

Weekly Schedule For the Win!



Complete by Tuesday at 11:59 pm

-  Document Analysis Activity 1: Analyzing a Technical Document
-  Course plan
-  Discussion Board 1 (DB1): Introduce yourself

Complete by Wednesday at 11:59 pm

-  Read Chapter 2: Understanding Ethical and Legal Considerations in Technical Communication pp. 18-39 (whole chapter)
-  Chapter 2 Quiz

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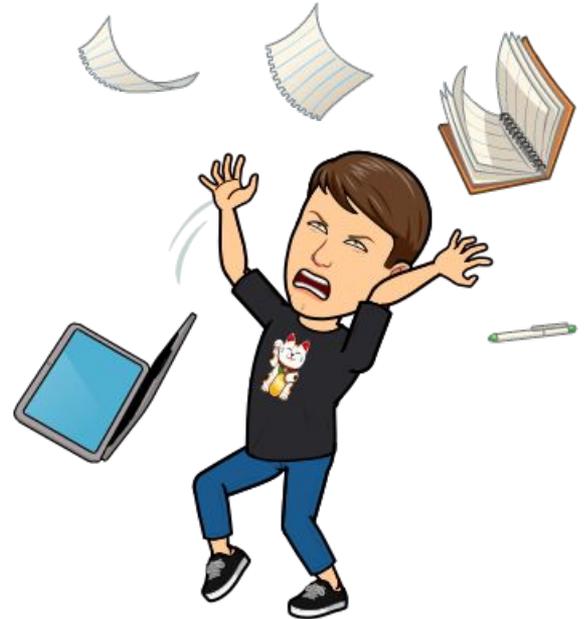
Problem: Time Management

- Online teaching and learning are more time-intensive.
- Both students and teachers can struggle to manage time.



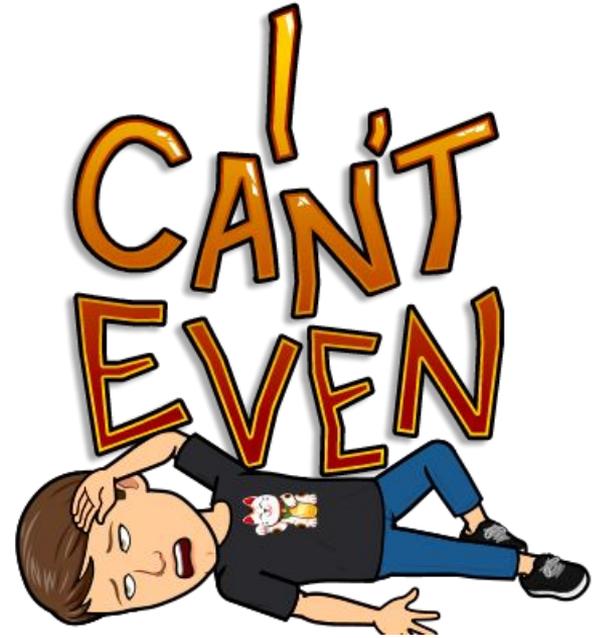
Problem: Time Management

- Students may have too much unstructured time
- Students may not realize how much time they need to devote to an online course
- Teachers may be juggling multiple online courses/sections and much more
- Common results: stress, frustration, giving up



Problem: Complex Tasks

- Taking an online class is a complex task in itself that requires task management
- Students may not be practiced in managing tasks
- Hence, online classes can seem **overwhelming**
- Students need a breakdown of complex tasks



One Solution: Suggested Weekly Schedule

- Provides **structure** for students who need it
- Provides **flexibility** for students who need it
- Helps teachers track how much work they've assigned
- Helps teachers strategically manage their time



One Solution: Suggested Weekly Schedule

- **Breaks down** each week into a series of smaller tasks
- Supports scaffolding
- Looks familiar to students and teachers



Widely applicable

- Works with asynchronous and synchronous modalities
- Helpful for students at all levels from **high school** to **first-year** undergrads to **Ph.D. students**
 - It's a mistake to assume (like I did!) that graduate students don't need this support, too.



How does it work? Asynchronous example

- Several **soft deadlines** + 1-2 **hard deadlines** each week
- Example from a third-year/junior-level asynchronous course:

Complete by Monday at 11:59 pm

Note: This week's only hard deadline is Sunday at 11:59 pm. The "complete by" labels are there to help you stay on track. They are not actual deadlines.

Read all of the documents in the START HERE section.



