THRIVE on Campus: Time Management

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Grade Level Secondary

Essential Question(s)

Summary

Time blocking is a time management method that asks you to divide your day into blocks of time. By breaking down tasks into smaller pieces and organizing your schedule, you can allocate time effectively and ensure that you have enough time for studying, assignments, and other activities. An organized system enables you to focus on the task at hand without being overwhelmed by clutter or distractions. When you stay organized and complete tasks on time, you feel a sense of achievement, which boosts motivation and confidence.

Learning Goals

Attachments

- Micro-Goals Planner—Time Management - Spanish.docx
- Micro-Goals Planner—Time Management - Spanish.pdf
- Micro-Goals Planner—Time Management.docx
- Micro-Goals Planner—Time Management.pdf
- Sample Schedule, Wednesday Key—Time Management.docx
- Sample Schedule, Wednesday Key—Time Management.pdf
- Sample Schedule—Time Management - Spanish.docx
- Sample Schedule—Time Management - Spanish.pdf
- Sample Schedule—Time Management.docx
- Sample Schedule—Time Management.pdf
- Scenario Cards—Time Management.docx
- Scenario Cards—Time Management.pdf
- Slide Presentation—Time Management.pptx
- Time Spent Pie Chart—Time Management - Spanish.docx
- Time Spent Pie Chart—Time Management - Spanish.pdf
- Time Spent Pie Chart—Time Management.docx
- Time Spent Pie Chart—Time Management.pdf

Materials

- Slide presentation (attached)
- Time Spent Pie Chart handout (attached; one copy per student, print double-sided)
- Sample Schedule handout (attached; one copy per student, print double-sided)
- Sample Schedule, Key for Wednesday (attached; facilitator may want to make just a few copies)
- Scenario Cards (one set per small group, cut and laminated)
- Sticky notes
- Laptop computers

10 minutes

Understanding the Value of Time

Facilitator Note: Using Slides

Although this resource includes a slide deck, the session can still be facilitated without it if technology, space, or participant numbers are limited.

Introduce yourself and the theme, “Time Management.” Display **slides 1** and **2**, if you are using slides.

Open with this scenario:

“Imagine you wake up tomorrow and find $86,400 in your bank account—but there's a catch. Whatever you don't spend by midnight disappears forever. You can't save it, can't carry it over. What will you do with it?”

Ask students whether they would take time to plan HOW they’re going to spend the money. Ask them if, however, instead of planning, they would just spend it? Or would they combine both: planning and impulse buying?

Allow a minute or two for discussion.

After a brief discussion, reveal to students that they, in fact, already have this account! It's called 'today'—86,400 seconds.

The question isn't whether they're spending every second. They don’t have a choice. The question is are they spending them with purpose?

If students struggle to understand, emphasize that it might be helpful to see the time each person has is a resource as valuable than money (or more so)! Help students make the connection that today’s discussion centers on time management and how effective time management tools can be leveraged to help us spend our 86,400 seconds wisely.

Pass out the handout “**Time Spent Pie Chart**.” Ask students to label the circle to show how they actually spent their last 24 hours (sleep, class, phone, homework, social time, etc.). Alternatively, using their computers, have them complete the handout “Time Category Totals” on the back of the Time Spent Pie Chart. Walk students through the instructions to create their Pie Charts and discuss.

Estimating Time Spent

Before moving on, ask if anyone would like to check whether the slice of pie they drew for social or phone time is accurate. Ask a willing volunteer with a mobile phone to share their phone use history. First, have them guess how many times they logged on to their phone the day before and to share how long they were on their phone. Take a minute to show them how to check the amount of time they have used their phones:

- on Apple iPhones / iOS:
  - If students have allowed Screen Time, they can easily see the time they've spent on their phone by going to Settings > Screen Time > See All App & Website Activity
- on Android devices:
  - Participants can check the Digital Wellbeing Feature by going to Settings > Digital Wellbeing & Parental Controls. View the daily screen time summary at the top of the screen and tap the chart/summary to see a detailed breakdown of usage.

A tool like Mentimeter or Poll Everywhere enables students to anonymously submit their screen time estimate and their actual number. Displaying the gap between estimates and reality as a class is more impactful than one volunteer sharing. Anonymity removes the social risk of admitting high or low usage.

15 minutes

Introducing Time Blocking

Pass out the **Sample Schedule** handout or unhide and show **slide 3.** Ask students to skim the sample schedule for Cameron, a high school student who plays basketball and has a part-time job. Walk them through the schedule for Tuesday and how it is blocked on the handout and the slide. Direct a conversation, asking questions about how Cameron planned her schedule. Do the same for Tuesday. If using slides, unhide and show **slide 4**.

