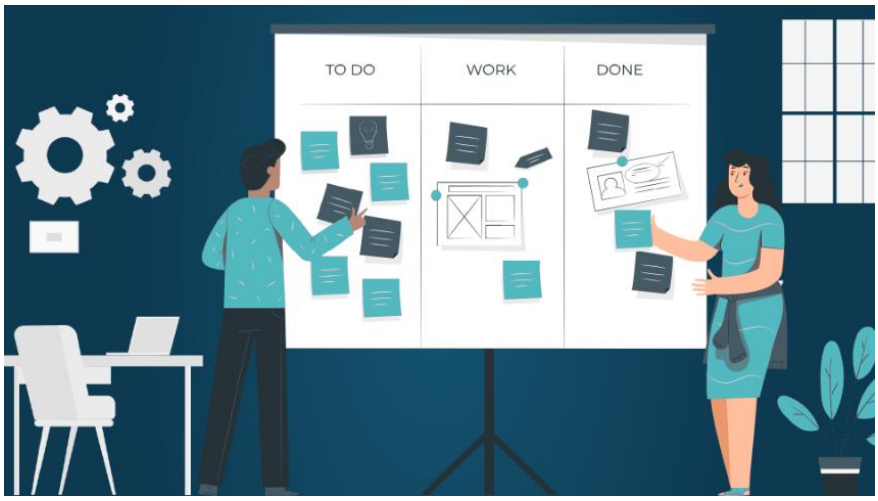


PROJECT PLANNER

for GRADUATE STUDENT SUCCESS

BETTER PLANNING AHEAD!

If you're struggling with time management and project planning this deceptively simple guide is for you! Plan a class assignment, a paper, or a whole research project and discover the power of process.

-Dr. Cristie Glasheen
Graduate Student Success Coach

How to Use this Planner

This project planner is deceptively simple and conceptually easy to apply to any type of class, assignment, or project. The key word here being *deceptively.* Many people struggle to plan and organize their time, bouncing from one system to another with little success. They often think that if they just find the perfect system, it will make all the difference. It rarely does.

It doesn't work because it's not usually the system that's the problem. It's how they're thinking through the process that's the problem.

If you're struggling to plan your tasks, you need to get more strategic in your thinking rather than finding a new system. Now, I have a whole course on building time management skills so this planner can't teach you everything, but it's a great start! So here are the rules:

1. **"Plans are worthless, but planning is everything." - Dwight D. Eisenhower. The value of this planning document is not to make a perfect plan but to prompt you to think through the steps involved in reaching your goal and the amount of time you think it will take you.**
2. **Good time management is a SKILL. It takes time to develop. Many people struggle thinking through the steps of a project or estimating how long something will take. You can get better at this through attention and practice.**
3. **The planner has 3 levels (See the example on page 3):**
    1. **The project: A project is however you define it. A project can be a paper, an assignment, a whole class, or an entire research endeavor. Whatever level you usually think about things when you ask yourself: what do I need to get done? is a project. This goes in the header.**
    2. **You create one planning document for each project. Your planning document can span multiple pages, you can print the provided template out multiple times, or you can just use a notebook or an excel spreadsheet, whatever you want. It's that flexible.**
    3. **Tasks: These are mini-milestones in a project. You can think of them as chunks or larger components of a project. For example, if your project is a paper then each task might be a section of the paper. If your project is a class, then each task might be an assignment or exam.**
    4. **Subtasks: These are action items. They are the smallest workable components of a task. They are the baby steps on the way to completing the project. Many people can come up with tasks, but struggle to come up with the subtasks. That's Okay! You don't have to be perfect and you will get**

better with practice. The more you pay attention to the subtasks of a project, the more you will remember to include them in each future projects.

4. Sit down and take some time to think through the planner starting from the top level and working down. You don't have to fill everything in order, if a step comes to you, write it down in approximately the right spot. You can move it later if it's out of order. If it's a big project you might need to do the planning in a few sessions.
5. Don't add time estimates until you've got the subtasks fleshed out. It's easier to estimate durations using the smallest parts.
6. If you realize you've forgotten a step, go ahead and add it to the planner, even if you've done it already. This will help you remember to plan for it when you are working on a similar project in the future.
7. Your time estimates are likely to be wildly inaccurate at first, especially if you haven't been tracking them. That's Okay! Do your best, take a wild guess and err on the side of estimating more time rather than less. Then as you go through and do each task, add a note for how long it really took you. You'll start to get much better at estimates once you pay attention to the discrepancy.
8. If you don't know what the next step is, then the next step is to figure out what's next. You're a student, you aren't going to always know every step of the project ahead of time. That's not a good reason to give up planning. Plan ahead as far as you are able and then add a place holder for figuring out what to do at that point. The planner is an evolving document as you figure out more steps, add them.
9. Save your planners. As you continue to update your project planners with more subtasks and notes on how long it really took you to do each stage, they become documentation of your activities and a record you can use for future planning. The next time you do a similar task, you'll have a list of subtasks with more accurate time estimates ready to start with.
10. Once you've created a plan for each project, you can combine the information from the planner with the deadlines and appointments in your calendar to allocate tasks across your week.
11. Go ahead and review the example planner starting on the next page to see how I would use it to create a plan for a small research project in my field.

