Using a planner: The essentials

Feel like there aren’t enough hours in the day to accomplish everything you want to do? Here are some tips and strategies for making the most of your time and making a plan for getting it all done.

The Five B’s

1. **Break things down**
   Break a large task into smaller, more manageable chunks.

2. **Back-planning**
   Start with the final deadline, determine how long each component of the assignment will take you to complete, and then plan backwards.

3. **Be specific**
   To be efficient, be specific with your plan. Writing “Biology, Chapter 8: Problems 22-26” is far more useful than writing “Study biology.”

4. **Be strategic**
   Try mapping out your alertness levels throughout the day to get a better sense of when you work best. Also consider how long you can focus on a topic before you need a break. We recommend regular 15-minute breaks for every 45 minutes of focused work.

5. **Balance**
   Leave space for the unexpected, and include breaks throughout the day to avoid burnout. Aim for a balance between your social and academic life as you create your plan.

Other scheduling tips

- Schedule short periods of time to preview and review course material throughout the week. Avoid study marathons!
- Use a deadline calendar to see an entire semester at a glance. Be mindful of busy weeks in the semester and plan accordingly.
- Use a reward system. Put tasks you normally put off right before something you enjoy so you’re more motivated to complete the task.