



# Using Gen AI to Help with Time Management

Life as a university student can be hectic; assignments can pile up, readings are seemingly endless, and exams loom around every corner. Time management is a valuable skill in today's busy, information-loaded environments and AI can be an effective tool for helping to maintain the balance. This handout provides some strategies to help you manage your time and provides advice on how to leverage generative AI for time management.

## Visualizing Your Time and Setting Reminders

Traditional technologies can help you keep track of your schedule. Use a physical or digital calendar to create a visual representation of your daily plans. Digital calendars have the additional benefit of sending notifications, but you can also set alarm clocks to serve as reminders. Some digital calendars also have built-in AI tools to help you organize your time, build a priority list, and set reminders.

You may also try using Gen AI to build a calendar to be downloaded or exported.

**Work-Life Balance Tip:** When planning out each day, remember to schedule regular breaks as part of your routine to ensure that you prioritize your well-being.

## Linking Your AI Chatbot with Your Calendar

AI tools are particularly helpful when you connect them to your digital calendars. For instance, Microsoft Copilot can be linked to your Outlook Calendar and Google Gemini can be linked to your Google Calendar.

When linked, chatting with these AI tools can quickly and easily show you an outline of your calendar and remind you of priorities. Note that using AI tools still requires you to fill out your calendar with important information, but you can also ask the chatbot to help you populate your calendar.

**Sample prompts for AI tools connected to your calendar:**

- “What are the assignments due this week?”
- “Show me a list of my exams this month.”
- “Find a time in my schedule to fit a 1.5-hour meeting with my group members.”

## Using AI to Help with Project Management

When it comes to completing projects and assignments, good time management begins with self-reflection, which you should never delegate to AI. Think about what matters to you and how you want to balance your work, school, and personal life. You should also learn how to evaluate and prioritize tasks based on various factors like scope, duration, purpose, and impact. Once you have considered these factors, AI can help you collect and organize the data you need to evaluate your priorities. Here are a few ways you can use Gen AI to help with time management in the completion of your coursework.

### Estimate the time to complete an assignment

Coursework varies in length, scope, and expectations, so it is often difficult to tell how long a given assignment will take. If you provide context (e.g. course information, assignment instructions, outline of expectations, deadlines, etc.), gen AI may be able to provide an estimate of how much time you may need to complete the assignment, based on gathered data regarding similar students.

However, everyone is different, and it is important to understand how your focus or process might differ from others'. You can consider AI's estimate, but you know your own work ethic best.

#### Sample prompt:

"I am writing an 800-word literature review for a 3rd year university course, and I have not started the research. I am required to cite at least 4 sources. Please give me an estimate of how long this assignment might take, factoring in that I still have to look for and review sources. I also read and absorb material slower than my peers, so please factor that into your estimate."

**Follow-up tip:** When reviewing the AI's estimate, ask yourself if it is plausible. You can ask the AI tool to break down its reasoning for the estimate. This will also help you break the assignment down into smaller chunks and organize your approach.

### Outline milestones

Bigger projects can take up a lot of time to complete, so you might find it helpful to break these down into smaller milestones. For example, you might want to split a research paper into smaller steps, such as finishing the readings, evaluating literature, outlining the paper, drafting sections, consulting your instructor or peers, incorporating feedback, and finalizing the paper. AI can be used to assist with identifying milestones and creating project plans.

#### Sample prompt:

"I have a group assignment coming up. We still need to meet as a group to discuss and determine a direction. Then, we need to write a research paper and prepare a presentation.

Help me break down the group assignment into smaller milestones and set daily or weekly goals for each milestone.”

**Follow-up tip:** Although you can ask AI to help break your assignment down into smaller steps, it will not be able to effectively do so unless you provide the necessary details. At that point, you may find that you are the one breaking down the assignment. AI can still help you plan out your goals.

## Creating timelines

AI can help you block off time to dedicate to certain tasks. If you want more structure, AI can also break your schedule down into hard or soft timeboxes. If you prefer, you can also fill up your calendar with the smaller milestones instead of a more generic timeslot to work on a project.

### Sample prompt:

“Here is my class schedule: [Provide a list of class days and times]. I also work on [provide your work schedule]. Lastly, here is the list of my upcoming assignments: [provide assignment deadlines]. Help me create a realistic weekly schedule to balance school, work, and personal life. Feel free to ask me questions about important factors that can help create a balanced schedule.”

**Follow-up tip:** Again, you know yourself best. Although AI can suggest a timeline, only you understand how long you can work on a task without getting distracted or burnt out. Be realistic when evaluating AI’s output. Feel free to shift timeslots as you see fit.

## Converting assignments into checklists

When created thoughtfully, checklists serve as a detailed breakdown of what constitutes good work and—when returning to an unfinished task—a reminder of what you still need to do to produce that work.

AI can help convert certain assignments into checklists based on the assignment instructions.

**Note:** if you are uploading course material, make sure you have permission to do so as this may infringe copyright.

### Sample prompt:

“I attached my assignment instructions. Help me break down the instructions into a detailed checklist to make sure I am meeting expectations.”

**Follow-up tip:** You can also try asking to break down certain assignments into smaller parts. For example, you might want to include different parts of the writing assignment in your checklist (e.g. introduction, thesis statement, body paragraphs, citations, argumentation, etc.). You may also wish to include different parts of the writing process, like prewriting, outlining, or revising.

## Creating checklists for studying

Checklists can also be a useful tool for your exam review and AI can be used to create checklists detailing various steps or strategies to study effectively.

**Note:** AI is unlikely to know what information is important for study without input from you, so it will be up to you to know what you have to review and to provide the necessary information for the tool to help you create an effective checklist.

**Sample prompt:** “I have a 3rd year cellular biology exam coming up, and I want to make sure I understand all the concepts. Can you create a checklist to help me study the material effectively?”

**Additional tip:** If you have attended classes and taken notes, you may find that your instructor told the class to “make sure to remember this.” You can relay these important topics to the AI and prompt it to quiz you on the material.

## Prioritizing tasks

While you can upload your course outlines and ask AI to extract information about assignment due dates and exam dates, you should still double-check for accuracy. Also, note that you should obtain your instructor’s permission before uploading course materials to an AI tool, as this may constitute copyright infringement.

Here’s a few things you should know prior to asking AI help:

- What’s the estimated time to complete the task?
- Are there required readings? How many?
- What’s the weight of the assignment?

**Sample prompt:** I have four assignments, and I need to make time for all of them. Here is the list with all the deadlines. [Attach relevant assignment details.] 1) Help me break these assignments into manageable chunks. 2) Suggest what I should tackle first, starting from what should be easiest. 3) Explain your reasoning.

## Prioritize What’s Important to You

Time management requires evaluating priorities, and priorities are personal. Thus, when it comes to time management, AI’s flaws often become clear. If an AI tool lacks data, it can make certain assumptions that may not be applicable to your situation. This shortcoming can be minimized by providing the tool with more context and information about the various factors necessary to consider in creating a balanced schedule.

The best way to use Gen AI is to engage actively with your own critical thinking skills – even using AI to assist with time management! You can use AI tools to help you evaluate how you use your time, but AI does not know what is most important in your life, and you should not allow AI to determine what is important for you. Automating your schedule may give you direction, but choosing what to do, when to do it, and how you do it maintains your agency.