

TO-DO LISTS

Every day can be a mixed bag when it comes to getting everything done. When you're a college student, that reality can be threefold or more. A key part of staying on top of all of your tasks is learning good time management skills. One of the tools you can use to improve your time management are **to-do lists**. A to-do list helps you manage time and activities on a daily basis by reminding you of key tasks. Try creating a to-do list for the next day each night before you go to bed (night owls) or for the current day when you get up in the morning (early birds). The few minutes you spend creating a list will save you countless time, effort, and stress in the long run.

Example:

Mike's To-Do List

Date: Wed. 3/7

1. Read for history class (due Fri.)
2. Complete biology lab write-up (due Thurs.)
3. Read book on reserve in library for lit class
4. Go running
5. Dinner with the kids (Wed@7pm)
6. Follow up with Rhea about group project (due Tues.)
7. Make dentist appointment

TIP: Try color-coding your list. This is a good way to show priority items and to make it easier to read. A big list of tasks is less intimidating if it's got a visual aspect to it. As you can see, Mike used a yellow highlight for immediate items and blue for timed but less urgent items. Things that can be done any time are left alone.

What are things that Mike did to make his to-do list more effective?

- He **prioritized** the list. You can see that Mike has crossed off the more immediate tasks, like the biology lab write-up that's due Thursday is done, but the projects due Friday and Tuesday are still on the list. The next priority item should be the Friday task.
- Mike's list is a list written in Word, but there are many **alternate to-do list methods**. Mike could have used anything that was accessible to him though. There are plenty of phone calendars, email services, tablet apps, and other options. Some will even send you notifications when a task is due to help keep you on top of your schedule! Find what works for you.
- Mike put when some items were due on the list, but didn't for others. Be sure to **be consistent with timed items**- this can help Mike (or you!) make sure that you don't lose track of time or overlap events. Since he included it, Mike won't be at the library with Rhea when he should be at dinner with his kids.

Always remember to cross tasks off as you complete them! It may not seem like much, but as the list gets shorter, your mental stress will decrease and your motivation will increase! You can do it!

For more information about time management, to-do lists, and stress reduction techniques, try enrolling in a **LEARN11 "Learning and Academic Strategies" course at Long Beach City College**, available on both campuses and online.