

# Using a Fixed Commitment Calendar

**Purpose:** Using a fixed commitment calendar helps account for *all* of your time, so you will be less likely to waste time. It shows you how you are using all 168 hours you get each week, and can train you to make the most of every block of time you have. Use a different color for each type of time use, such as green for exercise, red for class, etc. It's easier to see how much time you're devoting to each "chunk" this way. It can also be a little bit more fun to fill in this calendar using crayons (or markers or highlighters)!

1. Start by filling in all your *class* times, including labs. Also schedule a **preview time** (5-30 minutes) before each class whenever possible. At that time, review all or some of your notes in preparation for the upcoming lecture or discussion. If you have 2 or 3 classes in a row, preview from last to first class. Then schedule a **review time** after your classes (5-30 minutes) whenever possible. Use this time to edit and summarize your notes while they're still fresh. You can also use this time to look over any assignments that were given and begin to plan when and how you will do them. You can also write down any questions you have that you can ask the instructor.
2. If you have a job, add *work* responsibilities (shifts, staff meetings, training). Then add other regularly scheduled *commitments* (clubs, organizations, meetings, church, etc.).
3. *Add in your daily chores/normal routine* (shower/getting ready, meals; work out time, laundry, etc.). Make sure you are scheduling in realistic timeframes here; you don't need 90 minutes to make and eat every meal; maybe you would like to work out for 2 hours, but really can only fit in 45 minutes daily. Again, keep it realistic. Also keep in mind that you can multitask with some things: laundry and reading for example; take your textbook or blank notecards to the laundry room with you.
4. *Commit to study times*, keeping in mind that you want 2-3 hours of studying for every one hour of class time per week (i.e., a 3-hour class should have 6-9 hours of studying per week). Remember to try to keep your study blocks to no more than 2 hours at a time. Also remember that varying your study location is beneficial (go to the library, the MSC, an empty classroom, a lounge area). Try to get away from areas that will tempt you (your room), or distract you (roommates, or friends around). Schedule time each day for each class, even if some need more attention than others. Think in terms of "blocks of time" for specific tasks, not hours of studying.
5. *Schedule time for sleep*. A reasonable sleep schedule means don't sleep till 2 p.m. on the weekends if you are used to waking up by 7 a.m. during the week. Allow yourself some weekend sleep-in, but keep a reasonable schedule. Don't sleep until noon on Saturday and then take a nap from 4-7 p.m. too. All your sleep does not have to be at one time; if getting 5 hours at night and taking a 2-hour nap in the afternoon works for you then go for it. The point is to sleep as much as you need, not as much as you want. Also keep time open every day for physical activity! Research shows that regular exercise not only gives you a sense of well-being, it also reduces tension!
6. Make space for *downtime* and socializing. This is another area to be realistic about. Would it be nice to veg out and watch 3 hours of television in the middle of the week? Sure! Is it beneficial and helping you succeed academically? Probably not. Give yourself an hour or so of downtime each day, along with shorter time around your daily schedule to make phone calls to family and friends, send emails or texts. Multitasking is good here too. Eat with friends and have some social time while you get a meal in. Save your bigger blocks of downtime for the weekend, and use them as a reward for sticking to your class and study schedule during the week. Always keep in mind that the weekend should not be a blow-off time, or a total catch-up time. There are 7 days in the week—use them evenly and you'll have an easier time staying on top of your studies—and have time to have a life! Get the have-to done, so the want-to is guiltless fun.
7. *Bi-weekly & random commitments*: When you have appointments or meetings that only occur occasionally, add them to your schedule, but let them share time with other commitments. For example: you have a club meeting that meets every other week, schedule that in with a block of downtime or extra study time. That way the weeks you have your meeting, you attend that, the weeks you don't, you do the extra study or downtime (depending on what you have it scheduled with). Remember the goal of the commitment schedule is to account for all your time, so you're not tempted to waste time.