

Research Guide

College and Career Competency: *Organization & Time Management*

Definition:

Organization can be defined as the ability to prioritize and structure tasks, resources, and time (Naglieri & Goldstein, 2013). For students, organization is made up of skills in four areas (Abikoff & Gallagher, 2008): 1) tracking assignments, 2) managing materials, 3) managing time, and 4) planning tasks.

Time management is considered to be a particularly important part of organization and **self-regulated** learning (Eilam & Aharon, 2003; Zumbrunn et al., 2011). Based on the literature, time management can be defined as “behaviors that aim at achieving an effective use of time while performing certain goal-directed activities” (Claessens et al., 2007, p. 262).

Essential Components for Students:

1. Plan and prioritize tasks to get things done on time.
2. Manage your environment, resources, and time.

Research:

- Organization is an important part of effective study skills, which in turn are fundamental to academic competence (Gettinger & Seibert, 2002). Good organizational skills enable all students to maximize their study time and adapt their schedules, making it more likely that they will have sufficient time to complete their work.
- Organization, including time management, is an important part of **self-regulation** and self-regulated learning, particularly during the initial planning phase (Zumbrunn et al., 2011). A study of ninth-grade students conducted by Eilam and Aharon (2003) showed that students who demonstrate strong self-regulated learning behaviors manage their time and achieve at a higher level than students with weak self-regulated learning behaviors.
- College students who were trained in time management as part of self-regulated learning training over a 5-week period showed significant decreases in procrastination as well as improvements in math skills (Schmitz & Wiese, 2006; Zimmerman, 2008).
- Organizational skills play an important part in students’ postsecondary success. Indeed, studies show that students who fail to develop solid organizational skills before graduating from high school face an increased risk of underperforming in college or dropping out of college entirely. Simmons (2006) conducted a survey of faculty and administrators at the collegiate level and discovered that many of them cite poor organizational skills as one of the main reasons students do not receive terminal degrees. College students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), as LaCount et al. (2018) reveal, are particularly at risk in this regard unless offered a suitable intervention. To remedy this skill deficit among students, postsecondary institutions across the United States, including Brown University, Rutgers University, and a host of

community colleges, have increasingly started to offer courses, workshops, and student support resources and services to assist students with organization.

- Organizational skills instruction has been shown to bolster student performance from both a behavioral and academic standpoint. Boller (2008) notes, “Direct instruction in organizational skills, study skills, time management, and behavioral regulation can be easily interwoven into [students’] daily lessons” (p. 171) regardless of the subject being taught. Bakunas and Holley (2001) note that requiring students to organize their supplies and practice organizational behaviors like updating assignment notebooks daily in the classroom can also have a positive impact on their academic achievement. Research by Anderson et al. (2008) shows that students who are taught to set goals, self-monitor their work, and sign behavioral contracts perform better academically than students who do not receive this instruction.
- Many students struggle with organization. However, as a study by Langberg et al. (2008) shows, students with ADHD tend to have more difficulty mastering organizational skills and productive work routines than students who have not been diagnosed with ADHD. To address this, Gallagher et al. (2014) developed an intervention, the Organizational Skills Training (OST) program, to assist students with developing their organization, time management, and planning skills. After over a decade of research, including a pilot OST implementation, Abikoff et al. (n.d.) concluded that students involved with their InCommand training program showed higher confidence in their organizational skills, demonstrated higher academic functioning, received higher ratings in their academic standing, and improved their relations with their families.
- Students with learning disabilities oftentimes require interventions to assist them with developing the organizational skills necessary for academic success. Research by Bryan and Burstein (2004) indicates that 56 percent of students with learning disabilities find it particularly difficult to complete homework. The authors primarily attribute such difficulties to organizational deficits among the students. Hampshire et al. (2011) concur, asserting that students with learning disabilities clearly struggle to manage homework tasks and as a result, suffer academically regardless of their best intentions or efforts to succeed. According to the researchers, educators teaching students organizational strategies and skills within the context of homework are best served by partnering with parents. Such partnerships, according to Hampshire et al. (2011), can lead to better grades for students and ease tensions related to self-management at home.
- Students’ time management skills have a significant impact on their success in postsecondary learning environments. A study by Kearns and Gardiner (2007) indicates that university students who employ time management practices tend to feel better about their studies and perform higher than students who do not exercise time management practices. Research by MacCann et al. (2012) explains that time management can be particularly important for students who are attending college part-time. Basila’s (2014) work outside of traditional, face-to-face classes shows that students’ time management skills have an especially powerful impact on their ability to succeed in online courses and ultimately serve as a predictor of their achievement in such courses.
- According to research by Mitchell et al. (2010) and Robles (2012), organization and time management skills are extremely important in the workplace. Along with other important soft skills, including **communication** and **ethics**, these skills are critical for entry-level success on the job.
- Boller (2008), Zumbunn et al. (2011), and other researchers contend that teachers should provide lessons on time management or otherwise support the development of time-related self-regulated learning behaviors among their students throughout the school curriculum. In addition to providing students with strategies for organizing and regulating the time needed to

