Time Management

Time management is likely going to be one of your biggest challenges as a student—perhaps even as a human being. It takes a deliberate effort to master this skill. Here are some strategies to consider trying.

Setting Priorities:

- Take responsibility for your education.
  - There is no magic formula for how long to study or how fast to read. It is up to you to decide how immediately and how thoroughly you will focus on each class or assignment.
  - If you are unsure of how to balance your workload, talk to your professor about reasonable preparation time for each class or assignment.
  - Once you’ve decided how much time you will allocate to each class, schedule it on your calendar. (Hint: You should have a calendar.)
- Listen to feedback. Your faculty will provide comments and critiques to help you identify strengths and weaknesses. When in doubt, ask.
- Track where your time goes and compare that with your goals, values, and commitments. Decide what you want to change.
- Plan ahead for the semester.
  - Think about time in weeks and months, not just hours and days. Keep important deadlines and events on your calendar (and look at your calendar regularly).
  - Expect that you will sometimes have major work due in more than one class simultaneously. This is not a good reason for one assignment to be late; it is the reason you need to plan ahead.

Avoiding Procrastination:

- Ask yourself why you’re procrastinating. Address the root cause.
- Question whether you truly “work better under pressure” or whether you just don’t know how to motivate yourself before the last minute. If it’s a matter of motivation:
  - Set up mini-deadlines and make yourself accountable to them.
  - Use rewards strategically.
  - Just start—but with a plan to work for only 5-10 minutes. You might find that once you’ve started, you’re actually willing to keep going.
Working Efficiently:

• Before you start to work, ask yourself what you’re trying to accomplish and/or how much time you’re committing. This should help you decide if you’re on pace and will let you know when you’re done.
• Figure out when you work best. (Hint: it’s probably not at 2 a.m.) This may be different for different tasks.
• Figure out where you work best. (Hint: it’s probably not your bed, or even your room.) Again, the ideal location might vary based on the task.
• Identify and eliminate distractions, both environmental and internal.
  o Multitasking, especially with the help of a computer, is almost always a distraction.
• Take advantage of short blocks of time.
  o Instead of saying, “I have class in a half-hour, so I can’t work now,” try saying, “I have class in a half-hour, and even so, I can review vocabulary now.”
  o Carry an assignment with you at all times (an article, problem set, etc.)

Maintaining Endurance:

• Your brain is a part of your body. If you don’t feed, rest, exercise, hydrate, and generally take good care of your body, your brain (and your work) will suffer.
• Living “the life of the mind” does not mean ignoring everything else that makes life meaningful. Don’t expect to find time for your passions. Make time for them.
• Know when to ask for help.
  o Don’t struggle in isolation or let your pride get in the way of your success.
  o Reed is challenging; that’s why we have resources to support you.