Facilitator Note

This first time-blocking activity is incomplete on purpose—students are just blocking fixed commitments and basics in scheduling.

Emphasize the following:

- Plan realistically
- Protect the basics, such as sleep and meals
- Block fixed commitment first (class, work)
- Leave buffer time for delays and/or transitions
- Include social time, activities, and “down-time”

Once students have discussed the requirements, have them work with an Elbow Partner to plan out Cameron’s schedule using the blank chart on the page. Have them work through Cameron’s Wednesday schedule using the table on the back of the handout and Monday and Tuesday’s schedules as a model. Explain the following:

- Wednesday is an “Early Release Day,” and the school day ends at 12:15.
- Cameron has to work on an essay for history class and study her Spanish vocabulary.
- The regularly scheduled 4:00-5:30p basketball practice has already been recorded.

Give students a few minutes to work on Cameron’s schedule, then ask student partners to review their work. You may choose to show them the **Sample Schedule, Wednesday Key** handout, or unhide and show **slide 5**. Plant the seed for the next section here, asking something like, “Cameron has 'work on history essay' as a single block. Is that realistic? Could she just sit down and complete the essay in one sitting?”

20 minutes

Big Goals, Small Steps: Micro-Goals

If using the slide presentation, transition to **slide 6**.

Ask students what they notice about Cameron's schedule. Emphasize that some tasks on her schedule were too big for a single block of time. Talk about what to do when that happens. Ask students to begin with a short thought experiment:

Scenario:

A friend of yours wants to apply for an internship where she can gain real-world experience over the summer. There is a lot of work for one person to do. How can she break the tasks into smaller tasks in order to make the process manageable?

Guide students as they identify the smaller tasks she might complete—these are called *micro-goals*.

1. Spend 30 minutes researching internships related to her field of study.
2. Identify several promising options and choose those that align with her career goals.
3. Gather key details about each internship. Include the following:
    - Company Name
    - Application process for the internship
    - Submission deadline

Explain that a large task or project often cannot be accomplished in a single day, a single week, or in several months. To illustrate the process, ask students to define micro-goals in their own words, then display **slide 7** or and review the definition:

Micro-goals are small, specific, and actionable steps that make big projects easier to start and complete.

If students need more examples from their experiences at school, offer these alternate scenarios. If using slides, display **slides 8** and **9**.

- Writing a research paper or long essay:
    - Find three sources
    - Reflect on the sources
    - Read one article
    - Write an outline
    - Draft the introduction
- Becoming more active on campus
    - Attend campus fairs
    - Explore 4-5 organizations that interest you
    - Attend at least one event per week

Ask students to look back on their Time Pie Chart from the beginning of the lesson and think about a significant project, task, or responsibility they need to accomplish in the short term and write that down. Have students use the list of projects/tasks they wrote down. Have them outline micro-goals that will help them complete the tasks/project.

- If they are struggling to name a large task, have them consider a near-term life goal and write that down.
- Let students know that people in general don't struggle because they lack ambition. Often tasks seem overwhelming. Some individuals lack the ability to plan and break larger tasks into smaller ones.
- Make sure students understand there is no right or wrong way. The goal is to avoid a last-minute rush to finish projects or responsibilities. Encourage them to practice how to keep track of major projects and responsibilities ahead of time.

Hand out the **Micro-Goals Planner handout** and give students time to schedule micro-goals for one of the big projects they wrote down earlier. Then, have them work with an Elbow Partner to discuss their approaches.

Facilitator Note

For students needing more practice with micro-goals, see this related resource, Breaking It Down: Task Management 101.

15 minutes

Time-Blocking In Practice: Building Real-Life Schedules

Ask students to turn over the Micro-Goals Planner handout to see the Time Blocking chart and display **slide 10**. Now have them create their weekly schedule using the Time Blocking Chart. Remind them to include their micro goals, class time, events/activities, work, etc. Also, have them check to ensure they have included time for meals, socializing, sleeping and studying.

- Have students use a time management tool to plan out their week. Instruct students to reflect on their time-pie chart and micro-goals to help plan their day.
- Emphasize that this time management is not about perfection, but about progress.
- Even if you have a day where you don't stick to your schedule, you can always reset and look at what you can realistically tackle the next day.