complete tasks, self-regulated learning also affects student motivation, responsibility, and other areas essential for student success (English & Kitsantas, 2013; Zimmerman, 2008).

- Time management can affect an individual’s sense of well-being. As Burrus et al. (2013) and Kearns and Gardiner (2007) illustrate, students who understand time management strategies and exhibit sound time management skills are often able to lessen the amount of stress involved with schoolwork and academic achievement. Relatedly, research by Jex and Elacqua (1999) indicates that workers who show an aptitude for time management tend to experience fewer stressors, less burnout, and better physiological and psychological health than workers who lack time management abilities.
- Good time management depends on an accurate prediction both of how long a task will take and how much time has passed while working on a task. Research conducted with 48 adults found that individuals who perceive themselves as good time managers will accurately estimate how much time is required for a future task but will underestimate how much time has actually passed. In contrast, those who do not perceive themselves as good time managers will either over- or underestimate time required for future tasks and time that has passed (Francis-Smythe & Robertson, 1999).

Assessments:

Please note that the assessments listed here reflect what is currently being used in multiple disciplines to measure organizational skills. Not all of these measures will be easily used in classroom settings or by classroom teachers. However, the general knowledge that these measurements exist and the ability to review particular items from these assessments is valuable.

- [The Learning and Study Strategies Inventory—High School](#) (LASSI-HS) is a self-scoring, 76-item assessment for measuring students’ recognition and use of study skills (Weinstein & Palmer, n.d.). LASSI-HS utilizes a 5-point Likert scale across 10 domains which encompass various components crucial to academic success. LASSI-HS may be used as a diagnostic tool to help students better understand their relative strengths and weaknesses when it comes to skills such as time management and concentration as well as a means for educators to assist students with addressing their skill deficits.
- The Time Management Questionnaire (TMQ) is a 35-item instrument that gauges young adults’ attitudes towards short-term planning, long-term planning, and time (Britton & Tesser, 1991). The TMQ uses a 5-point response scale to measure seven components, including prioritizing goals, generating tasks and subtasks, scheduling tasks, and carrying out tasks. Items include “Do you plan your day before you start it?” Further examples of the items can be found in [Trueman and Hartley \(1995\)](#).
- The Time Structure Questionnaire (TSQ) is a self-reporting tool that measures participants’ perceptions regarding the organization and purpose of time (Bond & Feather, 1988). The TSQ employs a 7-point response scale across 26 items and can be used with individuals ranging from adolescents to older adults. Items include “Do you ever have trouble organizing the things you do?”
- [“How Good Is Your Time Management?”](#) is an informal 15-question self-test on time. It includes questions like “I am stressed about deadlines and commitments,” which are rated from *not at all* to *very often*.


Instructional Practices:

- Michelle Garcia Winner’s (2022) [“10 Steps to Foster Organization: Homework and Beyond!”](#) describes how teachers can assist students with the development of their executive functioning


and organizational skills. From early steps in the process, such as “Clearly define what needs to be done,” to later steps, such as “Prioritize and plan daily,” Winner provides practical methods and a clear structure for teaching organization in the classroom.

