

# Planning your week

Easy · 15 to 30 min a week, 5 min a day · Free

Once a week, spend 15 to 30 minutes putting everything fixed on a calendar first (work, class, sleep, meals), then schedule real blocks for the work that matters, broken into small pieces. Each day, pick your top three or four tasks. Expect things to take longer than you think, and leave room for it.

## YOU'LL NEED

- ☐ A calendar (paper or phone)
- ☐ Your work schedule and class dates
- ☐ A running to-do list

## WHAT TO KNOW

- 1 **Pick a regular planning time.** UNC's Learning Center suggests the same time every week, about 15 to 30 minutes, to map your obligations across the week.
- 2 **Put the big dates in first.** Enter every exam, deadline, trip and event for the next few months, then work backward from each due date to choose when you'll start.
- 3 **Block your non-negotiables.** McGill's guide lists them: classes, appointments, sleeping, eating, exercise, self-care and chores. Put those on the calendar before anything else. Add work shifts and other regular commitments, set as repeating events.
- 4 **Estimate, then schedule the work.** List what you need to get done this week, estimate how long each piece takes, and put it into open slots with buffer time around it.
- 5 **Break big jobs into small pieces.** Berkeley's Student Learning Center suggests chunks you can finish in 15 minutes or less, with results you can see, like a reading split into two- or three-page sections.
- 6 **Do hard work when you're sharpest.** Plan your toughest tasks for the times you're most alert, in a place where you can stay focused.
- 7 **Make a short daily list.** Keep one ongoing list of everything, and each day pick your top three or four tasks from it.
- 8 **Schedule rest on purpose.** UNC says not to assume you'll find time for yourself: put exercise and free time on the calendar too, and take a quick break about every hour.
- 9 **Adjust as you go.** UNC's last tip is to change your schedule as needed. Look at what slipped, and plan next week with that in mind.

**Watch out** Most plans fail because tasks take longer than expected. Berkeley's example: sorting papers "always takes longer than I expect, so I'll start tonight". Pad your estimates, and don't fill every hour.

**DAD NOTE** *If it isn't on the calendar, it isn't really planned. It's just a hope.*

Full lesson: [aptkeys.com/mind/managing-your-time/planning-your-week/](https://aptkeys.com/mind/managing-your-time/planning-your-week/)

Checked October 3, 2026. Sources: UNC Learning Center; UC Berkeley Student Learning Center; McGill University.