

Time Management & Study skills



UNIVERSITY of the
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Time Management

Time management is a crucial skill that a successful university student must pay attention to. Many students find it difficult to move from the structure of high school to an environment where the use of their time is solely their own responsibility. Below are some suggestions to help you successfully manage your time.

Get organised

- ❖ The first step is to put together a to-do list so you can keep track of everything that needs to be done. Make sure that you have a master list of the due dates for all assignments and tests. Do this at the start off the semester already so that you know how to divide your time. When arranging your electronic material you can use dates as part

of folder names as an easy way to remind yourself of due dates.

- ❖ There are several options to keep track of dates: you can use a paper diary or set reminders on your phone's calendar. Or, you can put together a schedule with OneNote (which comes with Microsoft Office) where you can create different tabbed folders for all of your modules. You can also use Google Calendar which is linked to your Gmail student account.
- ❖ Don't make your daily to-do lists too lengthy, try to limit it to a maximum of five main tasks that need to be accomplished to avoid feeling overwhelmed.
- ❖ Being organised does not only mean that you have a to-do list, but it also means that you keep all of

your study material, lecture notes, and tutorial work ordered. Arrange your electronic material with labelled folders, but also keep your hard copy material neatly labelled and filed for easy access.

- ❖ Effective learning requires revision so start studying well in advance. Review lecture notes every day while it is still fresh in your memory. Reading preparation before and follow up after classes will save time on studying during the exam time.

Prioritise

- ❖ Prioritise assignments that are due not only according to how much work is involved, but also taken into account how much each assignment counts towards your course work mark. A task that requires research and drafting will need more

time allocated to it. Learn from your experience: if you miscalculated for a previous task adjust your time allocation for future assignments.

- ❖ The last week or two of each term is usually packed with tests and due dates. Work and plan with that in mind.

Be realistic and flexible

- ❖ Be realistic. When you put tasks off until the last minute you will often try to work for hours at end which is very unproductive and stressful.
- ❖ A work schedule must be flexible because down time is as important as working hard. You especially need to give yourself time to recover from intensive tasks.
- ❖ Procrastination is a normal part of working, but it should not dominate your work time. If you know

that you take some time to get going with work then you should plan your work schedule with that in mind.

Goals, motivation and rewards

- ❖ When you set goals for yourself do not forget to reward yourself for your hard work. This will help keep you motivated.
- ❖ Keep a list of completed tasks to help you track your progress and development. We tend to focus on our weaknesses and shortcomings and having a record of your accomplishments will remind you of all the hard work you have already completed.
- ❖ Ambitious or difficult goals can be intimidating and you might be tempted to give up before you even start. Break a task down into smaller, manageable units to make it easier to complete. The same

principle applies to forming new productive habits. If you struggle to complete reading tasks, tell yourself that you will start off by reading at least 1 page (or the least number of pages you think you can manage) a day and then gradually increase the page count. The important thing is not to skip a day because you want a new habit to take root.

