

## ORGANIZATION: PUTTING FIRST THINGS FIRST

Many students become stressed out by trying to manage numerous assignments and deadlines. No one can create more hours in a day, but one can reduce stress by staying organized. Studying takes less time when there are fewer distractions and you know what needs to be done. Then, more time is available for other things.

- **UNCLUTTER WORK AREA.** Clear your work area of files, books, and loose papers to avoid becoming distracted from what needs to be done.
- **CREATE ENOUGH SPACE:** Your desk needs to be comfortable and have enough space for you to use resources, such as textbooks and notes, while completing assignments or studying.
- **USE ONE CALENDAR:** Keep all important reminders, notes, tasks, tests, assignments, and even social events in one calendar. By checking your calendar daily, you will be able to stay on track and even get ahead if necessary. Doing important things first reduces your level of stress and provides more time for your other interests.
- **CREATE A MASTER LIST:** Use a planner, excel worksheet, or computer application to list all pending assignments, projects, or tests in all courses. Update on a regular basis, and use whatever method works best for you.
- **AVOID INTERRUPTIONS:** Most projects and assignments require focused attention. Interruptions rob you of time and momentum. Studying in a quiet area with few interruptions is ideal.
- **SHARE THE LOAD:** Are there some parts of a project that other team members can do? Group work that is divided between team members saves everyone time for other projects or assignments.
- **OHIO RULE: “Only Handle It Once.”** Keeping papers to use later creates clutter, and most of the time, the papers are never used again. Using the Ohio Rule, reduces clutter and makes organization easier.
- **STOP COLLECTING STUFF:** The more stuff that you have the more time you need to manage it all. If an item has not been used for a reasonable amount of time, sell, donate, or give it away.
- **SAY “NO”:** Knowing your personal limits will help you say “no” to those requests that interfere with what is most important to you. When you receive a request, you might say, “let me think about it,” so you can check your calendar first before committing to an additional project.
- **PREPARATION:** Take a few minutes at the end of each day to clear your work area and plan for the next day. Planning how and when to complete what really needs to be done will help you spend your time and energy wisely and minimize anxiety over deadlines.

Adapted from 10 Steps to Organization at College. Counseling and Psychological Services, University of Kansas