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**A Guerrilla Guide
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Time isn't just money - it's life itself. Waste enough of it and you'll also lose a piece of yourself. —G.F.

Chapter IX

Time Management: The Cornerstone Of Success (And Not As Boring A Topic As You Might Imagine)

Schedule Schmchedule, Fudge It With "A Budget"

You've heard it before, "Time management is critical in college... You must schedule carefully so that the 86,400 seconds in each day don't slip through your fingers like sands through the hourglass, blah, blah, blah..." Well, take heart because I'm not about to make you suffer through a hypothetical series of pages out of somebody's daily calendar, with 47 minutes set aside for lunch, 21 minutes for folding the laundry and 2 minutes for flossing.

Let me break it down for you:

1. Remember, the main reasons students bite the dust in college are (a) poor study skills and (b) not spending enough time studying.
2. The heart of your schedule is already planned for you since your classes meet at set times. Your work schedule and other such obligations would also be essentially pre-scheduled.

3. Do your reading assignments and other class-oriented tasks in the order indicated in your class syllabus to avoid cramming. Your professor is telling you how and when to study based on a sensible assessment of how much material you are being asked to master! What happens if you don't follow the professor's recommendations? Maybe nothing—at least not yet. But even if you don't get penalized right away for failing to complete a reading assignment before the next class, you have missed a deadline. This will have a ripple effect. Now you find yourself going to the next class at a severe disadvantage because you may only grasp 50% (or less) of what is being taught. Pretty soon you can't tell your behind from a hole in the wall. Why put yourself through that? Simply complete assignments in the manner the instructor suggests. You will save time and avoid the stress of having to tackle a monstrous work load down the road. One thing's for sure—the amount of work won't get any smaller if you delay. Waiting around instead of tackling your work on schedule only means the information will get harder to cram into your mental databank as time passes.
4. In general, **budget** two hours of study time for each hour of class so you can absorb the information in digestible portions and increase memory retention. (That gives you at least a couple of days to get in your 1-to-2 ratio of study hours until the class meets again since college classes don't usually meet daily.) Thus, while I use the term "schedule" I want you to think in terms of "budgeting" your time so that—whatever happens schedule-wise during the course of your day—you meet your commitment to allocate a set number of hours to studying per day. If you like studying in the morning rather than at night, that's fine with me as long as it gets done.
5. As test time and paper deadlines approach, budget more time over the course of the preceding two or three weeks as appropriate (including time for cumulative class note reviews as discussed later)—but not at the expense of your 1-to-2 hour ratio for other classes.

6. That's it! If you do these things, everything else will fall into its natural place. Specifically, a place that is **secondary** to studying.

The Kick Ass Study Method In A Nutshell

As I've mentioned, most students think of "studying" as the desperate process of keeping up with the wave of information. These students are constantly operating right on the cusp of their understanding. Not only are they afraid of the information coming up—they are even afraid of the information they've already seen. *Why? Because they can't remember it anymore.*

As you can extrapolate from the last few sections I am asking you to think of studying as a two-pronged exercise:

1. Stay in front of the waves of information by reading ahead;
and
2. Periodically revisit the information you've seen before.

Come On ... Don't B.S. Yourself

When I make breezy reference to "study hours" what do I mean? Well, I know what I *don't* mean: wasted, idle hours spent sitting in the library that merely look like studying.

Sometimes, when caught up in the excitement of the big dance/concert/weenie roast, students try to convince themselves that they have studied plenty of time for the big test when, in fact, they've basically been jacking around.

What happens when people go to the gym and spend their time chatting by the water cooler? Nothing. They may be wearing their weight belt and their spandex thong and their fancy cross-trainers but if they don't break a sweat and focus they might as well have stayed home. Same thing goes for you if you fake it at the library

because you can't muster the focus and motivation to make something happen.

So what do you do? You change the way you think about studying, maintaining intensity and efficient use of your time. I call it...

"Punching In"

To study successfully you must train yourself to do a certain amount of **real work** in a **disciplined manner** within a **fixed time frame**.

Most people can maintain real intensity for about thirty minutes without interruption, at which time they would benefit from a five-minute break before resuming.

When you sit down to study, I urge that you think of it literally as "punching in" at work. My students purchase a small clock or stopwatch with a discreet alarm and go to work in small chunks of time. They set mini-goals for themselves so that they hit targets over the course of the study session. At the end of each half-hour study block they decide whether they are in "the zone" or whether they need their five-minute break. If they want to keep going they give themselves permission to put in another 10 minutes or so, which they also time. The result is that two hours spent studying in this manner can be far more effective than two hours spent sitting aimlessly, hoping for disciplined study to take hold of you.

Look, a stopwatch is just a tool. Ultimately you are going to have to suck it up and motivate yourself. You have to have sufficient focus on your long-term goals to get fired up for each night of study (much easier when you also have the satisfaction of knowing you are a finely tuned and efficient studying machine).

"Punching in" is a highly effective time management method, especially for students who tend to procrastinate, or those who find it motivating to be highly conscious of the passage of time.

