

## USING WEEKDAY TIME EFFECTIVELY

### ONE OR TWO HOURS BETWEEN CLASSES

One of the most common time management complaints we receive from students is that they waste a lot of time during the day. This results in study tasks getting pushed to the evening (sometimes very late in the evening) and the weekend.

There are a number of ideas that you can try to help you use time more effectively during the day, to free up more time in the evenings and on weekends when there are usually more fun activities taking place.



The first step is to pinpoint the periods during the day that you usually waste time. Some of the most common ones are:

- One or two hours between classes
- Between the last class of the day and supper time
- Sleeping in and wasting time in the morning before classes begin
- Extending lunch or supper break so it's too long.

### ONE OR TWO HOURS BETWEEN CLASSES

The common rationale for wasting time between classes is that there isn't enough time to get anything significant done. By the time you get a coffee, walk to the library or your room, take off your coat and get settled with your books and computer, it's almost time to get ready for the next class. So what's the point? Here are some ideas that might help:

- If you're not within five minutes walking distance of your res, apartment or the library, don't go there. If there isn't another class coming in, you can stay in your classroom and work, or find an empty classroom, lounge, or space in a corridor nearby. Or, walk to the building where your next class will be and find an empty room. If the weather is nice, sit outside. Be sure to bring all the course materials you need to your earlier class so that not having the right book doesn't become a convenient excuse.
- Stay away from food courts and restaurants - they're like fly paper. Once you land there, you're stuck forever. If you're dying for a caffeine fix, try filling a small thermos or insulated cup at home first thing in the morning (or afternoon) and taking it with you.
- Most importantly, rid yourself of the myth that you can't get anything worthwhile done in less than one or two or x number of hours. Even ten minutes can be put to good use reviewing and editing lecture notes, skimming a chapter, studying a chart or diagram, memorizing a couple of vocabulary words or body parts, checking a definition, formulating a question - you get the idea.

## **BETWEEN LAST CLASS OF DAY & SUPPER**

As a student, you may have experienced a situation like this: it's 3 or 4 o'clock and you've got a pile of work to do before your night class. Yet you've just finished several hours of classes and you're tired. You trudge to the library anyway and, after settling down with a textbook, you find that you can't keep your eyes open. Some primordial instinct has kicked in .... you read the same page over and over and still don't know what's on it .... you're getting a headache and you're getting hungry .... you can't stay awake .... you can't control it .... it's deadly! It's.... NAP TIME!

I'm convinced that, for some people, the need to have an afternoon nap simply never goes away. Long after my childhood or even university-hood, and even on days when I feel well rested, all I have to do is try to read after 3pm and I am asleep. Some claim that the secret to maintaining energy through the afternoon is a good sleep the night before and a light lunch with substantial protein. If your energy level crashes late in the afternoon no matter what, here are some suggestions. Don't leave tasks to do during this time that require focused attention or concentration. Use late afternoon for checking e-mail, making phone calls or photocopies, running errands, working out, or doing laundry or other housekeeping. Or, best of all, taking a nap!

## **SLEEPING IN & WASTING MORNING TIME**

Getting enough sleep is not wasting time. In general, most university-aged people don't get enough sleep, and the stressful, energy-draining activity of learning complex academic material means that students should be getting more sleep than the average adult needs. All too often, however, the university lifestyle results in students getting less sleep than average, and on some occasions more sleep than needed.

There are two essential strategies to consider if you're concerned about difficulties with getting up:

- First, whenever possible, go to bed and get up at the same time every day. People who suffer from migraine headaches are already aware of the physiological benefits this provides - it's an important preventative strategy. A regular sleep pattern is simply easier on your body, so it makes sense that it will be easier to get up at a time in tune with established, biological rhythms.
- Second, if you're just not a morning person, realize it, accept it, and work around it. Don't feel guilty or get hung up about when you think you should be getting up. Don't leave important study tasks for the morning to try to force yourself to get up. Even if you manage to get out of bed, chances are that your concentration will be less than ideal. See [Finding Your Best Time of Day](#) for more information on this.
- Third, if your classes don't meet until the afternoon, set up something structured in the morning (not dawn, but maybe 9 or 10am) to help you get a reasonable start. For example, meet with a friend to go to the gym or go grocery shopping, or, if possible, schedule work or volunteer hours in the morning.

## EXTENDING LUNCH OR SUPPER BREAKS

Getting a handle on this one can be tough. The reason meal times often become extended beyond what is desirable is that students NEED this time - to relax, to socialize with others, to digest what they've put into their bodies and their minds so far that day. If extended meal breaks are a recurring problem for you, look at the rest of your day and ensure that you're getting the breaks you need.

It's important to plan a reasonable break for meals - say an hour for lunch and one-and-a-half to two hours for supper, even if you can eat in 20 minutes. Breaks are essential to using time effectively. For more on this see [Breaks and Rewards](#).

If you take frequent breaks and plan a reasonable time for meals and you're still finding it tough to get back to work after lunch or supper, here are a couple of get-back-to-work strategies:

- Schedule your [flexible time](#) right after lunch or supper hour
- Try to set up your class, lab and work schedule so you don't have more than an hour for lunch or two hours for supper
- Schedule anything you can that involves other people (appointments, group meetings, workshops, etc.) for the time you'd like to get started after meals
- Meet a friend after the meal to study together.