

HOW TO... Develop Your Time Management Skills

Time management is important when at College to enable you to organise your time to allow you to study, complete your coursework, fulfil your personal commitments, work at a part-time job, and have time to relax!

It can be quite a juggling act to manage all these areas of your life, so managing your time well can help you have a less stressful time at college.

Time itself is not as important as how you use the time e.g. 1 hour of study when you are not focused or tired is wasted, but 30 minutes when you then understand a concept is a more productive and better use of your time. Think about the time you have available to you, and what you want to achieve in that time.

Starting points

Time log

A good exercise to start you off is a time log. Write down what you do in a day with how much time you spend on each task. This will highlight wasted time e.g. if you spend an hour on the internet chatting on Facebook, then try to rush writing an essay, it is easy to see where you need to save time. However, allow yourself 30 minutes to relax each day – just make sure it's not consecutive and you end up having all your relaxation time in one evening!

To do lists

- ❖ write everything down that needs doing, then plan it out in a prioritised list
- ❖ have a short term list – what you need to do immediately or on a daily basis
- ❖ have a long term list – what you need to do in the coming month
- ❖ use a timetable to plan activities and allocate time, and make sure to highlight deadlines
- ❖ revisit your timetable/lists regularly to tick off tasks completed and change priority of tasks as deadlines approach

To do lists are not just for college work. Try it with personal tasks too – it will help you remember to complete the most important personal things such as family birthdays, anniversaries, doctor's appointments, etc.

Planning

Effective time management = clear targets + good planning + identified priorities

So a good place to start is to ask yourself:

- ❖ What activities need to be done i.e. are priority?
- ❖ What deadlines do I have?
- ❖ What time do I have available to complete these priorities?
- ❖ What targets do I need to set for my college work and personal life?

When planning your time for the items on your to do list, break large tasks up into smaller “chunks”. For example, if you have an essay due in 2 weeks, the tasks you need to complete for this are: research; visit the Library; first draft; talk to classmates and tutor if needed; redraft; final draft; print; and hand in. This gives you a plan for taking on a piece of work, one step at a time. It will also help you allocate time to each part of the task.

Try to make sure you are sticking to your plan and not jumping from task to task – otherwise you will feel you are getting nowhere and achieving nothing. Try to complete a task before moving on to the next.

Organise your learning

- ❖ Learn to use the IT systems in the college or at home effectively. There are hand-outs, tutorials, and staff in the College to help you with IT – just ask! It will save you time if you ask for help early on in your course so that typing up essays, completing spreadsheets and graphs etc. are tasks you can achieve quickly and effectively
- ❖ Use the handouts available from Library Services and your tutor to develop your study, writing, and research skills, as well as writing bibliographies and exam preparation. This will help you to feel confident in your studies.

Ideas and tips for you to try

Everyone has their own way of dealing with the pressures of college and work/home life. Below are a few ideas which may help you if you need to rethink how you organise yourself and your life:

- ❖ Firstly, don't delay in starting tasks – you will only get yourself in a panic as deadlines approach
- ❖ Remember you can't do everything – college, work, home life – so ask for help from family and take any help offered, and stop doing things which don't need to be done e.g. watching soaps on TV!

- ❖ Save time by sorting your notes as you go along
- ❖ File notes and hand-outs in chronological order with colour coding if that helps you
- ❖ Tidy your study space/bedroom/home regularly so you don't have a mountain to tidy at the end of the week/month which can cause you to feel that you can't cope with household chores as well as college work. If you have children, get them to help you by tidying away toys at the end of the night – part of the bed time ritual!

See the How to guide on [Study/Revision skills](#) to help with organising your study time.

June 2017 LT