Organization & Time Management

Time will pass, but will you?

This is the biggie. Organization is one of the most important skills to have at university (or in life, for that matter!). You may be a wonderful essay writer, but that won't help you if you forgot you had an essay due or lost the assignment sheet.

You need a system of organization. It does not just happen on its own. It is really up to you how you do it, but you have to have some kind of system in place to help keep you on track with readings, studying, research, assignments, social events, and so on. University can get overwhelming very fast and getting (and staying) organized are crucial.
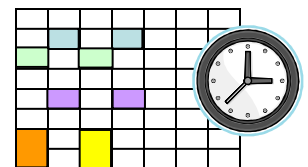
Semester Calendars

A semester calendar displays all four months of a semester at once. It should be displayed above your desk, on your fridge, or anywhere that you will see it regularly. Use your course outlines and write down every test, exam and assignment due date that you have. Make sure to include the class with the due date.

Now you can see how your semester is shaping up. Are there some real crunch times where many things are due at once? You will need to plan for those times and possibly get an assignment (or two!) done early.
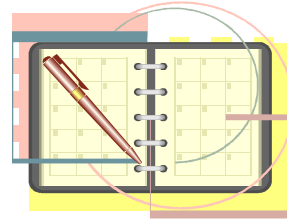
Weekly Schedule

A weekly schedule lists each day of the week and is divided into time slots (typically of one hour). Begin by filling in your classes and any other events that are consistent from week to week, such as a job, sports, or volunteering (i.e. volunteer every Friday morning from 8:30 – noon).

Now look at the available time that you have for the rest of your life. A full-time student should be doing around 30 hours a week of school work. When are you going to do that? Aim for using daylight hours, time in between classes, and working more Monday to Friday so that you can have at least one full day off on the weekends.

Agenda

Agendas need to be portable and can be paper or electronic (PDA, Palm Pilot), depending on your preference and budget. An agenda is used to write down due dates, tests, etc, as well as the daily things that are happening.

Agendas are also the place to write down daily to-do lists. This involves work for assignments/essays, weekly reading for all classes and studying for tests.

When you look at an upcoming assignment, break it down into chunks and assign dates. Then put those into your agenda. For example, an article review that is due on Oct 29 may be broken down into the following sections:

Friday Oct 12 – choose topic

Sat Oct 13 – research and find article (this may take the most time)

Tues Oct 16 – read, analyze, understand article

Wed Oct 17 – create outline for article review

Sat Oct 20 – begin writing rough draft

Tues Oct 23 – finish rough draft

Thurs Oct 25 – bring writing to Writing Lab for editing

Fri Oct 26 – make any changes, print good copy

Mon Oct 29 – hand in during class

By breaking down an assignment in this way, it is manageable and should not affect all of the other work that needs to be done for other classes. Plus, it does allow for some flexibility if something changes on one day and you could not do one step.

This will only work if you remember to write things down and then you remember to check your agenda!

Be strict with yourself and make sure you do the things that you have outlined for yourself for any specific day. If you don't, everything will carry over onto the next day and the next…..Before you know it, you will fall behind and have to scramble around to get things done (and it probably won't be your best work!).