Time Management

If you struggle with time management, you are not alone! Managing the time you have available to study is an ongoing challenge reported by many medical students and residents. Researchers have found that learners who develop effective time management skills and who can make efficient use of their study time improve their academic performance (e.g., West & Sadoski, 2011; Abdulghani et al., 2014).

The resources below offer a variety of methods and strategies to not only manage time, but to help you become more efficient with your use of time. With the utilization of effective approaches, you can strategically identify and study those topics that are most challenging and, in some cases, reduce the total amount of time you spend studying.

- **Study without Stress: Mastering Medical Sciences** by Kelman and Straker (2000). Specifically, visit Chapter 1: Time: Your Greatest Resource. In this chapter, diagnose your current time management skills, learn how students of medicine spend their time, plan your schedule, learn how to save time, and review tips for monitoring your time efficiency.

- **A Guide for Time Management.** This comprehensive resource developed by the University of Guelph offers a variety of resources including an introduction to time management, how to analyze your need for structure, strategies for planning your time, resources for staying on track, and tips for understanding and controlling procrastination.

- **Pomodoro Technique:** During your study sessions, experiment with the “Pomodoro” Technique to enhance reading comprehension and retention of concepts. Plan blocks of 25–35 minutes of focused study time (e.g., reading, researching, qbank questions) followed by five minutes of relaxed or diffused time (take a short walk, get a drink, check email, organize your papers), then repeat. After three or four Pomodoro sessions, take a longer break, 20 minutes or more, depending upon your natural rhythms or needs. To learn more, visit The Pomodoro Technique. If you like apps, check out The 12 Best Pomodoro Timer Apps to Boost Your Productivity.

- **How to Learn Better with the Pomodoro Technique.** Watch this short, three-minute video, by Barbara Oakley, Ph.D., to prepare more effectively for course, shelf, or Step exams. In addition, learn how this method can be used to avoid distractions and the “pain” of procrastination.

- **Time Management.** For those of you who prefer to learn with videos, this website, developed by the Academic Success Center at Oregon State University, offers strategies for time management, setting goals, long-term planning, scheduling time, setting priorities, and managing procrastination in print and video formats. Also, included you will find links to handouts, worksheets, and additional techniques. While this website content is not specific to medical students or residents, the content and additional tools are worth revisiting and repurposing for application in any setting.

- **Time Management.** This website, developed by MindTools, offers links to resources on over 60 skills focused on helping you work more effectively, while utilizing time more efficiently to meet your goals. See also 10 Common Time Management Mistakes.

**Helpful Handouts or Worksheets**

- **Weekly Task Sheet.** For those of you who prefer to check off tasks as opposed to utilizing a schedule or calendar, check out this simple, weekly task sheet developed by the Academic Success Center, Iowa State University.
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- **Procrastination Management.** This flow chart, developed by the Academic Success Center, Iowa State University, offers steps you can take to identify procrastination and progress toward your goals.

**Additional Resources for Residents**

- **Do More With The Time You Have: 13 Management Tips For Harried Residents.** This article by Bethanee Schlosser, MD, PhD, overviews tips to help you know which tasks must and should be done to better manage your time.

- **Residency Survival Guide: Time Management.** This resource, developed by the members of the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada Junior Members Committee, offers tips on time management (begin on page 5), residents as teachers, family life, research during residency, and more.

**Research Articles**

- **Do Study Strategies Predict Academic Performance in Medical School?** This research, by West and Sadoski (2011), found that time management and self-testing appear to yield academic performance dividends.

- **A Preliminary Exploration of Time Management Strategies used by Physicians in the United States.** This article, by Kleshinski, Dunn, and Kleshinski (2010), identifies and discusses strategies used by physicians and provides practical ideas on how medical professionals can circumvent time limitations. For a summary of strategies utilized, see Table 2, p. 51.

- **A Practical Approach to Time Management for Physicians.** This article, by Gordon and Borkan (2014), overviews techniques focused on setting short and long-term goals, setting priorities among competing responsibilities, planning and organizing activities, and minimizing “time wasters.” See also suggestions for finding “hidden time.”

**References**
