

CREATING A MASTER PLAN

When only a relatively few hours each week are spent in classes and labs (compared to high school), or when it seems like ALL your time is spent in classes and labs, it's easy to misjudge the amount of time which is actually available for studying. Follow the steps below to make a master plan of your weekly classes and other activities so you can not only get a realistic picture of how many hours are actually free, you can also plan study periods around other activities which you consider important and don't want to sacrifice for studying.



HOW TO CREATE A MASTER PLAN

You can either do this on paper (PDF/Word) and make copies for each week in the semester or use a digital calendar such as Guelph's online calendar system. Make a timetable for this semester of all your activities which are the same each week. This should not include study time yet - fill in things like:

- Classes & labs
- Travelling time to & from campus
- Sleep
- Dressing, grooming, personal care
- Meals
- Sports or fitness activities
- Practicum placement, volunteer position or part-time job, including travelling time there & back
- Church or spiritual activities, etc.
- Flexible time

Be scrupulously realistic about how long all these activities can take - travelling time is often overlooked or forgotten, as is time needed for meal preparation and clean up.

After you've got all your regular activities slotted in, if you're doing a paper version take a highlighter and draw a line around the blocks of time that are left empty. If you're doing an electronic version, fill in the empty blocks using a different colour (like "tentative" or "out of the office"). This is the time available for studying. Are you surprised at how little time there is, particularly on weekdays? And this doesn't even include time for fun and socializing, or household tasks like cleaning, laundry and grocery shopping! Add up the number of hours available for studying each day, and write or input the total at the bottom of the page. This will come in handy when you're deciding how to spread out your work over the week.

You've now completed your master time plan. To help with the other steps in time planning, it's a good idea to make a paper copy for each week remaining in this semester or, make the events repeating in the online calendar. The master plan is used in conjunction with the task list as well as your preferred level of structure to create a time plan for each week in the semester.