Read Chapter 1: Introduction to Technical Communication in Technical Communication pp. 3-13 (whole chapter)



Chapter 1 Quiz

Complete by Tuesday at 11:59 pm



Document Analysis Activity 1: Analyzing a Technical Document



Course plan



Discussion Board 1 (DB1): Introduce yourself

How does it work? Peer review example

- Several **soft deadlines** + peer review **hard deadlines**
- Example from a third-year/junior-level asynchronous course:



Complete by Tuesday at 11:59 pm

ALERT! Please note that **Tuesday** and **Thursday** contain **hard deadlines** for posting your **draft** (Tuesday) and **reviews** (Thursday).



Peer review of workplace correspondence

Complete by Wednesday at 11:59 pm

Receive peer review assignments over email. Begin peer review.

Complete by Thursday at 11:59 pm

Complete peer review.

Begin revising on the basis of feedback you received and/or ideas you had when you reviewed others' writing.

How does it work? Synchronous example

- Several **soft deadlines** + more **hard deadlines** as needed each week
- Example from a first-year synchronous course:

Complete by Thursday at 11:59 pm



Read *Becoming Rhetorical* chapter 1a: Communicators, pp. 8-13



We'll read chapter 1 in parts so we have enough time to thoroughly discuss fundamental concepts. You only need to read chapter 1a: Communicators for Friday.



Reading quiz 4



ALERT! Hard deadline: The quiz closes before class on Friday at 10:59 am. You won't be able to make up the quiz.

This quiz covers chapter 1a: Communicators (pp. 8-13) in *Becoming Rhetorical*. This quiz is **not** timed. You can use your book and your notes.



Accounting for local culture

- Most online students I teach reside near the university or in the same state
- Local culture (highly religious) views weekends as family time
- Adjust schedule to allow students to finish the week by Friday

Complete by Friday at 11:59 pm

Please note that the assignment is due on **Sunday**. 😊



Workplace correspondence



Potential for confusion

- Soft deadlines confuse some students at first
- Panicked emails may ensue
- But a suggested schedule is **forgiving**
- Students usually haven't missed the hard deadline on Sunday



Mitigating confusion

- Add a note on deadlines to mitigate confusion
- Example from asynchronous course:

Weekly Schedule & Deadlines

I've set up this course using labels that say "**Complete by [day of the week] at 11:59 pm.**" Most of those deadlines are **NOT hard deadlines**. You can complete quizzes, document analysis activities, and most discussion boards any time during the week through Sunday at 11:59 pm.

Hard deadlines in the class include: major assignment drafts, peer reviews, and revised, finalized submissions. Drafts of major assignments are usually due on Wednesdays with peer review due on Friday. Final drafts are sometimes due on Sundays and sometimes during the next week of class.

- Explain how deadlines work in a video introduction to the course or a separate, shorter video

Explaining the schedule

- It's also helpful to explain what the suggested schedule is intended to do for students.
- Example from asynchronous course:

Why is the course structured like this?

It breaks up the work: I've structured the course this way in order **to break up the work over the days of the week**. Past groups of students say they like this structure because it makes the workload more manageable and doesn't require you to manage your time by yourself. If you're a full-time student and you don't have a full-time job, you're in the group of students that this structure works well for.

It's also flexible: If you're busy during the day, you're in the group of students that this structure doesn't work well for. You need the flexibility to work on this course when your schedule permits. Most of the deadlines are not hard deadlines in order to provide you with flexibility.

I'll send reminders about hard deadlines to help you stay on track.

Students' course plans can come first

- If you ask students to provide a course plan based on their own schedules...
- Those plans can supersede the soft deadlines in the suggested schedule...
- As long as students are scheduling enough time each week

Course plan

What are we doing?

I'm curious about when you will work on this course each week. **In your course plan, show me when you plan to devote time to this class during a typical week.**

For example, you might work on this class from 8-10 am on Mondays, 1-2 pm on Tuesdays, 7-8 pm on Wednesdays, etc.

Limitations



- Your institution's learning management system (LMS) may not (easily) allow you to add informative labels
- **Workaround:** A Google Doc or similar with this schedule could be provided
- This adjustment should be done before classes begin to avoid further confusion

How is this different from a f2f schedule?

- **Benefit:** similarity to a face-to-face schedule
- This benefit reduces cognitive load
- **Difference:** *much* more detailed
- The schedule should explicitly list **everything** you need students to do



For the (student) win!

- Students consistently say that this schedule **helps them manage their time** and **prevents them from being overwhelmed**.
- Students consistently express gratitude for the **flexibility** in the schedule.
- In short, this schedule **supports students' success** with online learning.



For the (teacher) win!

- Makes the rhythm of each course explicit for me.
- I know exactly when students will most need my attention in each class.
- I can (try to) stagger the busiest times in each course to manage my workload.



If you try it...

- I'd love to hear how it went if you try it
- Local high school teachers applied it to their remote teaching in March with great success (students thanked their teachers!)
- @WilkesLydia on Twitter 

