

# **Estimating Time Accurately**



# Common Time Estimation Mistakes

## Planning Fallacy

- The belief that you will complete a task according to the way you planned it (Buehler & Ross, 1994).

## Time Availability

- The mistake of estimating how long until a task or project is due rather than the amount of time it will take them to complete it (Buehler & Ross, 1994).



# How We Estimate Time

## Singular Information

- Case-based, meaning it depends wholly on the task at hand. When using singular information to determine the time estimation, one would consider the various steps of which the task is comprised and make their estimation from there (Buehler & Ross, 1994).

## Distributional Information

- Data gathered from previous experiences. When using distributional information to determine the time estimation, one would consider the length of other tasks, previous obstacles, and other factors (Buehler & Ross, 1994).



# How to Estimate Time Accurately – Step 1

## Create Your Task List

- Write down the tasks (in order from high to low priority) you want to complete in the "Today's To Do List" section of the worksheet during your study session.
- Be realistic about the number of tasks that you can complete during your study session.

## ESTIMATING TIME ACCURATELY

### BREAK YOUR TASKS UP INTO SMALLER, REALISTIC CHUNKS

- *Understand yourself and how long you are able to focus, and break tasks up based on your limits. (i.e. break up 2-hour long assignment into 25 to 15 minute increments)*

### PLUG INTO A WEEKLY CALENDAR

- *Look at when you have blocks of time to study, and plug tasks into those blocks.*

### PLAN BREAKS/REWARD YOURSELF

- *If you know you have several hours of work to do, plan for breaks to avoid burning out.*
- *Give yourself incentives to finishing work. (i.e. for every two chapters you read-call a friend)*

### BE REALISTIC ABOUT YOUR ENERGY LEVEL

- *If you have been in class 3 hours, then worked 5 hours, don't plan to start studying the minute you get home.*

### IT'S OKAY TO NOT BE PERFECT

- *Do the best you can with what time you have*

### YOU WILL IMPROVE

- *The more you practice estimating time, the better you will get.*

### EXAMPLE

#### TODAY'S TO DO LIST:

1. Task 1
2. Task 2
3. Task 3
4. Task 4

# How to Estimate Time Accurately – Step 2

Estimate the time it will take for each task

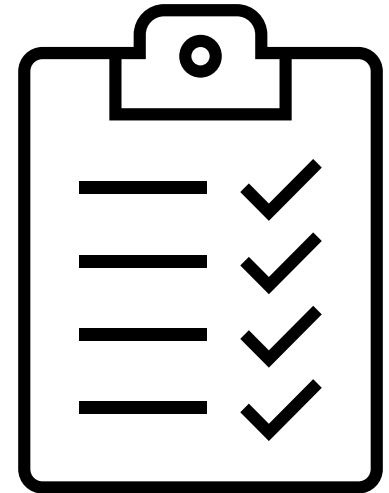
- How long will it take you to complete each task?
- How many steps need to be finished before you can mark the task as being complete?

ESTIMATING TIME *ACCURATELY*

TASK	ESTIMATED TIME	ACTUAL TIME	NOTES

# How to Estimate Time Accurately – Step 3

Complete the tasks



# How to Estimate Time Accurately – Step 4

## Record Actual Time

ESTIMATING TIME *ACCURATELY*

TASK	ESTIMATED TIME	ACTUAL TIME	NOTES

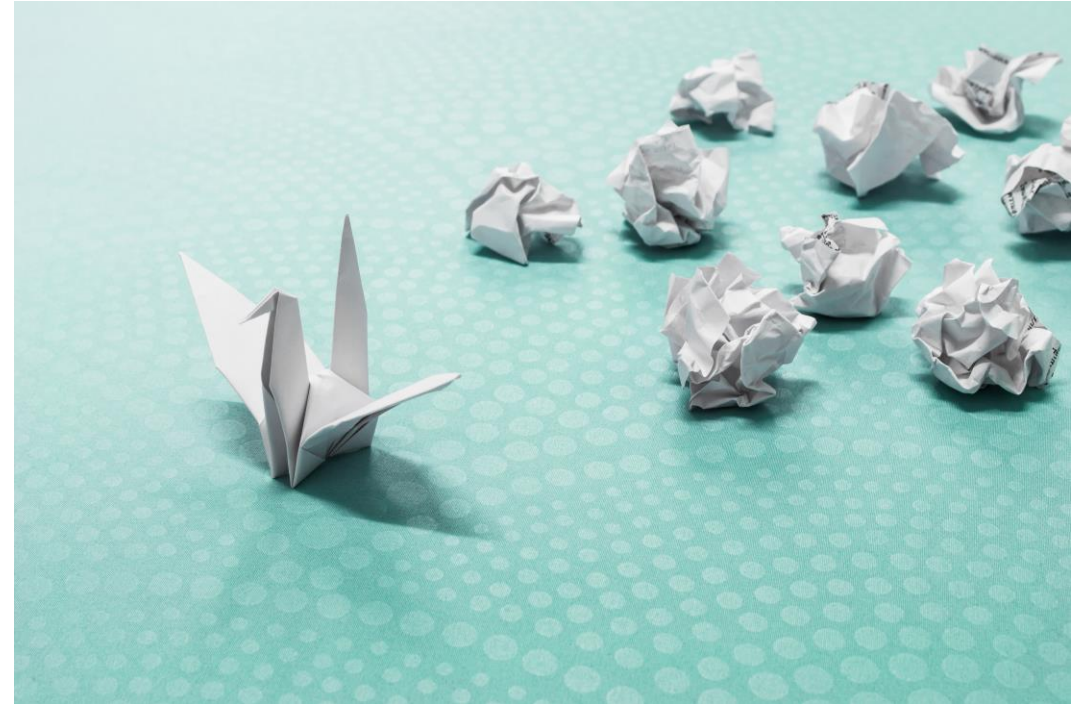
# Example-Estimating Time

TASK	ESTIMATED TIME	ACTUAL TIME	NOTES
Freidman ch.1, 2 (40 pgs)	40 minutes	1 hr 10 mins	Dense reading and small font!
Freidman ch 3, 4 (40 pgs)	1 hr 10 mins	1 hr 10	Next time, start reading earlier so I only have to read 2 chapters a day
Outline essay	1 hr	30 min	Thought about essay all day, so when I actually sat to write it down, it came quickly
Study for Spanish test	1 hr	1 hr	
Reflection paper	10 mins	20 mins	Had to review class notes before I could write reflection, which added more time



# Tips for Estimating Time

- Plan for manageable tasks
- Consider different circumstances
- Avoid perfectionism
- Plan for breaks
- Keep practicing



## References

- Buehler, Griffin, D., & Ross, M. (1994). Exploring the “Planning Fallacy”: Why People Underestimate Their Task Completion Times. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 67(3), 366–381. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.67.3.366>
- Goswami, & Urminsky, O. (2020). More time, more work: How time limits bias estimates of task scope and project duration. *Judgment and Decision Making*, 15(6), 994–1008. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1930297500008196>