Good Luck! If you find this helpful, you can learn a lot more about the principles of productivity and successful time management in my Top-Notch Time Management Course over at GradStudentGreatness.com.

Wishing You All the Best,
-Dr. Cristie Glasheen
GradStudentSuccess.com

Project: *Binge Drinking Paper*

The estimate of how long you think it will take. If you're not good at this, make a rough estimate, then write down how long it did take you. You'll get better at estimating once you pay attention.

A subtask, also known as an action item, is the smallest workable component of a task.

Task	Subtask	Estimate [hrs]
Create title page	Check target journal formatting guidelines	.5
2.5hr	Format Word template	.25
	Determine author order	.25
	Get credentials/contact details for coauthors	.25
	Decide on keywords	.5
	Create title page	.75
Write abstract	Write abstract	1
1.5hr	1st edit abstract	.5
Write introduction	**Read** Colonel and Mustard 2020 [18 pages]	2
16hr	Write topic paragraphs [~2]	1
	Read White and Scarlett 2006 [30 pages]	3.5
	Skim Plum and Green 2001 [20 pages]	.75
	Skim Evette and Cook 2011 [30 pages]	1
	Write background paragraphs [~4]	3
	Write purpose paragraph	.75
	1st edit introduction	2
Write methods	Write data source and procedures paragraphs [3]	2
12hr + [1 day]	Design table shells	3
	Write variables paragraph [~3]	2
	Statistician review table shells	[2 days]
	Revise table shells	1
	Write analysis paragraphs [2]	1
	1st edit methods	3
Run analyses	Write analytic plan	3
21.25 +?	Meet with statistician to review/modify plan	1
	Clean and recode data	4
	Run sample description stats	1
	Produce missing data counts and frequency histograms	2

Total hours each task is expected to take. This helps create a timeline for a project.

The smaller the goal, the easier to motivate yourself.

Noting the page number makes it easier to estimate the time.

This list isn't necessarily hierarchical or linear. E.g., I would write the abstract last and I could work on parts for more than one task on the same day.

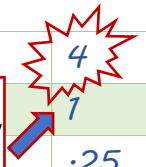
Estimating the number of paragraphs will help you estimate the time needed.

Estimates for others should be how many days they are expected to take to get back to you.

	QC results and determine if further recodes are needed	2
	Additional recodes	1
	Run new sample description stats and produce Table 1	1
	Run bivariate analyses, produce Table 2	.75
	Run test for sex*binge drinking interaction, produce Table 3	.25
	QC bivariates and interaction test	.5
	Meet with statistician, review results, decide on final multivariable analyses	1
	Run multivariable analyses	1
	QC multivariable analyses	.5
	Write up brief summary	1
	Send summary and tables to coauthors for review	.25
	Meet with coauthors	1
	Revise analyses as needed	?
Write results	Write up sample characteristics	1
7hr	Write up bivariate analyses	1
	Write up interaction effect testing	.5
	Write up multivariable analyses	2
	1st edit results	2.5
Write discussion	Write big picture summary [2]	1
8hr	Write comparisons to past literature [4]	3
	Write strengths and limitations [1]	.5
	Write future directions and implications [2]	1
	1st edit discussion	2.5
1st full draft	Send to co-authors for review	[5 days]
14.75 + [10 days]	Meet with co-authors to discuss	1
	Combine reviewers text edits using Word	.5
	Review comments	1
	Make grammar & style edits	2
	Make substantive edits Intro	2
	Make substantive edits Methods	1
	Make substantive edits Results	2

It's ok to have place holders. You can fill them in as you learn more.

	Make substantive edits Discussion	4
	Edit Abstract	1
	Send for second review	·25
	Second review	[5 days]
2nd full draft	Make grammar and style edits	1
6·5hr	Make substantive edits Abstract and Intro	1
	Make substantive edits Methods and Results	1
	Make substantive edits Discussion	1
	Provide final confirmation of changes to coauthors and ask if they wish for a final review	0·5
	Any last changes	2
Submission	Write letter to editor	1
2·75hr	Edit letter to editor	0·5
	Upload Submission onto system	1
	Update Journal Submission Log	0·25
Reflect	How accurate were my estimates?	·5
2hr	Is there anything I would do differently?	1·5



Project:

Task	Subtask	Estimate

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