

Time Management Tips

The management of your time is THE most important skill in the attainment of academic success. It provides the grounding for all your studies and, if done correctly, gives you a flexible framework from which to balance your various (and often seemingly conflicting) commitments. In addition to this it enables you to keep focused and motivated.

Although there are various tools of time management (e.g. diary, year planner etc.) the development of an effective Study Timetable will be the focus of this article.

Study Timetable Essentials

- First get hold of a blank 7-day week timetable that encompasses your full day (from when you wake up to when you go to sleep).
- Schedule in your daily routines in as much detail as possible (e.g. what time you wake up, what time you get ready in the morning, when you have lunch and dinner, daily chores and when you go to bed). Since these routines are essential and generally inflexible, they will provide the parameters (structure) around which you will eventually schedule your study time.
- Schedule in your essential leisure activities in as much detail as possible (e.g. gym, soccer practice, favourite TV programmes, personal commitments etc). These are generally more flexible than daily routines and can be forfeited in times of high stress (e.g. exams) - but this should not be the norm.
- Schedule in your work commitments (e.g. time spent at work or lecture times).
- Your timetable will now have a number of blanks in it. These are your potential study times. However before you schedule your study time in, first decide which time of the day is your prime time (i.e. time when you are feeling most alert). This may be different for each person and could include morning, noon or night. Once you've decided this you concentrate most of your studies (and definitely your more challenging subjects) around this time.
- Now break the remaining blanks into study blocks. These study blocks should not exceed 50 minutes and should include regular breaks (generally not longer than 10 mins). Write these in a different colour pens so that you can, at a glance, see when you are scheduled to study (e.g. make blue for leisure, black for daily routines and red for study).

- Try to stick to these study blocks, even if you don't have an upcoming test. Rather use them for assignments or review – so that you get into the habit of studying at certain times in the day.
- Try and use non-prime time periods for study preparation and assignments (i.e. activities that don't require the same degree of concentration as studying).
- When you have an upcoming test – take the study material and break it down into manageable chunks, and slot these into your study blocks.
- Set short-term goals for each day – and evaluate your progress each day. If you are behind, immediately make plans to make up the work. This way you won't run out of time before the test.
- Never study the day before a test, this time should be used for revision only. As such make sure your study timetable includes revision time.

Remember that studying requires discipline, as it's rare that you would prefer to study than engage in leisure activities. As such once you've written up your study timetable, and made the necessary adjustments to ensure it works for you, you must stick to it. Only by developing good study habits can academic success be guaranteed.

If you have any difficulties please pop-in and see one of our professionally trained psychologists at the Student Counselling Centre located at:

Lower Library Complex
(next door to Financial Aid)
Steve Biko Campus
031 373 2266