

Coping with College Series

Get Your Life in Order this Semester

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Were you scrambling to get assignments finished at the end of last semester. Did you find that the busier you were, the more likely you were to waste time looking for things (keys, assignments, that sweater you wanted to wear)? Did your exercise plan fall by the wayside? A new semester gives you a clean slate to work with. New classes, new professors, new assignments, and a chance to begin fresh. However, if life seemed to spiral out of control last semester you might consider making some healthy changes now.

Although no one system of organization works for everyone there are some techniques that you may find helpful. To get organized for school, consider using a weekly day planner to write in when your classes are, when assignments are due. Include your own personal timelines to help you break down large projects (e.g. that 30-page paper) into smaller, doable steps. Identify the times you feel you are most productive and schedule your study times then. Make a plan for the day with about 3 things you most want to accomplish for school or otherwise. You'll be amazed at how much more you can accomplish by just using that short "to-do" list everyday.

Keep your books and papers and supplies in a special place or folder. Put things away when you are finished with them so you will always know where they are (e.g. room keys). This will save you a lot of time that you can reinvest in getting homework completed or having free time. Try to keep up with assignments from the start of the semester because studying small amounts over the whole semester tends to work better than delaying your study for one huge dose at the end.

For improving organization in your personal life consider some of the following techniques. We all need time for a social life whether that means seeing friends and family, writing e-mail, or making calls. Make sure you have some time to connect with others every day, even if only at meal times, but plan that around your classes and study times. Sometimes the peak study hours get whittled away by conversation, and then you find yourself too tired or unmotivated to study.

Remember to take good care of your body, giving it adequate sleep and allowing some time to exercise at least 3 times a week. This will help you feel rested, improve concentration, and increase your overall energy level and improve feelings of self-esteem. Being worn down, and fatigued from never exercising or from sleep deprivation can make your productivity plummet.

Finally, be sure to balance your work, school and social life. No one should work all the time, but save the times you are most alert and focused for school, and then fit in the other activities at other times. Finding the best balance, using a to-do list, and organizing your day, the "3 item to-do list", and good sleep and exercise can really help you get your semester organized for success. Have a great semester!