Reading

There are four items to complete in this Reading area:

1. Reading
2. Challenge Activity
3. Powerful Words for a Powerful Vocabulary
4. Successories

I. Reading

Time Management

Students today are very busy and their lives are full of responsibilities such as work, taking care of family, their home, school, and many other things.

Students also have social and personal commitments such as getting together with friends, playing sports, shopping, and watching TV. All of these are time consuming, and with just 24 hours each day, finding the time to get it all done is what time management is all about.

Topics

Getting it all done — Take away a few ideas you can use.

The Keys to Successful Planning — Read how to "Chunk Your Time" and many more tips.

Tools and an Overview — Learn about additional tools and read the recap.
**Writing a weekly schedule** is an important step. Appointments and meetings are less likely to be missed, and projects for your classes can be scheduled so that there is plenty of time to ask the instructor questions and still hand them in on time. Plan at least a week at a time for the best results.

**The Importance of Time and Stress Management**

In the last unit you learned how to successfully navigate throughout the course and have an understanding of the course expectations and course policies.

Now that you have a solid understanding of how the online classroom works and what it has to offer, you are ready to begin the next step.

One of biggest problems you may face as an online learner is dealing with the additional stress classes and studying places on your life, your family, and time. In this unit, you will learn how to manage the stressors in your life by using time-management tools and strategies to plan, organize, and prioritize your daily activities.

Managing your time and stress effectively will help you achieve your goals. Mastering the art of organization will help you find success in all areas of life, including home, work, school, and in the community.

**Understanding Stress**

One thing that will assist you in managing stress is to understand its origin. Research in the 1990s worked to learn more about the brain and its natural rhythm of learning. That first ten years is now known as The Decade of the Brain in academia. To simplify some of the findings, let’s look at two general sections of the learning brain.

The amygdala — this structure is located in the limbic area of the brain. The limbic area is one of the oldest and first developing areas. It is in the mid-brain and houses several structures you may recognize — the hippocampus (long-term memory), the thalamus (sensory perception) and the amygdala (fight or flight). The amygdala is ancient. Its purpose from the beginning of time has been to protect against threats to survival. It has the power to send a multitude of messages through the brain to ignite fight (aggression) or flight (withdrawal).

In the prehistoric era, the threats to survival were more concrete — lions, tigers, and bears to be exact. In today’s world, after thousands of years of evolving, one of the most dangerous forms of a threat to the brain is stress in any one of its many shapes or forms. Everyone is aware of how ominous and detrimental stress can be.
When a threat is recognized by the amygdala, the structure goes into survival mode sending messages throughout the brain that can block critical thinking and common sense thinking from occurring. The amygdala is that powerful.

Research also shows that the cerebral cortex, also known as the critical-thinking brain located in the forefront of the brain, can intercept messages from the amygdala in the early stages of its ignition and prevent the "freight train" of survival instinct from gaining so much speed. If the cerebral cortex is not trained to stop the amygdala early, through personal discipline, the “fight or flight” instinct is increasingly difficult to stop. The most important thing you can learn from this bit of information is that the earlier the intervention occurs the better the chances are that stress can be managed. Stress will always be present in your life, you know now; you can keep it in control by using your critical-thinking brain.

There are two very interesting pieces of information that may help you to understand yourself better. One is that the amygdala matures at about 10 months of age and the other is that the critical thinking brain matures at about the age of 24. It is so much easier to see why stress can rule when you understand that your brain learns best by repetition; the amygdala has plenty of years to refine its M.O. (modus operandi or mode of operation) to protect. Everyone has been in the situation where they feel frightened and have the urge to fight or run. Sometimes, this reaction happens in a nanosecond.

One of the answers rests with the critical thinking brain. Your job is to “work it” early in life, and repetitively seek creativity through the most important step — analysis. The earlier you learn to think critically, the more automatically you will use these skills; again repetition, repetition, and more repetition. Therefore, you must analyze the situation causing stress and strategize. How can you creatively counter stress? It is from here that you will look at the strategies that have been proven to help, especially the one you will focus on in this unit, time management.

Life Lesson:  

To-Do Lists
A daily To-Do list can help you organize your activities for the day. Prepare your To-Do list each morning (or the night before), listing all the activities you wish to complete during the day, and cross each one off as you complete it. Completing everything you planned to do for the day can provide a great sense of accomplishment.

