

Parachute Essay #1 – Time Management

The work quantity and quality required of me during high school was much less than that required by MIT, as I discovered within my first week of classes this semester. Of course, I had never needed to consider such things as time management or even discipline before coming to MIT because I could get by with reasonable grades just by attending class during high school, leaving my afternoons and weekends free for pursuing my own hobbies and interests. However, during my first semester at MIT, I realized that this kind of behavior has a proper term that is *procrastination*.

I tried studying in the sense that I would sit somewhere comfortable with a textbook or a problem set and try to work through the material. Unfortunately, my subconscious was confused and such methods of studying often effectively sedated me. I found that I could spend nearly all my time, not spent sleeping, eating or attending class, studying, and not make any headway or build any neurons at all. This soon became frustrating and distressing. I realized that I needed some help, so I went to talk with my advisor.

At first, I was embarrassed to seek help for something that seemed as though it should have been intuitive. However, I am so glad that I mustered the courage to ask for help at the time that I did. My advisor, Mr. Wayne Johnson, told me that time management is a common obstacle for incoming freshmen at MIT to deal with because we all came from similar backgrounds of high school boredom. He suggested that I counted the number of hours of each activity that I participate in every week (including classes) and add them up to make sure I wasn't trying to create days longer than 24 hours. He also suggested that I allot time to study a specific subject and to allot time for leisure activities that I enjoy such as playing piano, flute, singing and going ice-skating. So I thanked him very much for his sound advice and decided that I would begin my new regiment of allotted leisure and study time immediately.

Even though I thought I was doing nothing but study beforehand, once I had calculated the number of hours per week that I spent time doing certain things, I realized that there was actually a lot of spare time in my schedule – I was just procrastinating. Even after including adequate amounts of sleep, nearly one quarter of my 168 hours every week was open for spontaneity. From that point on, all I had to do was stick to my schedule. If it was physics study time by my schedule then I would sit down and do physics, and actually get it done. Another strategy I had was to attend office hours as much as my class schedule would allow, and work in groups on problem sets and other homework problems. I realized just how much faster I was able to work when my questions could be answered immediately rather than having them queued for later attention.

Sometimes I would not feel like studying physics during my allotted physics study time, for example. So instead of just sitting and staring at it as I would have done previously, I would trade that time block for another such as chemistry study or playing piano. That way I still had some freedom to do what I enjoy and so that the activities that I didn't feel like doing still got done later. I hold my advisor in very high regard, mostly because he was able to help me so much with my time management issue. I could tell he genuinely wanted to see me improve my

time management and he really cared that I got better grades, which motivated me to really make an effort not to procrastinate anymore.

The most positive reinforcement for my efforts to change was that my teachers, especially my math teacher, noticed an improvement not only in my grades, but also in my alertness during class (mostly due to the increase in the amount of sleep I had been getting) and my overall happiness.

My achievement of good time management put me in a good light. My teachers really noticed that I had made the effort, and now I feel much happier – much more content and at ease knowing that there is always time. It all comes down to discipline and balancing arduous activities with more enjoyable ones so that I don't burn out. I feel that I have made a good impression on my teachers, been a good example for my peers, and proven to myself that I do have the discipline to make changes to my lifestyle and way of thinking if I ever felt that I needed to do improve some aspect of my personality in the future.