



Key points:

- Look for assistive technology that can help students monitor, manage time
- Have students track how long it takes them to do daily tasks, activities, assignments
- Impart strategies for scheduling, organization

Teach time management strategies to students with disabilities

Time management can be a daunting task for students whose disabilities affect their perception or comprehension of time.

For example, a student with ADHD may struggle to transition from watching TV to doing homework at a specified time. Or a student with LD may not allot enough time to complete an assignment and thus miss the due date.

Knowing how to manage time effectively is critical in order to succeed in college and the workplace, however. After high school, students are expected to maintain their own schedules and meet deadlines without reminders. Familiarize students with alternative methods and tools they can use to track and manage their time, recommended Tara Bruss, an assistive technology specialist with the PACER Center's [Simon Technology Center](#).

Share these strategies with students during postsecondary transition planning:

- **Research different types of assistive technology.** Look for smartphone apps or other types of AT that help with time management in different ways depending on the student's impairments, needs, and environment, Bruss said. Examples include:
 - Visual: An alarm that uses a flashing light to give a visual signal that it's time to do a task.
 - Audible: An app that speaks the time out loud or an alarm that uses music or repetitive beeps.
 - Tactile: Apps or devices that use vibrations or other physical representations to give alerts.
 - Kinesthetic: A device with an alarm that makes the student move to a different area to shut it off. For example, if a student is on her phone browsing social media and an alarm pops up on her phone that it's time to do homework, it's too easy to switch off that alarm, Bruss said. "Having devices [with alarms] where you have to move yourself to that location can help with that transition from one activity to the next," she said.
- **Discover your "task pace."** Students who struggle with perceiving time may underestimate or overestimate how long it takes them to do certain activities, Bruss said. This can lead to missed deadlines if the student doesn't allot enough time to complete assignments.

To combat this, have the student keep a task analysis and time estimation log, Bruss said. Pick a task -- such as a reading assignment for a class -- and write down the steps involved in that task, such as how many pages to read and what kind of notes to take. Have the student estimate how long it will take her to complete that task, and then have her time herself to see how long it actually takes. Repeat this with different tasks and note the pattern between the estimated time and the actual time, Bruss said. The student may realize she needs to give herself half or double the time she estimates for certain tasks. "This is a really good way to learn about yourself," Bruss said.

· **List all daily activities.** Have students create a list of every activity they do in a day -- including classes, meals, chores, studying, homework, hobbies, hygiene, and sleeping -- and determine how much time each item takes. This will give students a big picture of how their time is spread throughout the day, Bruss said.

· **Get organized.** Students can use a to-do list or task manager to keep track of and prioritize major assignments based on due dates, said Sarah Giffen-Hunter, an AT specialist with the PACER Center's Simon Technology Center. Then, students can break down each assignment into steps and schedule internal due dates for each step, along with a specific period of time to work on each step, she said.

If the student struggles to visualize the steps needed to complete a major assignment, suggest working backward, Bruss said. For example, have the student write down the end goal (for example, giving a presentation in front of the class) and then determine each step that comes before it (practicing the presentation, editing the slides, putting information into slides, doing research, deciding on a topic, and so on), she said.

· **Schedule according to your needs.** Encourage the student to analyze her energy level at different times of the day, Giffen-Hunter said. For example, is she typically more alert in the morning and able to do higher-level tasks that require lots of thinking? Is she typically more sleepy right after lunch, so doing a task that requires physical activity at that time would be a good way to deter lethargy?

Tara Bruss and Sarah Giffen-Hunter spoke about this topic during the webinar [Managing Time for Teens and Young Adults](#) by the PACER Center's Simon Technology Center.

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See also:

- [Teach independent living skills to students with disabilities](#) (Aug. 29)
- [Begin life skills instruction early to prepare students for independent living, employment](#) (April 25)
- [Address students' sense of time, social skills in travel training](#) (Nov. 7, 2016)

For more stories and guidance on this topic, see the [Postsecondary Transition Roundup](#).

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