

Teaching Tips/Notes



The Golden Ticket: A Strategy for Time Management and Decision-Making

Introduction

Time management and decision-making are life skills that instructors encourage in students to make the most of their college experience and prepare for the demands of new careers. Developing time saving and decision-making strategies can be easier for students if they have options to help them as they consider priorities and time allotment for classes and projects. I encourage students in my landscape design class to plan their semester work schedules as much as possible in advance, including establishing pre-deadline due dates and accounting for outside activities that may conflict with their course work schedule. To help them, the course syllabus includes a “golden ticket” that students can use as a time management/decision-making tool.

Procedure

The golden ticket—a form printed on gold colored paper—can be used to request additional time to complete any one of the required class projects, with the exception of the last project of the semester. If a student needs more time to complete a project they can fill out the ticket to request a later due date. However, the ticket can only be used one time, so students must give serious deliberation and consider the possible need for the ticket in the future. The request must be made no later than the class period before the project is due. For example, my class meets on Mondays and Wednesdays and projects are due on Wednesdays, so they must present their ticket for approval no later than the Monday before the Wednesday due date. Once the ticket request has been approved, they have until the next class period, on Monday, to turn in the project with no penalties.

To make a request the student must bring the golden ticket form to class and ask for the deferred date in person. The instructor notes the revised due date on the form and the student and instructor both sign the form. Signatures go on the top and bottom of the form and the instructor keeps the bottom half of the ticket for their records. It is important to keep the bottom half of the ticket for proof that the student has already used a ticket, which will deter them from borrowing another student's ticket to make a second request. The students are encouraged to review their semester class schedule and save the ticket to use when they might need it most -- when multiple assignments are due at the same time in their classes, when the big game is coming up, or simply because they want more time to work on the project – the ticket can be used for any reason, no questions asked.

Assessment

Some students plan ahead and know exactly when they will use the ticket, saving it for a particularly busy time in the semester, which is typically around mid-term exam time. Others simply save it as an emergency back-up in case the need comes up; however, most students never use it. As the instructor I have recommended to students on a few occasions to consider using their ticket for additional time (usually over the weekend) to work on their project and improve it. Most students will take my recommendation if they have time- knowing that their grade will probably improve- while others choose to save it or simply don't have the time to work on the project. For some students it's a point of pride to not use the ticket, but all students, even if they don't use the ticket, say it's nice to know they have the option if they need it.

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