



Time Management: Schoolwork

During the school day, your schedule is probably made up for you. Once the bell rings, though, it's up to you to take control of school-related Have-To's.

Write everything down. Put your homework assignments, test dates, and project due-dates on paper as soon as your teacher gives them to you. If you keep your Weekly Planner with you, all this info will be in one place rather than scribbled on random pieces of paper or in notebook margins.

Stay organized. Keeping your schoolwork and papers organized helps you manage time. Keep each class or subject in its own folder, or buy one of those multi-pocket folders that will hold the whole shebang. Try making a weekly homework and assignment chart and tape it to your folder each Monday, so you'll always have it right in front of you. We've made up a **Weekly Homework Chart** for you to print and use.

Avoid distractions. Stay away from TV, the phone, the Web, and all other distracting things while you're doing school assignments. If you're trying to read your English homework while *American Idol* is on, you'll probably spend half your time listening to the show, and it'll take you much longer to finish your reading. Consider this: get the assignment finished first, and *then* watch the tube. You'll understand your schoolwork better and enjoy the TV show more.

Set homework time. Set a regular block of time each afternoon or evening to do all your homework and studying. Make sure everyone in the family knows about this time, so that they can give you the space and quiet you need to concentrate.

Think about space as well as time. Try and create a regular quiet space, either in a bedroom, spare room, or office, where you keep your school stuff and work on assignments. The kitchen table is not usually the best place to do homework, since all the distractions can slow you down and make your work more difficult.

Get your family involved. Show your parents or guardian your school assignments and responsibilities every day and week. They can help you plan out your schedule, set aside time, and remind you of upcoming deadlines.

Don't underestimate assignments. Many of us look at a school assignment and think "I can get that done in a few minutes," then find out that it really takes an hour. Before you put an assignment into your schedule, make sure you have a realistic idea of how long it will take to complete it. When in doubt, ask an adult. It's also a good idea to ask your teacher, "How long should this take to finish?" when he or she hands out the assignment.

Break up big assignments into smaller chunks. Some homework is long-term research or study projects, and will require you to schedule blocks of time over one or more weeks. A good way to do this is to break a big task up into smaller tasks, and accomplish each goal one at a time until everything is done.

If you're studying for a big test:

1. Mark the date of the test in your Weekly Planner or Monthly Calendar.
2. Count backwards the number of days you need to study. If the test is on a Monday, and you need one week to study, count back to the previous Monday and mark that as the first day of studying. Even better, count back a few extra days to leave some "wiggle room" in case an emergency comes up.
3. On your daily and weekly planners, schedule enough time each day so that you'll have the material down cold.
4. Divide up the things you have to study and tackle a different idea each day.

If you're doing a book report or long-term project:

1. Be realistic about how many days of work the project will take, and then count backwards from the due date.
2. Chop up the project into smaller tasks, and try to accomplish one of these each day. If it's a book report, consider chopping up the work by reading a chapter a day (or more if they're small chapters).

This means you have to schedule as many days as the book has chapters, as well as enough time to write the report.

3. If it's a research paper or other project, make a list of all the things you have to do, like research, making an outline, writing the different sections, and so on. On your Monthly Calendar, assign yourself a deadline for each of these steps, and finish them one at a time. This way, your project will be a series of small assignments instead of a big, overwhelming one.

Time Management: Have-To's, Want-To's, and Goals

What are the things we *have* to do in our lives? What are the things we *want* to do? All of these take TIME!

Have-To's:

"Have-To's" need to be a part of almost every day. Whether we like it or not, we all have to find time to get them done.

- **Family responsibilities.** You know the drill: household chores, helping your little bro with homework, keeping your room clean.
- **School and homework.** You won't always be a student, but while you are, it's your job to give time and energy to your education.
- **Sleep.** This may seem like a big "DUH," but it helps to be reminded: Sleep is a must for our bodies and minds, and doctors agree that young people need at least eight hours every night. If you think you can squeeze more time into your schedule by cutting back on *Zzzz's*, you'll probably find that you're sleepy and sluggish during the day, and wind up taking longer to do things anyway.
- **Eating and personal hygiene.** We know, another big "DUH." But many people skip meals because they're running late. Taking enough time to eat so that you actually enjoy it, rather than just shoving cereal down your throat, will help you develop healthy food habits. The same goes for bathing, dressing, and other things that make you presentable to the world. If you block out time to do them and enjoy them, you're likely to feel better about yourself that day.

Want-To's:

Fortunately, our time isn't just about responsibilities—we get to have some fun, too! "Want-To's" make our lives a little more fulfilling.

- **Activities.** You might be a violinist, a soccer player, a painter, a poet, or a ballet dancer. Sports, the arts, and other hobbies are important because they help make us well-rounded and develop our bodies and minds. Plus, they just plain make us happy.
- **Chill time.** Okay, let's not forget that you also deserve some time to just be *you* and do whatever you feel like, whether it's going to the park, hanging out with friends, reading a book, or being alone with your thoughts.

Goals:

Many of our Have-To's and Want-To's get done because we set goals for ourselves.

Short-term goals are things we want or need to do that can be accomplished in a few hours or days. Let's say you want to bake a birthday cake for your dad. You might not think about it, but that's a short-term goal. It'll probably take just an hour or two, but making that goal and planning to achieve it will result in that yummy cake. Other short-term goals take longer; for instance, building a skateboard ramp or going through old boxes in the attic, which might happen over a weekend or more.

Long-term goals are part of the "bigger picture" of our lives -- our dreams and aspirations. Although they may take months or years to accomplish, they still take up time on a regular basis. These might include teaching yourself to play guitar, writing a book, becoming a better basketball player, or learning to speak French. Goals like these can't be achieved by setting aside one big block of time but rather, smaller blocks of time over a period of days, months, or even years.