

Scheduling Your Week to Improve Your Education

(adapted from original version developed by Keith Bradley, Director RA Programs)

It is imperative that you hit the academic ground running if you want to be successful in qualifying for health professional school. If you are thinking of this kind of career, you are committing yourself to a 60-70 hour work week. Don't feel too bad. Residents in medical training programs have lobbied for a maximum work week of **80** hours and that does not include their own study time. Imagine a labor union negotiating for only 80 hours of work per week!

The Scheduler can be a help. It is set up on a weekly basis using 15 minute time intervals. The biggest difference between high school and college is that there is more available time during the day for preparation work outside of class. Committing yourself to using this time efficiently can go a long way to getting those **three hours** of prep for every science credit hour and **two hours** of prep for every non-science credit that is recommended.

Here are some suggestions for using the Scheduler:

Filling out your schedule

Step 1. Put in all your classes and labs.

- figure in about 10-15 minutes on either side of an activity to get to the next thing you are going to do.
- look for that empty classroom, lab or conference room to work in, rather than going all the way back to the dorm room

Step 2. Put in your mandatory extracurricular activities (e.g., sports, glee club, volunteer, etc.)

Step 3. Put in your meals. Eat breakfast.

Step 4. Put in when you will go to sleep and when you will wake up.

- schedule 8 hours of sleep per night; stop laughing ... it is actually possible
- remember the return on investment for study time when you are tired at 3 AM is minimal
- early to bed and early to rise makes one ... a doctor!

Step 5. Put in an hour of exercise per day.

Step 6. Identify the number of prep hours you need for each course (6 for 3 credit non-science courses and 12 for 4 credit science courses).

Step 7. Fill up the open spaces with study times designated by subjects.

- look to schedule an hour of prep before a class and an hour after that class to maximize your benefit
- schedule out the courses that you think will be the most difficult for you first; try to study every subject every day
- do business hours (**7 AM** to 5 PM) first, then evenings
- don't try to study any one subject for more than an hour; coming back to it frequently rather than long stretches can often be more productive
- look for those 1/2 hour and 45 minute segments that are hiding between classes

Step 8. Put in time for fun, goofing off, relaxing ("MY TIME"). Like Friday nights???

Step 9. Count up your prep hours to see how you need to be spending your weekend.

- doing more during the week means less for the weekend!

Step 10. The weekend has four blocks: Sat. day, Sat. evening, Sun. day, Sunday evening.

- two of the blocks should be for you and two for the books.

Step 11. Total up your hours. Now go back and look for those niches during business hours or weekends that you may need to get the cumulative time right.

Using the Scheduler

- If you have not had to use your time as efficiently in the past, it is unlikely that you will be exactly successful right off the bat with this. Like any new skill or habit, it takes practice and perseverance. Do you think that surgical interns perform a perfect appendectomy the first time they try? It is why they call it the "Practice of Medicine!"
- The more you use it, the easier it becomes. A month is a good test to see if it can be effective for you.

Pitfalls

- TV
- Electronic Video Games (Xbox, Nintendo, On-line games, etc.)
- Late nights, too little sleep

Follow-up

More than 90% of those having academic difficulty who come to see me have < 2 hours of prep time/class hour. Let that not be you!