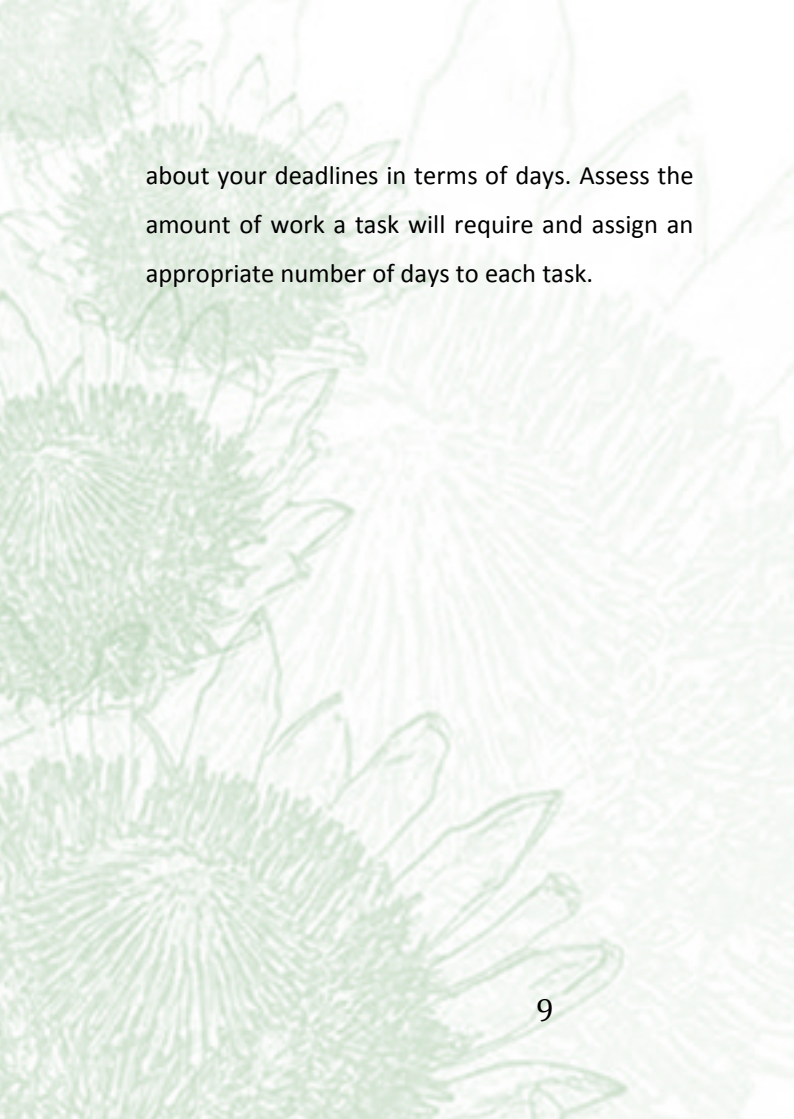
Work smarter not harder

- ❖ Know what time of day you're most productive. Some people get more done early in the morning, others prefer to work at night. Set aside time at the same time every day (if you can) to create a productive habit.
- ❖ Know your limits in terms of how long you can concentrate, and work around that. No one can

fully concentrate for a whole hour so start with 15 or 30 minute units with small breaks in-between.

Avoid distractions. You must try to maintain a distinction between your work time and recreational time. Tell your friends that you will be working and put your phone away. If you are working on a computer, switch the internet off so you won't be tempted to procrastinate.

- ❖ When you have free time between classes try to use at least some of it for work. You can go to the library, or wherever you feel comfortable working, so you can focus.
- ❖ When you set deadlines, avoid thinking in terms of weeks or months. If you tell yourself that you have a whole month to complete a task you are less likely to start on it right away. Instead, think

The background of the page features a light green, sketch-like illustration of several flowers and leaves. The flowers have a dense, textured center, and the leaves are elongated and pointed. The overall style is soft and artistic, with a monochromatic green color palette.

about your deadlines in terms of days. Assess the amount of work a task will require and assign an appropriate number of days to each task.

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Study skills

Studying for university exams can be quite intimidating and stressful, especially since the university curriculum and your lecturer's expectations differ quite markedly from the school environment you have been accustomed to for twelve years. The study method employed may differ from student to student, given that we all absorb and acquire knowledge differently, be it visually, discursively or through inscription. Thus, our study journeys may not become an easier process as one progresses but the crucial thing to note is that it is not impossible to feel victorious over exams even before your marks are published. Self-belief is therefore fundamental to whatever method one

utilises and equally, so is visualising your success before you attempt to achieve it.

In addition, it is undeniable that regular consultation and conversations between students and their lecturers and tutors are a crucial part of exam preparation and should be considered as part of the study methods one employs (I do not cease in reminding my own students of this). This continuous engagement may not only foster a support network, but goes a long way to alleviating pre-exam jitters that are a natural part of being a student simply because feeling isolated and removed from the disciplines you study often accompanies not only the social aspect of being a student on a large campus, but more so the academic side. Therefore, students should feel

encouraged to access these avenues of support because it is precisely the time when feelings of failure and despondency are at their height, that lecturers and tutors should be engaged with.

Below are well-researched study approaches and methods touted by psychologists and educators from high ranking universities to be the most effective way of not just merely coping with exams, but empowering oneself through assuming control over examinations and all it entails. Some of these methods may seem obvious, but keep in mind that what is proffered is an overall success 'kit' (to use that word). Perhaps you already have an approach that works for you; this should not deter you from incorporating whatever you find most useful.

1. Making and Keeping a Study Schedule

Set aside certain hours of each day for study just as you do for nourishment and sleep. Keep the same schedule faithfully from day-to-day. The amount of time needed for study will vary for each individual based on skills with the subject matter. An average of two hours of study each day for each hour in class is recommended. Going to class is only the beginning; the real work begins afterwards!

2. Studying in an Appropriate Setting — Same Time, Same Place, Every Day

If concentration is your problem, then the right surroundings will help you greatly. Your study desk or table should be in a quiet place – free from as many

distractions as possible. You will concentrate better when you study in the same place every day. **It is a mind set.** For example, when you sit down at the kitchen table, you expect to eat. When you sit down in an easy chair, you watch TV, etc. Developing the habit of studying in the same place at the same time everyday will improve your concentration.