- Missouri Schoolwide Positive Behavior (n.d.) provides [Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions](#) focused on students’ organizational skills. These include a presentation on an intervention designed to “facilitate student organization and promote student ability to sort and store paperwork, identify assigned homework, and locate completed assignments when they are due.”
- Gallagher et al.’s (2014) Organizational Skills Training (OST) is an intervention designed to help students with ADHD develop sound organizational skills. The intervention addresses four areas: tracking assignments, managing materials, time management, and task planning. Abikoff and Gallagher’s (2008) assessment, Children’s Organizational Skills Scale (COSS), serves as a screener to determine if students should receive OST training. Additional information on OST is available at [Guilford Press](#).
- An effective form of time management training includes the use of time management forms and diary entries, where students discuss procrastination and how to overcome it. Students also categorize how they spent their time, for example, leisure or study (Schmitz & Wiese, 2006).
- The School of Education at the College of William and Mary has created [a useful list of tips](#) for helping students with learning disabilities become better organized (Ito, 1999).
- The West Virginia Department of Education’s Learning, Individualized Needs, Knowledge and Skills program (LINKS) offers educators a variety of lesson plans for helping students develop skills necessary for success in grades [5–8](#) and [9–12](#). These include lesson plans specifically focused on helping students develop organizational skills.
- The West Virginia Department of Education’s LINKS also provides lesson plans specifically focused on helping students develop time management skills, with activities such as creating time management plans or schedules. An excerpt from [the Time Management lesson plan](#) for ninth-grade students (West Virginia Department of Education, n.d.) is provided below.

TIME MANAGEMENT



GRADE 9 LESSON 3



Time Required: 30-45 minutes

Content Standards:

AA.S.1 Students will acquire attitudes, knowledge, and skills that contribute to effective learning in school and across the lifespan.

Indicators (Students will...):

AA.A.9.1.07 Utilize management skills to control anxiety, **increase productivity and improve school success.**

AA.A.9.1.10 Analyze their time-use and make plans for revision as needed.

GOAL: Students will learn to manage their own time in order to prepare and organize themselves for academic success.

Activity Statements:

1. Students will use a time-management schedule.
2. Students will set goals for themselves to improve their grades.
3. Students will utilize a calendar and assignment sheet for setting academic goals.

Materials:

1. Handout 1 -- “A Time Management Quiz”
2. Handout 2 -- “How To Study: Manage Your Time”
3. Handout 3 -- “Weekly Assignments”
4. Handout 4 -- “Calendar”
5. Handout 5 -- “Agenda”

- Macmillan Education (2019) has created [a group of resources](#) to teach adolescents a range of life skills, including organization and time management. Several lesson plans, such as Open Mind: Managing Distractions, deal with real-world time management dilemmas in an engaging manner. Here's an example:

Many students are able to remain completely focused while they are studying, but most of us allow ourselves to be distracted from a task at least some of the time. Our brain seems to let us know when we need a break, so we stop what we're doing to make a phone call, talk to someone in person, eat something, have a coffee or something else. This has always been the case, but in the 21st century there are more potential distractions than ever before. We are constantly bombarded with emails, text messages, tweets, instant messages and other electronic distractions. An important part of being an effective student is to learn to manage those distractions to get the best out of the time you spend studying. Complete our quiz to get an idea of where you might have problems dealing with distractions.

Tick the statements that are true for you. Then estimate how much time you spend every day doing each activity you ticked.

When I am studying/ working ...	YES	NO	MINUTES/ HOURS PER DAY
I check my personal email.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="text"/>
I answer my mobile phone.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="text"/>
I answer text/instant messages.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="text"/>
I chat online.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="text"/>
I use social networking sites.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="text"/>
I read messages on Twitter, etc.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="text"/>
I surf the internet.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="text"/>

- The University of Kentucky's [The Successful Person's Guide to Time Management](#) addresses the importance of time management and offers a number of strategies for acquiring and practicing time management skills (Fetsch et al., 2008). Along with a discussion of time management, *The Successful Person's Guide to Time Management* also provides a series of assessments to help individuals examine their behaviors and adopt the practices necessary for effective time management.
- [Career Guidance Washington](#) provides educators with some helpful teaching resources on time management geared towards students in grades 6–12, like the lesson plans [Time Management](#) for sixth grade (2016).
- The research from Burrus et al. (2013) and Francis-Smythe and Robertson (1999) suggests that teachers can develop students' time management skills by helping them make good estimates of how long a task will take and how much time has passed while working on a task. A useful strategy would be to have students reflect on prior assignments and the amount of time involved in completing tasks. Then, for new assignments, have students estimate how long it will take them to complete an assignment and keep a log of time spent on tasks. At the conclusion, have the students reflect on any discrepancies between estimated and actual task time. Teachers can also time in-class assignments and then ask students what they perceived as the amount of time passed. The class can then discuss variations in perceived time passed compared to actual time.

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