Your time is precious and fleeting.¹ And time is the great equalizer since we all have the same amount in the course of a day, no matter our age or job or anything else.

So remember, kids: **make time your bitch.**

Power Breaks

I've talked about the importance of taking periodic five-minute breaks. Make the most of this time by taking a minute to go outside and take a few deep breaths of fresh air. It also helps to eat a couple of slices of fresh fruit to give you just a bit of easily digested fuel every hour or so.

Many people around the world swear by a few simple Yoga poses to boost their energy in just a couple of minutes. These poses were developed over thousands of years and work their effects on the body with great speed and efficiency. Yoga also helps you to relax so that you can enjoy the process of success more and take the edge off of your stress.

You might enjoy taking a Yoga class (unless you're self-conscious about your feet or something). Or, you can simply do a little light stretching.

Here's a really good all-purpose stretch: lie down on your back and rest your lower legs on a chair; your legs should be together and your thighs parallel with the legs of the chair so that you get maximum decompression of your spine. *Feels so good.* And it eases fatigue by easing blood flow to the brain for an all-around good use of your break.

Oh yeah, and don't forget to pee.

Your Gigantor Calendar

Go buy yourself one of those giant desk blotter calendars, but don't put it on your desk—instead put it on your wall. (I am not, by the way, talking about an erasable white board calendar that requires you to fill in all the numbers every month. We both know those are a pain in the ass, and they smear too easily. It's also better to have the ability to preserve what you've written and to review

multiple months, which you can't do if you use a white board you have to erase every month.)

On the first day your professor will make some introductory remarks explaining the manner in which the class will be graded (for example, three tests worth 20% each and a series of quizzes worth a total of 40%). You will also receive a class syllabus with all kinds of exam dates, review session times, paper deadlines and the like. As soon as humanly convenient go home and transfer this information onto your big-ass calendar. It'll only take you about five minutes a class so don't whine. You're better than that.

The idea is to make your schedule seem less like a series of abstract dates and more like a giant map of a journey. Time itself will take on a dimensionality that will better allow you to control it and use it to your advantage. You will always have a constant reminder of your upcoming academic challenges, and your future will seem to "come alive" before it happens. (This is also yet another way to get you to list your goals, which by now you've realized is some kind of psychotic crusade for me.)

You should also pick up an official university calendar and transfer key dates on to your Jumbotron version of your life, such as the last day you can drop a class, the first day of spring break, and other helpful info. Remember to get performing arts and sports schedules if you also want to keep up with those events.

Now then, doesn't it feel good to know what's going on? What a relief not to have to worry about things sneaking up behind you and whacking you on the head.

When you've got this GINORMOUS poster thingy on your wall, continually priming you for crunch times and deadlines, you are miles ahead of those students burying their heads in the sand about their time-sensitive obligations. Hey, somebody's got to make C's.

Enter The Technology Dragon

Not all of my scheduling tactics rely on such retro tools as paper calendars and old-fashioned writing implements. I firmly believe students should rely on a personal data assistant (PDA) such as one of the increasingly inexpensive line of Palm Pilot® devices. Sure, there are fancier models² but a basic device that serves as a calendar/alarm, an address book and a calculator will do the job—just so long as you can synch up to a computer and back up your data (the single biggest advantage over an easily lost paper version of your life).

These little technological marvels help make daily scheduling a natural and even vaguely enjoyable part of life.

My favorite feature of the Palm devices (though I hated it passionately before mastering it with a little practice) is the stylus-driven “graffiti” function. And if you download a program like Doodle-Bug, you can actually use the stylus to jot information on the graphical interface screen the same way you would write on a sticky note, which is super-convenient.

Write everything in your PDA calendar from test dates to hot dates, along with all the stuff on your humongous wall calendar. In other words, make your PDA your portable office. You will experience a feeling of security and liberation when you use this device, freeing your mind of mental lint and clutter. Equally important, PDAs are now a staple of business life, so there is a good chance you will be called upon to use one after college.

Kill Your Television

If you're like me, you enjoy television more than you care to admit. As we all know, the bulk of T.V. shows are like greasy, syrupy junk food for the mind. Watching them will do nothing but waste your time. **Contrary to popular belief, watching television is not relaxation.** Because of the passive, sedentary nature of the activity it can actually induce enormous stress and depression.



Now doesn't that feel better?

But let's say you can't live without reruns of Friends, or maybe Judge Judy is your guilty pleasure. Perhaps you like to watch the evening news. Whatever the case, I urge you to *schedule the amount of television you watch each month*. Buy a subscription to T.V. Guide if it will help you to decide what and when you will watch.

Also, personal video recorders (TIVO® is but one such product) have revolutionized television viewing by making it incredibly efficient to record shows and skip commercials.³

My suggestion would be that you watch no more than

seven hours a week of T.V., including the weekends. Again, make it a treat to watch your favorite show. If you really want to escape the sin box, just don't get cable ...

