

MENTORING **SPARK**

Quick ideas to light up your doctoral conversations.

► TIME MANAGEMENT



SOLUTIONS FOR STUDENTS

Fundamental time management involves scheduling tasks given to us. But how do we manage our time when we need to develop the tasks ourselves, the time required is vague, and we have competing priorities with deadlines out of our control? This **Spark** endeavors to help students think about their time management planning, customizing tools to fit their needs, and realizing that time management is an *active (not a passive)* skill set that can be learned.

Good time management skills, especially for nebulous or self-directed work, is a necessity to be successful in one's career.



FACULTY FYI

This is the second of three Time Management **Sparks**. Students should be able to begin take ownership of their time, and be managing all of the pie pieces as they move from a somewhat structured schedule (*with primarily class work*) to an unstructured (*primarily research/thesis writing*) environment. Students should already have knowledge of time management tools available, prioritization techniques, and should be practicing basic time management.

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LEVEL 1: BASIC STRATEGIES

LEVEL 2: SHIFTING SCHEDULES

LEVEL 3: ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES



ACTIONS FOR FACULTY

- Help students understand that everyone deals with nebulous and changing plans, and that everyone has action items that are not within our control.
- Explain that it can be difficult to know how much detail is needed in a fluid plan, but that it becomes easier with practice, with experiential learning. Thus, starting sooner is better than waiting until we are becoming overwhelmed.
- Suggest newer graduate students ask peers (and those further along in their graduate careers) about their time management techniques and to see their process.
- Help students to understand that what works for one person may not work for them; thus, they should not think that copying a very organized person's method is always "the" answer.

A RESOURCE FROM:



Use this QR code to access this and other Mentoring Spark tip sheets:





DIGGING DEEPER

- Discuss methods for maintaining a detailed action planner with consideration for delays and unexpected add-ons.
- Create a calendar with time blocks for efficiency of type of work being done & when. Are there department and/or University dates/activities to add?
- **Analysis:** Are you meeting deadlines (*self-imposed or otherwise*)? If not, do not *add* time; instead, use your tools to analyze why you are not accomplishing your time management goals.
- **Evaluate:** Manage your interruptions by managing your tools. Consider how you use tools such as email and texting. Can you block time for reading and responding to them? Can you work from different locations to reduce the distractions around you?
- Use the Hunks, Chunks, and Bites method to develop tasks towards your goals that are discrete and can be time bound. (See *Project Planning Level 1 Spark*.)
- Consider color coding different projects to visually help you know what you are and will be working on. The colors can also be associated with importance or other factors.

Please visit the RDI Mentoring Sparks website for examples and links to these tools and resources!



EXERCISES FOR STUDENTS

There are two exercises to consider at this level. One is practicing the skill of managing your time, the other is evaluating what techniques work for you – being metacognitive about your techniques.

1. Think of two or three milestones you need/want to accomplish by the end of the academic year. For each milestone (“*hunk*”), break the hunk into several measurable “*chunks*”, then break each chunk into several “*bites*.” For each bite, consider the best environment in which to do the work (*lab, home, group setting, library, etc.*), and what resources are needed. Organize your time to work on these tasks to minimize travel, changing of thoughts (*e.g., going from research to a personal task, then back to research, may not be optimal.*)
2. In the beginning, review your progress weekly – what worked well and what didn’t, or was even stressful? If you did not stick with the plan, why not? Make corrections to the plan and change, as necessary, your time management tools. **Review this exercise with a peer who is also working on improving their time management skills.** Learn from each other; you do not need to reinvent the wheel!

Collaborative time management is the most efficient when the collaborating individuals already have good personal time management skills.



REFLECTION & NEXT STEPS

- **Student:** Time management and nebulous schedules are directly related to project management and communication.
- **Student:** Time management also connects to topics such as writing and analysis in terms of thinking about what blocks of time are needed to do the work and what time of day is better for that type of work.
- **Student and Faculty:** Proceed on to the final time management Spark, deals with **collaborative** time management. Consider that collaborative time management is most efficient when the collaborating individuals already have good personal time management skills of their own.

Fundamental time management involves scheduling tasks...

For more information: www.therisingdoctoralinstitute.com/sparks/



This document series was supported by the National Science Foundation under grants No. 2029796, 2029784, 2029782, and 2029785. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.