Time Management

Because everyone procrastinates (even professors)
Maybe you’ve experienced this...

[Comic]

LARGE, IMPORTANT TASK

Small, unimportant tasks

Better take care of these...

OKAY, I’LL WAIT.

LARGE, IMPORTANT TASK

©Sarah Andersen
AHH! IT'S 5:00PM AND I HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING TODAY!

WHY!? WHY DID I WASTE THE WHOLE DAY DOING STUPID THINGS THAT DON'T MATTER!??

MUST... DO... SOMETHING... ANYTHING...

reads one paragraph of paper

PHEW...!

ANOTHER DAY IN GRAD SCHOOL.

WWW.PHDCOMICS.COM
THE VICIOUS CYCLE:

You stay up late because you didn't do anything productive all day. You don't do anything all day because you stayed up too late. (and you goofed around a little).

Aaaaahh...!

Pull all-nighter, Crash

You stay up even later to make up for it. You get even less done.

Reset
Managing time can be difficult

Teacher

Researcher

Someone who has a social life

Student

[others]

The average TA

Discussion: “Balance” and “Tomorrow I’ll be productive”
Where does the time go?
# Important/Urgent Matrix

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>URGENT</th>
<th>NOT URGENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IMPORTANT</td>
<td><img src="https://via.placeholder.com/150" alt="Image" /></td>
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- **URGENT**
  - I archived my E-mail, cleaned my desktop, fixed the squeak in my office chair and tuned the lab coffee machine for optimal production.

- **NOT URGENT**
  - Procrastination!
Time Management Strategies

Do you use a **calendar** app? A **reminders** app? A **to-do list** app? If you don’t, start doing so!

- Calendar for recurring events (color coding also helps!)
- Set **research days**!
- Reminders for deadlines
- To-do for tasks
- “If it’s not in writing, it doesn’t exist…”
Time Management Strategies

Take inventory and **set goals**

- Is this important? Is this urgent?
- Identify time-sinks and possible workarounds
- Estimate: how long will this take to do?
- Use **rubrics** for grading

- Break a big task into smaller chunks! It is very satisfying to frequently check small things off the to-do list, much more than having ONE BIG THING still there waiting to be done.
Time Management Strategies

Identify your **peak productive hours**

- Are you a morning person?
- Are you a night owl?
- Work in chunks during your productive hours to avoid burnout (e.g., Pomodoro method)
- Make sure productive hours don’t interfere with self-care (e.g., sleep!)
Time Management Strategies

Handle **email/slack/work communications** efficiently

- Easier said than done, sometimes emails come in faster than you can resolve them
- Set inbox filters (mailing lists!)
- Prioritize! You CAN ignore emails that are not urgent
- Set specific times for handling emails from students (and let students know of these times early in the semester)
Plan for **unexpected delays and interruptions**

- You can’t plan for what you don’t know, but it’s a good idea to give yourself some wiggle room just in case.

- Try to stay in the **important but not urgent** quadrant.

- Be kind to yourself when unexpected delays happen (e.g., hospitalization, family emergency, laptop broke).

- **Back-up your data!!!**
Avoid procrastination but also set aside time for yourself

- Taking classes? Study a bit each day after class, look at homework problems the day they are given
- Need to grade many papers? Make a goal to grade N papers today and give yourself a small reward when you finish
- Start early on long-term projects
- Make sure to eat, sleep, and take care of your physical and mental health