

Selecting Courses and Building Your Trees

Pick out the courses you want to take. Study the course schedule and determine your preferred schedule for the upcoming semester. Rank your courses (excluding laboratories) in terms of their importance to your schedule for the semester. For example, if you are a senior and you need a science course to complete your degree requirements, you might rank that class as your first choice.

Put together your "preferred schedule." On the top "branch" of the diagram labeled "Tree A" on the worksheet, write in your preferred schedule. (Above each course in the tree, include the time period of the course to help you avoid period conflicts as you are planning.) List your first choice in slot A1 on the tree, your second choice in slot A2, your third choice in slot A3, your fourth choice in slot A4, and your fifth and additional choices starting on the first line of the "Other Courses" column. List laboratories for which a separate registration is required in the column labeled "Labs" in order of preference. Your preferred schedule should now be listed across the top "branch" of Tree A, continuing in the "Other Courses" column as necessary.

Determine the number of alternate schedules you should build. Some students don't get full schedules because they failed to include alternate courses or build alternate trees. Before you meet with your advisor, select several alternate courses that you can use to build acceptable alternate schedules. If you are a first-year student, you will need to build more alternate schedules than a senior, who might be assured of getting in upper division classes. If you know that most of your courses won't close, you may have to use only a few branches of each tree. On the other hand, if many of the courses you want may close quickly or you aren't sure about the demand for them, you should make use of most of the branches in each of the three trees. (Remember, you may duplicate choices of courses in the trees as long as this duplication doesn't occur along any single branch.) Your advisor will help you judge this situation.

Select your alternate schedules. Each tree has eight different branches that correspond to eight different schedules. Each "branch" of the tree is a different path for assigning a schedule. When putting your alternate courses into these trees, you must be careful to avoid period conflicts and course duplication along any single branch. The computer will not assign a course to you if it finds that course conflicts with a course you already have.

Ideally, the computer program will assign all your courses by moving along the top tree branch containing your preferred schedule (i.e., tree slots A1, A2, A3, A4, and as many of the courses listed in the "Other Courses" column as are necessary to reach your desired course load.) Once the computer places you in a course, it will move to the right, through the corresponding tree branch (or path), always shifting upward after a successful assignment. At any point along a path, the program may encounter a closed course. In this event, it shifts down to the next slot in that particular tree to check for availability.

Trees B and C. Build Trees B and C in the same fashion as you built Tree A, keeping in mind that if you don't get into your A1 choice, the computer will then try to place you into B1, and if that is not successful, it will try for C1. Once it has secured one of these courses, it will move through that particular tree and only that tree. The computer will not move to any other tree once a first course has been assigned. As you can see, the tree allows you to design different schedules that each depend on the three different first-choice courses. All three trees can be very different or very similar except for the first choice course. So if you don't get into the particular section of the particular course you have listed in A1, you might desire a completely different schedule that depends on B1 or C1.

Other courses. If you have additional alternates that won't fit into the tree, list them in the "Other Courses" column below the courses already listed as part of your preferred schedule. Alternate lab sections should be listed below the preferred labs already listed in the "Labs" column. List them in order of preference so that you will have a better chance of getting a lab in the event your preferred section conflicts with the schedule the computer assigns you. Finally, list any P.E. courses at the end of the "Other Courses" column.