Encourage them to apply what they learned about planning micro-goals. When they built Cameron's schedule, they were working without micro-goals—so their schedules should look different now — those big blocks should be broken into specific steps.

Facilitator Note

Some people prefer to use an online calendar rather than a written planner. You don't need to spend time teaching these tools, but you can point out a few of the most common options—such as Google Calendar, Apple Calendar, Outlook, My Study Life, and ClickUp—so students know where to start. If all students have access to a digital device, consider building the schedule in an online calendar tool so that students leave with a real schedule with notifications and reminders rather than a paper artifact.

30 minutes

Adapting to Life's Curveballs

Facilitator Note

The Scenarios section is optional but highly recommended.

Put students in small groups. Pass out a set of **Scenario Cards** to each group, and have them take turns drawing a life scenario, then change their schedule to adapt to the life situation.

Card scenarios:

Car Trouble:

- You leave campus and go home for the weekend. You get ready to head back to campus Sunday evening, and your car won't start. You have two classes on Monday, and you're planning to meet with some classmates after class to work on a group project.
- It's lunch time. You're stuck off campus for two hours during the middle of the day because of a friend's car trouble. You miss your afternoon class.

Family:

- Your mother calls you Monday about a family emergency and needs you to take your sister to school on Wednesday and Thursday because she has a test that she cannot miss.
- A friend invites you to a networking event Thursday night, but that's when you blocked time for your research paper draft. The paper isn't due until next week, but you know yourself and slipping once usually means it doesn't get done.

Work:

- You've been offered extra hours at work this week. You could use the money, but it would eat into your study time before midterms.
- You plan to work on some assignments during your work-study shift as usual. However, when you go in today there are some special projects that your supervisor asks you to work on and have completed by the end of your shift.

School:

- You scheduled time after your last class to go to the library to work on an online assignment. When you get to the library to begin working on the assignment, you discover a glitch in the website, and the website is slated to be down for a couple hours.
- You're headed to class. Once you arrive your professor has a note on the door. Class has been cancelled at the last minute.

Dorm/Apartment

- A dorm fire alarm goes off in the middle of the night before an early exam.
- A plumbing issue (like a leaking sink or flooded bathroom) requires maintenance and relocation.

Friend

- Your best friend calls and tells you she/he has been having a really rough week, from a romantic break-up to family illness to getting a failing grade on an exam. Your friend needs you, so you take time to go visit and support your friend.
- You had a bad argument with your friend last night. You have a full day of classes and a study session planned, but you barely slept and can't concentrate.

20 minutes

Peer Review

Students will exchange their time-block schedule with a partner and give feedback. Each partner will review the schedule and give feedback by asking clarifying questions:

- Are micro-goals included?
- Does the schedule reflect realistic amounts of time?
- Are barriers accounted for with strategies (study spot, reminders, buffer blocks)?
- Is there balance (sleep, meals, downtime, classes)?

Give some examples as a group and reference the example given earlier to ensure that students are understanding the concept of planning your day and being realistic with their schedules.

Facilitator Note

- Emphasize that time management is essential for prioritizing when real-life demands arise.
- Provide examples of common disruptions (e.g., *What happens when your chemistry lab runs late, or your aunt needs an emergency babysitter?*).
- Solicit ideas from the group on how to handle emergencies and other unexpected interruptions.
- Allow students to problem-solve first, while remaining ready to offer sound guidance as the facilitator.
- Encourage students to offer one another thoughtful, constructive advice.
- Reinforce that perfection is not the goal and that it's important to give themselves and others grace when plans change!

Display **slide 11** and distribute sticky notes. Explain the How Am I Feeling? What Am I Thinking? strategy, allow time for thought, and collect the notes.

15 minutes

Peer Review

Display **slide 12**. Students will exchange their time-block schedule with a partner and give feedback. Each partner will review the schedule and give feedback by asking clarifying questions:

- Are micro-goals included?
- Does the schedule reflect realistic amounts of time?
- Are barriers accounted for with strategies (study spot, reminders, buffer blocks)?
- Is there balance (sleep, meals, downtime, classes)?

Give some examples as a group and reference the example given earlier to ensure students are understanding the concept of planning their day and being realistic with their schedules.

Facilitator Note

- Emphasize that time management is essential for prioritizing when real-life demands arise.
- Provide examples of common disruptions (e.g., *What happens when your chemistry lab runs late, or your aunt needs an emergency babysitter?*).
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Go to **slide 12** and distribute sticky notes. Explain the How Am I Feeling? What Am I Thinking? strategy, allow time for thought, and collect the notes.