Organization and Time Management Strategies

Algoma University Learning Centre

Assignment Breakdown

When you look at an upcoming assignment, break it down into chunks and assign dates. Then put those into your agenda. For example, an article review that is due on Oct 29 may be broken down into the following sections:

Oct 12 – choose topic

Oct 13 – research and find article (this may take the most time)

Oct 16 – read and analyze article

Oct 17 – create outline for article review

Oct 20 – begin writing rough draft

Oct 23 – finish rough draft

Oct 25 – bring writing to Writing Lab for editing

Oct 26 – make any changes, print good copy

Oct 29 – hand in during class

By breaking down an assignment in this way, it is manageable and should not affect all of the other work that needs to be done for other classes. Plus, it does allow for some flexibility if something changes on one day and you cannot do one step.

Working Efficiently

Once you have your to-do lists in place, the next step is to actually do the work. **Be strict with yourself and make sure you do the things that you have outlined for yourself for any specific day.** If you don't, everything will carry over onto the next day and the next….Before you know it, you will fall behind and have to scramble to get things done (and it probably won't be your best work).

Limit distractions when you are working. This means that you may not be able to work in your bedroom, kitchen, student lounges, etc. Turn off the TV, radio, Facebook and cell phone. You can get more work done than you realized when you focus 100% of your attention on your work.

If you feel you could use some one-on-one help with your organization skills, please visit the Learning Centre to make an appointment with Raquel Lehto, Algoma U's Learning Strategist.

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Semester Calendars

A semester calendar displays all four months of a semester at once. It should be displayed above your desk, on your fridge, or anywhere that you will see it regularly. Use your course outlines and write down every test, exam and assignment due date that you have. Make sure to include the class with the due date. Don't forget to include other events or appointments that are important to you and you do not want to miss.

Now you can see how your semester is shaping up. Are there some real crunch times where many things are due at once? You will need to plan for those times and possibly get an assignment (or two!) done early.

Weekly Schedule

A weekly schedule lists each day of the week and is divided into time slots (typically of one hour). Begin by filling in your classes and any other events that are consistent from week to week, such as a job, sports, or volunteering.

Now look at the available time that you have for the rest of your life. **A full-time student should be doing around 30 hours a week of school work.** When are you going to do that? Aim for using daylight hours, time in between classes, and working more Monday to Friday so that you can have at least one full day off on the weekends.

When you are determining when you are going to do course work, think of your own internal clock: what time of day is the best for you to work? Morning, afternoon or evening? Try to maximize that time, so that you are at your best when working.

Agenda

Agendas need to be portable and can be paper or electronic depending on your preference and budget. An agenda is used to write down due dates, tests, etc, as well as the daily things that are happening. Agendas are also the place to write down daily to-do lists. This involves work for assignments, essays, weekly reading for all classes, and studying for tests.

Spend a few minutes on the weekend and plan out the following week by looking ahead at what needs to be done. Write down the tasks for each day and then tell yourself that you are not going to bed that night until the list is done!
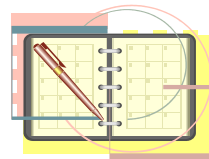
By starting things early and planning ahead, you should be able to have reasonable to-do lists for each day.