

OmniPlan: Scheduling Your Future

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There are some serious heavy hitters in the world of scheduling software. Microsoft Project, Primavera, and various others that

- run only under Windows
- are often integrated into construction accounting/management software solutions
- cost a fortune
- have a learning curve like El Capitan

That's why Campus Planning, which has very simple project scheduling software needs, has instead relied on any drawing or spreadsheet program.

I've been experimenting with OmniPlan. In a limited form, it's free, or fairly cheap in the full version. It's easy to learn, fairly easy to use, and if your needs are simple like mine, you might want to try it. The free version is limited to no more than twenty tasks (or Gantt chart lines).

Installation: go to <http://www.omnigroup.com/applications/omniplan/>, click the Download button, follow the very simple instructions.

It comes up with Gantt chart for an empty project, with only the initial task showing, and a four pane inspector window. I usually work with the Task window open.

Click on "Task 1", and you can give it a name, let's say "Shop at Kiva for dinner". In the Task window, you can give it a duration (say 20 minutes), and decide if it's a task, a milestone. I haven't yet used the other option, groups. You can also change start time, end time, and duration by simply dragging the bars of the Gantt chart.

Back on the Gantt chart, hitting return while on the first task brings up a second blank task. You might name it "cook dinner".

Want to link tasks? Easy:

Structure menu>>Connect Tasks>>Finish to Start (or Control-Command=)

Want a milestone instead of a task? Easy. Select the task and click the -shaped diamond milestone button in the Task pane.

You can also add tasks or milestones via the **Structure menu>>Add**, which has choices like task, milestone, dependent task, etc.

So now you're running way off the window. Controlling the view in the window isn't hard, although it's not very intuitive. **View menu>>Gantt chart>>Scale to Fit Project**

At some point, you'll want to name your project. Open the Project pane, bottom pane below the Task pane, and it has a handy box for doing just that.

I'm still learning this program, but I can attest that it's a lot quicker and a lot more fun than using a graphics program or a spreadsheet.