3. Equipping Your Study Area With All the Materials You Need

Your study desk or table should be equipped with all the materials you might need to complete the assignment, e.g., pencils, pens, erasers, paper clips, stapler, dictionary, snacks, and liquid refreshments, etc. For some assignments, you may require a calculator or

other supplies. With your materials at hand, you can study without interruption. Taking your snack food and drinks to the study location will eliminate those endless trips to the kitchen which break your concentration.

4. Not Relying on Inspiration for Motivation

Can you imagine an athlete-in-training waiting for inspiration to strike to practise in preparation for an event? Of course not. They train daily to stay competitive whether they want to or not. Like the athlete, you must get in training for tests and examinations by doing the assignments and preparing daily through review to be ready for the action.

5. Keeping a Well-Kept Notebook Improves Grades

Researchers tell us that there is definitely a relationship between orderliness and high grades. Knowing where to find your materials when you need them is crucial. Keep a special section for each subject in your notebook as well as a semester calendar so that you can write down all important assignments as they are announced. Having all of this information together in one place is vital to your success. A well-kept notebook is a part of good time management. If you have ever misplaced an important assignment, you know how much valuable time can be lost looking for it.

6. Keeping a Careful Record of Assignments

Put it down in black and white—including the details—and keep it in your notebook. Knowing just what you are expected to do and when you are expected to do it is the first giant step toward completing important assignments successfully and on time.

7. Making Use of “Trade Secrets”

Flash cards are not just for kids! They are a legitimate study tool. Use the front of the card to write an important term, and on the back, write a definition or an important fact about that term. Carry your flash cards with you. Post them on your bathroom mirror to review while shaving or applying make-up. You will be surprised how much you can accomplish during those

times when you are going about your daily routines. Think about developing your own “trade secrets” that will improve your study skills. For example:

- *Keyword mnemonic: using keywords and mental imagery to associate verbal materials are an excellent way of retaining and triggering chunks of information.

- *Summarization is another, where summaries of to-be-learned texts are made as a first attempt at comprehending the work yet to be lectured on.

- * Highlighting and underlining key words and ideas assist in memory retention, as one can often recall a highlighted section or word, which serves as a catalyst to recall the necessary information.

* Self-explanation where one explains new information to oneself, aloud to oneself or someone else, or writing the information in one's own words, is quite an efficacious method (I can attest to this).

*Rereading or restudying text material again after an initial reading.

*Self-tests are a superb way of retaining information in your long-term memory. I utilised this fool proof method throughout high school and my tertiary education. After studying a section of work, write in a rapid short hand, a condensed version of the section you just studied, which could be anything from beginning with the key mnemonics and following this with just the first letter of the words that constitute whole

sentences. Actuate this kind of regular testing section by section. You will be amazed at your level of acute retention.

8. Taking Good Notes as Insurance Against Forgetting

Learn to take good notes efficiently as your lecturer's stress important points in class and as you study your assignments. Good notes are a "must" for just-before-test-reviewing. Without notes, you will need to reread and review the entire assignment before a test. This may require you to read anywhere from 100-300 pages of material in one sitting. With notes, you can recall the main points in just a fraction of the time. The time you spend in note taking is not lost, but in fact, is a time-saver.

9. Overlearning Material Enhances Memory

Psychologists tell us that the secret to learning for future reference is overlearning. Experts suggest that after you can say, "I know this material," that you should continue to study that material for an additional one-fourth of the original study time. The alphabet is an example of overlearning. How did you learn it? Probably through recitation which is the best way to etch material into the memory trace. Manipulate the material as many different ways as possible by writing, reading, touching, hearing, and saying it. In an experimental study, students who overlearned material retained four times as much after a month than students who didn't overlearn.

10. Reviewing Material Frequently

A student who does not review material can forget 80% of what has been learned in only two weeks! The first review should come very shortly after the material was first presented and studied. Reviewing early acts as a safeguard against forgetting and helps you remember far longer. Frequent reviews throughout the course will bring rewards at test time and will alleviate pre-test anxiety.

Although these ten study methods do work, there is one other component needed when using all of them – taking responsibility for studying by following through on assignments. All the study methods in the world will not help you if you do not help yourself. As with most

everything in your life, your motto should be, **“I’m responsible for my success!”**

If you put forth the effort to study effectively, the improved skills will soon become a habit and be just as natural as breathing. The result can be better grades, greater knowledge, and higher self-esteem. These skills will also serve you well in your professional and personal life.

All the best for your study journey!

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FROM HOPE TO ACTION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE