

Helping Students Manage Time Effectively During School Closure

Time is a precious commodity that too often seems to get away from us. It's cliché to say there's never enough time in the day to do everything we need (or hope) to do. Considering how precious time is, it is perhaps surprising how poor we are at using it. William Penn, 17th century writer and Quaker leader wrote, "Time is what we want most, but... what we use worst." This is often true even under the best of circumstances. But in times like this, when our familiar routines are shattered and distractions abound, making good use of the time we have can prove to be an immense challenge.

For our students who are used to bells and teachers giving direction about when to change subjects, when to take breaks, and when to socialize, the sudden shift to managing these things on their own (or even with the help of wise parents who are simply not used to having to do this) can cause a lot of frustration and anxiety, for students and parents alike. In an effort to help us all regain a little bit of sanity, here are a few time management tips to help your kids to maximize their effectiveness and reduce stress (theirs and yours).

1. Develop a routine.

- Healthy daily routines have many benefits: they make us more efficient, create structure in our lives, reduce procrastination, build momentum, reduce stress and facilitate relaxation, and help us achieve our goals.
- A good routine should be specific while also remaining flexible. It should include a consistent start time, blocks of time for work with breaks in between, and an end time. Be sure to include time for physical activity, connecting with friends, family activities, time to relax, and be sure to allow for sufficient sleep (more on that later).
- Check out these 2 articles on maintaining routines during COVID-19:
 - [Maintaining Routines During COVID-19](#)
 - [Establishing Structure and Routine for Kids During COVID-19](#)

2. Make a daily work plan.

- Start each day by planning out your work for that day. It may help to make a list of what you need to do for each course. Then plan out how much time will be needed for each task. You might find it helpful to use a planning worksheet like [this one](#) to help you plan and schedule your tasks for a given day or week.
- Finally, and this is important, stick to your schedule as best you can. If you schedule a 15 minute break, set a timer so it doesn't turn into a 30 or 40 minute break. If work for one course seems to be taking longer than expected, consider setting it aside temporarily to allow you to complete your work for other courses. You can come back to a task later if needed.
- Check out [this article](#) for more tips for time management and planning for students.

3. Organize your workspace.

- Having a designated place to work, free from clutter can make a big difference. Clutter is distracting and inconsistency can have a negative impact on productivity.
- Clean up your workspace, getting rid of or putting away things you don't need to keep close by.

4. Minimize distractions.

- Information we learn while distracted is quickly forgotten, which negatively affects academic performance. Do your best to reduce or prevent distractions as much as possible, such as unnecessary noise, visual distractions, and mental distractions. The latter can be managed by scheduling a time to deal with important matters that are on your mind, allowing you to set them aside and focus your attention on your present task.
- See also ["A Word About Cell Phone Use During Study Time"](#) for the specific distraction of smartphones and social media for our HS and MS students.

5. Prioritize your tasks using the Eisenhower Matrix.

- The Eisenhower Matrix is an effective method for prioritizing and organizing all of the problems we need to address and things we need or want to do. Named for former U.S. president, Dwight D. Eisenhower who is credited with developing it, and popularized by Stephen Covey, the matrix is made up of 4 boxes or quadrants, organized according to things that are urgent & important (box 1), not urgent but important (box 2), urgent but not important (box 3) and not urgent & not important (box 4).



- Check out these two videos that explain the Eisenhower Matrix and how to use it:
 - [Stephen Covey's 4 Quadrants Time Management Strategies](#)
 - [The Eisenhower Matrix](#)

6. Make sleep and exercise priorities.

- Sleep and exercise are often among the first things we compromise when life gets busy. But ironically, getting insufficient sleep makes us less effective while we're awake. Our memory and ability to learn are negatively affected, for example.

- When we don't exercise, we have lower energy levels and can experience lower mood (feeling sad, depressed, or apathetic). Both of these can have a negative influence on academic performance.
- By the way, the average teenager needs about 9 ¼ hours of sleep to function at their best. Check out this eye-opening [short video](#) on the importance of sleep.

We hope these tips and linked resources provide you with some assistance as you help your students to work efficiently and productively and with minimal stress during this school closure. Please know you can reach out to the counseling department with questions or concerns about your students at anytime.