Okay, you can stop laughing now. But the temptation to waste large chunks of time "cruising" the endless array of channels with the remote can be too hard to resist. (By the way, Playstation® counts as T.V.-watching for these purposes. Play computer games without defined limits at your peril.) Needless to say, not having a T.V. of your own would be the wisest of all courses during your college years since no good can come of on-demand boob-tube access. Or at least consider unplugging the damned thing and stuffing it in your closet during exams.

In short, don't just take the T.V. drug as a way to escape your responsibilities. **If you don't believe T.V. is like an addictive drug, try shutting it off for a week.** The most successful people have substantially moderated or completely eliminated their use of television. Ask any successful person and you will see for yourself.

Okay, if you really like television (or film), why not study it? Consider working in the media or entertainment industry.

Regardless, you should seek to become "filmmically" literate. Your library may have classic titles available for student viewing. Great films are just as important in your cultural education as great books. You might want to ask your English professor for a list of his or her suggestions, some of which may complement your classes or suggest a topic for a term paper.

Heaving The All-Nighter: A Misguided Odyssey into The Wee Hours

Sleep deprivation is a common form of torture. Its effects are brutal, both mentally and physically. Whenever you deny yourself one of your most basic needs—whether it be food, water, oxygen or sleep—you aren't doing yourself any favors. Therefore ...

Plan, plan, plan so you never place yourself in a position to have to heave an all-nighter. You need at least a few hours of sleep before a

test, and preferably the normal seven or eight. This applies whether you think you "feel" tired or not. A sleep deficit will undermine your performance, okay? It affects your memory and any number of other cognitive functions.

If you find yourself having to write a paper the night before it's due, you're just not being good to yourself. Moreover, the law of diminishing returns comes into play at around 1 A.M., and you become much less productive as the night drags on. In all likelihood, the assignment you turn in will be nowhere near as good as the one you might have written at a reasonable hour. There is simply no substitute for consistent, daily preparation—and no reason to stay up all night if you punch in every day for work and put in your budgeted hours.

As a rule, you should be in bed by midnight at the latest. If you're a sleep-deprived zombie, you won't benefit much from your morning classes. Get organized and get to sleep.

By the way, artificial stimulants, like coffee, cola drinks and caffeine pills, will thoroughly drain you of energy after a few hours.† More importantly, they will ruin your health and make you more susceptible to illness.



I tried some No-Doz® once. They gave me a terrible stomach-ache, like chronic constipation. The worst thing was that I actually slept through the French test I had stayed up most of the night studying for in the first place. Apparently, too much caffeine can make you sleep through an incredibly loud, jangling alarm. When you finally do pass out, you sleep like the dead. Fortunately, I groveled pitifully and the professor let me take the test in his office after everyone else had finished. — L.L.

If you must occasionally stay up late (and you will), build up endurance naturally through exercise and good nutrition. Don't become reliant on drugs like caffeine, which can wreak havoc on your system.

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Key Points

1. Satisfy your study budget and everything else will fall into place.
2. Make time to stay ahead, take time to review continuously.
3. "Punch in" to make study time count.
4. Use power breaks to keep sharp.
5. Make your schedule "come alive" with a giant calendar.
6. Invest in a PDA and back it up.
7. Don't take the TV drug to escape your responsibilities.
8. All-nighters are unnecessary and masochistic.

Chapter IX Notes

1. If you learn one bit of Latin let it be *tempus fugit*, or “time flies.”
2. The top-of-the-line Palm-powered treo 650 PDA combines phone, web, email and camera functionalities in addition to the standard calendar/address book/calculator/alarm functions. Soon this type of product will become entry-level and the snazzier models will feature video capabilities and GPS positioning. They may even be able to make you a tuna sandwich. But for now, you can start with something much more basic and inexpensive.
3. Definitely avoid commercials at night, since they bombard you with images of fattening junk food. Like Pavlov’s dogs, we race to the vending machines for some sticky nougat goodness or call in for a tire-sized pizza with cheese-injected crust.
4. By the way, you should also avoid sleeping pills, which tend to make you dull-witted the next morning. They can also be highly addictive.

Your memory is a lot better than it even needs to be to make straight As. It's just a matter of switching it on. —G.F.

Chapter X

Congratulations: You've Got A Kick Ass Memory

You Never Forget A Face ... Or Anything Else For That Matter

Your memory is perfect. The trick is learning to move short-term memories into your long-term memory bank. I like to remind students about a bizarre incident that occurred some 25 years ago in which a woman awoke to find her husband talking in his sleep – in a foreign tongue of some kind. The odd thing was that the man had no foreign language skills. Fortunately, his wife had the presence of mind to record her husband’s lengthy nocturnal rambings. It was later determined that the man was speaking perfect, unaccented Russian. It seems that at some point in his life he had been within earshot of two people having a mundane conversation in Russian. For whatever reason, his brain had absorbed this information and randomly accessed it in his sleep, causing him to recite the conversation perfectly. Similarly astonishing results can be obtained through hypnosis.

Gee, I wonder if your memory is good enough to get you through your next Geography test. *Ya think?*