**Optional Activity:**
If you want more information about making a “to-do” list, you can go to [http://www.mindtools.com/prtodo.html](http://www.mindtools.com/prtodo.html), and read the article entitled “To Do Lists: The Key to Efficiency.” This article talks about creating and prioritizing tasks in a To Do list.

**The Keys to Successful Planning**

**Be Realistic** — Only put things on your list that you think you can accomplish. Keep in mind that there are limited hours in the day and a limit to your energy level as well.

**Build in Extra Time for the Unexpected** — Sometimes keeping your goals in mind and planning your activities accordingly are not enough. Many times, you will come across unexpected circumstances that can interfere with your plans and goals. If you schedule every minute of your day, there will be no allowances for emergencies or things beyond your control. For example, losing your keys, a flat tire, bad weather, or a family emergency are not things you plan for, but they can still take up your time.

**Know Yourself** — What is your most productive time of the day? Are you a morning person, or do you like to work into the late hours of the night?

**Chunk Your Time** — You know what takes up most of your day, whether it is your job, school, or family/friends. Put those at the top of your list and list the other activities such as unloading the dishwasher and cleaning the house can be done in between the others.

**The Keys to Successful Planning** — If you have a project due at the end of your course, start planning for it at the beginning. Do not wait until the last minute, and do not get lost in the daily assignments.

**Dealing with the Demands of Others** — You may be able to avoid some interruptions from friends, family, colleagues, or classmates, but realize that the people you live with deserve your time and attention too. Schedule some time for fun and relaxation with family into each day to avoid burnout.

**Learning How to Say "NO"** — Say no to additional projects, responsibilities, and demands when you are already over-committed. Your willingness to say no will help you realize your full potential and achieve your goals.

**Using Unexpected Gifts of Time** — Use your time waiting at the doctor’s office or on your hour-long commute to work wisely. You would be surprised how much you can read and do in only 10 minutes.
Time Management Tools

There are many time management tools that can help you prioritize your goals and schedule your time wisely so that you can maximize the time you have available doing those tasks that are most important to you. Some of these tools are pocket calendars, weekly planners, diaries, personal digital assistants (PDAs), and computer-based calendars. They can help you plan for intermediate — and long-term activities.

The key factor in effective time management is being organized. Being organized simply means keeping your goals in mind and planning your activities to make them a reality.

Time Management Questions

The key factor in effective time management is being organized. Being organized means keeping your goals in mind and planning your activities to make them a reality.

Careful planning should come before doing any activity. When you plan ahead, you should be considering questions such as:

1. What do you have to do?
2. What resources do you require to get the job done (for example, time, money, people, accessories, or information)?
3. Can you break down the activity into smaller, more manageable tasks?

You have now read about basic time management skills; next you will read about stress management. The next section of the Reading will cover "Stress Management."

Stress Management

Stress is your body's reaction to pressure or other demands that are placed on you. There are two types of stress: good stress and bad stress. Good stress is sometimes referred to as "eustress" and bad stress sometimes referred to as "distress."

Good stress is the kind of stress that keeps you motivated to work harder. Without good stress, you would not feel motivated to study for a test or go out to lunch with a friend you have not seen in a long time. Bad stress is the kind of stress that causes you to perform poorly at work, school, and at home.

Stress Management Factors
There are many factors in your life that can cause you to stress. These factors are called "stressors." The amount of stress a person will experience is directly related to:

- The degree to which the stressor is present
- How the stressor is perceived

Think about how you feel when you are stressed out. Now, think about how those feelings might affect your ability to learn. As a student, you need to stay focused on task. You also need to stay healthy so that you can attend your classes and stay in school.

Researchers believe that students who feel continuously stressed do not learn as efficiently as they would otherwise. Think about how the stressors in your life may interfere with your ability to learn.

**Dealing with Stress**

If you do not take measures to deal with the stressors in your life, they can influence you in many different ways. Some examples of the physiological and emotional effects of stress are: chronic pain, isolation from friends and family, anxiety, and depression.

People deal with stress in different ways. Some people take a nap when things get rough, some people self-medicate by taking drugs or alcohol, and some people even take their frustrations out on friends or family members. It is impossible to completely avoid stress in your life, but you can find ways to deal with your stressors more appropriately.

**Steps of Stress Control**

Practice the basics of stress control by following these three steps.

1. Become a time management expert. Learn how to tell the difference between important obligations and trivial activities. Know how to manage your day so that you work to complete the most important tasks first.

