up with your studies. Another part, however, is creating a place conducive to your work. It is one thing to set aside time, but you need to ensure that you will be productive during that time. As

a psychology student you will learn about how our environment influences us. Take advantage of that knowledge and create a study environment that will support and encourage your work. Where do you work? Is it conducive to learning? Exercise 5.4 will help you to evaluate your study area and determine if it is conducive to work.

EXERCISE 5.4
STUDY ENVIRONMENT QUIZ

Check off items that you find are true for your study environment.

- ❑ There is a clutter-free table or desk with space to spread out books and papers.
- ❑ The area has good lighting.
- ❑ No television, music, or another loud distraction is nearby.
- ❑ A sturdy and comfortable chair is available.
- ❑ The temperature is comfortable.
- ❑ My calendar, schedule, and to-do lists are handy.
- ❑ My laptop, tablet, and phone notifications are turned off.
- ❑ Books and supplies are handy.
- ❑ My phone is silenced.
- ❑ People interrupt me rarely here.
- ❑ There are few things in my field of vision that have nothing to do with school work.
- ❑ I work well and feel that my studying is effective here.

Scoring

Count your checkmarks. The closer your score is to 12, the better your study environment.

Reflection

1. How does your study space rate? Reflect on your score.

2. In what ways might the quality of your workspace influence your learning and academic achievement?

3. In what ways can you improve your study space to make it a place more conducive for working? Identify three strategies for improving your workspace.

Designate an area just for studying. Choose a quiet place with adequate light. Make your study area pleasant and motivating. Avoid distractions; don't set up a study area in a high-traffic place (like the kitchen). If you are prone to distraction and procrastination, be sure to set up your study area away from the television or anything else that might draw your attention (e.g., a big window). Create a barrier between you and the world. If possible, shut the door or at least create an invisible barrier by facing the wall. Your study area should be convenient—a place that's easy to use, so you'll use it often. Some students need light background noise to study, but be careful that it's not distracting. Generally speaking, television and music with lyrics tend to be distracting because we naturally try to process what we're hearing even though we're trying to focus on our work. Before you decide that you need background noise like the television or radio, try spending some time without any noise to see how it feels. Many people find white noise helpful because it's simple background noise without content, such as static or a subtle hissing like the motor of a fan. There are a number of websites, apps, and downloads that offer free access to white noise (e.g., I like Simply Noise at http://simplynoise.com but there are many other options, including playlists on YouTube).

Many students don't have an ideal work space, a place that is just for studying. What then? Create consistent circumstances that prepare you to work. Find a handful of places where you can distance yourself and work. Don't rely only on studying in your dorm, in case your roommate has friends over. Find a place in the library but also a quiet student lounge so that you have options. Avoid open spaces where students congregate to chat. The conversations taking place around you will interfere with your concentration. Seek a barrier, whether physical or mental. Turn yourself away from others so that their activity won't disturb you. Play white noise through your ear buds. Wherever you choose, enact the same ritual each time you prepare to work: Lay your stuff out, find your barrier, use your ear buds, and focus.

PRACTICAL TIP
SET A ROUTINE STUDY TIME

Your energy and attention tends to fluctuate over the course of the day. Determine your best study time, when you're awake, alert, and more ready to work. Try to study at the same time each day. When you set a discrete period of time aside for studying each day, your mind gets used to the pattern. It becomes easier to work during that time. If you stick to a routine study time and place, you'll find it easier to get into the "zone" and you'll spend less time warming up and more time studying effectively.

Organize Your Materials

Studying is easier if you're organized. Have you ever sat down to study only to realize that you needed materials from another room or files that are on your tablet rather than your laptop? Not having your materials together is a time trap, because you'll need to spend extra time gathering them and risk getting sidetracked. Save time by keeping all your study materials in one place.

Think about your filing system. Do you know you where you put last week's notes? The handout from class? Do you know where to look to find your work? There are various ways of keeping your class material organized. If you prefer to use paper, follow this simple binder method. Use a three-ring binder for your schoolwork. Keep lecture notes and handouts from each class together, marked by a tab. Use one large binder for all of your classes, separating each class with tabbed dividers. You can also add a section for other necessities such as calendars, weekly schedules, lists, and phone numbers. All that you have to carry around is a single binder, and not five notebooks, folders, and many scraps of paper. You're also less prone to losing handouts if they're in your binder. If your binder is full or gets too bulky, empty the contents into file folders marked for each class. Some students do this weekly. If you move your notes and handouts into folders, date each page and, if applicable, add page numbers. If you drop a folder, you'll be able to reorganize it easily. At the end of the semester you'll have at least one file folder for each class.

Today there are many digital options that provide more flexibility and are more durable than the binder-paper approach. Data management websites and apps like Evernote, OneNote, or Google Keep allow you to create notes, scan handouts, and save photos of whiteboards and other presentations. Some students take handwritten notes in class and scan them into their desired app. Some apps can convert handwriting to searchable text. Notes can be tagged for easy searching. Each of these apps is available online, as computer programs, and as phone apps syncing across all of your devices, ensuring that your work is safe and easily accessible.

If you save your notes as word-processing files, create a set of folders on your tablet or laptop to organize your materials from class. You might have a folder labeled by semester (Fall 2021) with subfolders for each class (e.g., Child Psych, Biology, Experimental Psych, and so on). A hierarchical set of folders ensures that you can find your files easily. Also develop a standard way of labeling files to help you find what you need quickly. For example, your notes from Tuesday's Experimental Psychology class would be filed in the Experimental Psych folder and might be titled "Exp_notes_01_20_2021" to indicate that they were recorded on January 20. A simple labeling system will be very helpful when you need to search for notes recorded on a specific date.

As we have discussed, self-management skills contribute to your success in college and beyond, and you can improve your competence. In Chapter 6 we examine study skills, another contributor to academic success, as effective study skills can help you learn more in less time. However, your ability to apply study skills is influenced by your competence in self-management. In order to take advantage of study tips, you must effectively manage your time, attitudes, and environment.

REFLECTION PROMPTS

I'm at My Best When . . .

When are you at your best? When do you find it easiest to concentrate on difficult tasks? Are you a morning person, someone who accomplishes the most in the early morning? Do you work better at night? Why do you think you have these working patterns? What are the implications for scheduling classes and studying? How can you use this knowledge to help yourself?

Making Time for Health

Usually when we talk about time management, the emphasis is on ensuring that we get our work done. Good time management also ensures that we make time for our social life and for fun. Many students (and professors), however, prioritize work and friends over self-care. Ever notice how nearly everyone has a cold around exam time? Use your time management strategies to ensure that you make time to take care of yourself. Identify at least three times this week in which you will do something special for yourself to focus on your own health. It might be taking a yoga class, making a special meal, or doing an activity that you love. What are those times and what will you do?

Ideal Day

Suppose that you managed your time well. What would an ideal day look like? Write about it, realistically. Deal with life as it is now, not as a fantasy. What would you do, and how would you handle yourself in all situations? What two things could you do to bring yourself closer to that ideal?

Two Extra Hours

Suppose you suddenly had an extra 2 hours each day. How would you spend the time? Why? How does this proposed activity compare with the rest of your schedule? Is it more important than any of your current activities? If you believe it is, identify steps that you can take to make time for this activity.

Evaluating Time Management Strategies

After you've had a chance to try the time management strategies described in this chapter, write about your experience. Which strategies worked well? How might you modify them to fit your style and needs?