

Building a Schedule

Schedules work best when they allow you to view different scales of time (the **term**, the next **week** or two, and **today**), when they are **specific, personal, flexible**, and when they are built into your **routine**. Finding a time management practice that can work for you is a process of trial and error. The steps below are a guide to get started; it's okay if they don't all work for you. Having a term calendar and a weekly to-do list is a great place to start!

Create your term calendar

- Include important dates from the **syllabus** like tests and assignment due dates, dates in the **academic calendar** (e.g. drop deadlines), and **personal events**.
- This is best done at the beginning of term, but it can be helpful anytime!



Develop a weekly planning routine

Find a time you can sit every week (or at a regular frequency that works for you) to plan out your next week. For many students, Fridays or Sundays work best. Each week:

- 1 Write a to-do list for the week**
Refer to your term calendar to see what is coming up. Make a list of what needs to be done to stay on track, and then organize it in meaningful ways (e.g. academic vs. personal, most to least important).
- 2 Break bigger tasks down into small steps**
If you see a task on your list and feel uncertain, anxious, or reluctant, this is a good cue to pause and write out step-by-step how you can tackle it. If you're not sure, reach out to your professor, a friend, or your learning strategist!

Scheduling Tip
Make scheduling fun! Use materials or apps that you **enjoy using**. Grab a favourite snack and turn on music you love. Connect with a friend and plan together! Make your planning a joyful process.

- 3 In a planner or schedule, first write non-negotiable commitments**

This includes classes, work shifts, meetings, appointments, social events- anything that has a fixed time that you want to prioritize.

- 4 Plan negotiable time**

Schedule some time for dedicated study periods and other things that are important to you like eating, exercising, and connecting with friends and family. Remember to consider rest, travel, and transition time in your plan.

- 5 Assign goals to your study periods**

Working backwards from deadlines, assign tasks from your to-do list and your step-by-step breakdown to study periods to build a specific plan to stay on track to get everything done.

Scheduling Tip
Work with your strengths. Plan harder tasks for times of day you expect to be most alert and engaged, and plan to work in an environment where you can focus best.

Check in with your plan everyday

Now that you have a path set for the week, your planner is your helpful guide. **Congratulations for taking steps to care for your busy self!**

Check it:

- in the evenings to **plan and pack for the next day**
- when you sit down to study to **see what you need to work on**
- when a friend asks if you want to hang out to **see how you can shift things around and build meaningful connections while feeling balanced and on top of things!**



To learn more, book a one-on-one coaching appointment or attend a Learning Skills Workshop! Visit www.smu.ca/studentsuccess
StudentSuccess@smu.ca



Time Management Tools

For scheduling and keeping a calendar

Physical

- **SMU term wall calendar**
 - **4-month whiteboard**
 - **Agendas and planners**
- There are many styles and designs of planners to suit your individual needs. Try out the Learning Skills weekly templates to see what works for you. Look through a stationary, office supplies, or dollar store to see what appeals to you.

Digital

- **MS Outlook**
 - **Google or Apple Calendar**
- Schedule and plan in one place, accessible across devices. Use features like colour-coding, repeating events and notifications to help make scheduling easy and stay on top of things!
Outlook is used across SMU and is free for SMU Students. You can get support with Outlook through the Software Application Support Centre (sas@smu.ca).

For staying on track with tasks and plans

Physical

- **To-Do lists**
 - **Sticky note reminders**
 - **Goal-setting journals**
- If you prefer physical lists and tracking, be sure to keep it in a place that you can check often and won't misplace it. To-do lists and reminders often work best when they are embedded in planners or course-notes!

Digital

- **MagicToDo** helps you to break down complex tasks into manageable steps
- **Notion** - Keep your tasks, projects and ideas organized and in one place
- **remember the milk** helps you organize your time and tasks and can sync to Google apps and Outlook

For promoting productivity during your study sessions

Physical

- **Study in an environment** that works for you; use visual cues like encouraging notes or a figurine to remind you of your focus.
- **Schedule** your study periods and breaks
- **Set goals** for your study periods and **keep track of your progress**

Digital

- **Forest** helps you stay focused on tasks using a game-based timer. Plant a tree when you start working and watch your forest grow over time!
- **Free app and web blockers** are available for different systems and browsers. Schedule blocks to reduce your screen time and stay focused.
- **Pomodor.app** - Set a timer to work and break at a rhythm that works for you



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