2. Pay attention to your physical health. Your mind and body work together to ward off stress. In order for your mind to cope effectively with challenges, your body must function at optimal levels. Take time to eat a healthy diet and exercise regularly.

3. Develop your relaxation skills. Due to busy lifestyles, many people have actually lost the ability to relax and set aside the demands of everyday life.
The Time and Stress Management Connection

According to the article from the Mayo Clinic®, "Time Management: Tips to Reduce Stress and Improve Productivity," you can reduce stress by improving your time management strategies. Think about it! We all experience some amount of stress from time to time; this seems to be a natural part of life. However, when your stress levels become so high that they interfere with your daily functioning, this is something you should definitely be concerned about. Without a doubt, high levels of stress interfere with your peace of mind and your overall productivity. This is where time management can be an extremely valuable tool. By managing your time effectively, you can actually boost your self-esteem as well as your confidence and sense of accomplishment. When you plan ahead and clearly identify priority items, you tend to accomplish more and feel better about yourself. You become mentally stronger, which in turn leads to lower levels of stress. The connection here is clear and critical!

Remember the Amygdala

Be aware. Recognize when stress is showing itself. Analyze the situation. What might you do about it (use some of the strategies above)? Critical thinking begins with analyzing the situation. Make a decision about what to do and then creatively “do it.” Refine your strategies as you monitor the degree to which they are working. Critical thinking is circular. Your learning is enhanced through the cycle of analyzing/researching, evaluating, and using creativity to problem solve consistently.

II. Challenge Activity

Mind Tools™ offers a plethora of information and options for you as you proceed in your educational journey, your career, and your life. As your challenge in Unit 2 and to further enrich your learning strategies go to:

http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newHTE_05.htm, and read the article entitled “To Do Lists: The Key to Efficiency.” This article talks about creating and prioritizing tasks in a To-Do list.

Take the time to explore the Mind Tools™ site more completely as you will find many helpful components at your fingertips: www.mindtools.com

Continue to make connections as you move from unit to unit. Begin by reviewing the Unit 1 Reading and put your critical thinking skills of analysis and research into practice. Search for the strategies that you find most helpful to your learning and thinking processes. Begin to use them over and over as through repetition you establish habits of success. Do not forget, you may always share your thoughts in Virtual Office or Discussion Board.
III. Powerful Words for a POWERFUL Vocabulary – 7 words in 7 Days

Effective communication is not only an essential academic strategy; it is fast becoming one of the top skills employers are looking for as they screen potential employees. However, how do you become an effective communicator? The answer to this question is actually quite simple, yet it involves some serious commitment on your part. You have to practice and make a firm commitment to equipping yourself with the many different “tools” that you will need in order to express your ideas clearly and effectively in both written and spoken communication. This is where a powerful vocabulary can make a world of difference for you because words are the building blocks of communication. Therefore, the more words you are able to use, the more creative, convincing, and powerful you will be as a communicator. What if you could add just one new word to your vocabulary each day? Think about the progress you would make in a week, a month, or even an entire year.

Vocabulary Enrichment Resources

Merriam-Webster's Word of the Day
http://www.merriam-webster.com/word-of-the-day/

Activity: Make your own flashcards: http://quizlet.com/

Unit 2 Vocabulary Words

Complete the vocabulary activities here
http://www.studymate.com/sm.do?id=3fnqF62J4

Circumspect: Watchful; discreet; cautious.

Elicit: To draw out; to encourage.

Affable: Easy to speak to; gracious.
Malleable: Capable of being shaped; adaptable.

Paragon: Model of excellence or perfection.

Indomitable: Not easily discouraged or subdued.

Ameliorate: Improve; make better or more tolerable.

IV. Successories

The information provided in the Successories area is designed to provide you with valuable tips, skills, and resources — all related to your ongoing success here at Kaplan and beyond.

This week, please take time to listen to the following reading and tutorials:

Kaplan Guide to Effective Writing – Chapter 4 E-mail Etiquette
https://kucampus.kaplan.edu/DocumentStore/Docs10/pdf/WC/Section1_Your_College_Writing_Experience.pdf

Stress and Time Management Activities

Matching Game: http://extmedia.kaplan.edu/business/CS113_1203C/reading/u2/quiz.html

Unit Self-Check: http://extmedia.kaplan.edu/business/CS113_1203C/reading/CS113_u2branching.htm
References

