

Time management

Introduction

This guide provides ideas and strategies how to manage your study time and avoid these time management challenges:

- Lack of realistic plan
- Perfectionism
- Procrastination

Manage your time

Write down all your appointments, deadlines, social activities in one place

I put a copy of my course year plan in the front of my diary!

I have a year calendar in which I merge a course year plan with my children's school holidays, their appointments, my appointments, birthdays, socials.

I use my mobile calendar for all my study deadlines and personal appointments

Manage deadlines

- Identify your submission deadlines
- Break large tasks down into mini tasks
- Work back from deadlines
- Set yourself mini tasks to do before main deadline

Example: Schedule for an essay

Week 1) Start Working out what is required & brainstorming.	Week 2) Research Gather & reflect on research data.	Week 3) Organise Group & select information	Week 4) Write 1st draft & review	Week 5) Complete final draft & review
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Prioritise tasks for the next few weeks

Prioritise according to the “value” of the task to you:

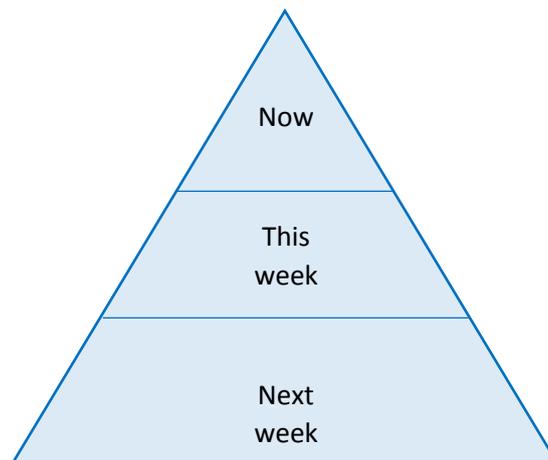
- What are your personal goals?
- Which of the tasks are most valuable to you?

Create a tasks list: break them down into actions that need to be completed now and those which can be done later.

Tasks	Action now (describe what action needs to be taken and date)	Action later (what action needs to be taken and date)

Time Triangle activity

Write tasks on post-it notes and place in the most suitable time slot within the time triangle:



Manage study periods



Taking regular breaks between study sessions optimizes our effectiveness.

Our attention is highest at the beginning of a study period and before a break.

About 50 minute study periods with short breaks have been found effective (see Fig. 1).

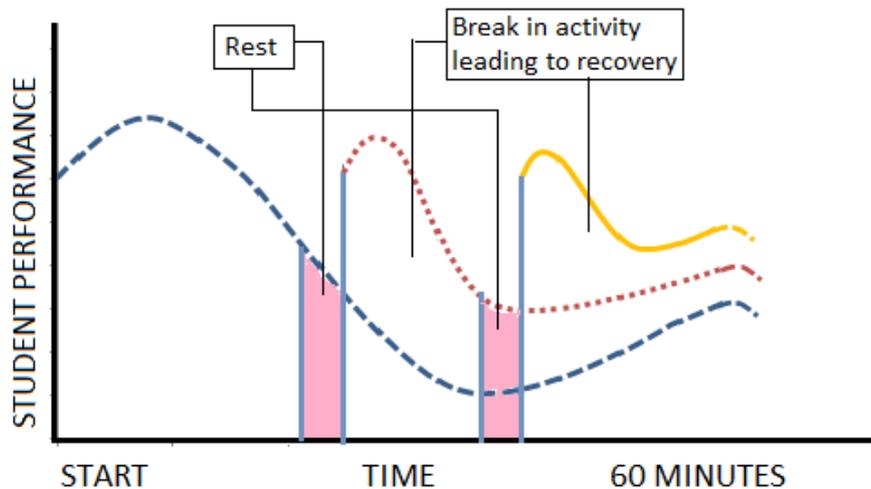


Fig. 1: Student performance when short breaks are taken during study (Bligh, 1998).

Give yourself time out each day

For example, divide the day into three parts – morning, afternoon and evening. Work two parts, such as morning and afternoon and take the evening off.

Avoid distractions



I know I'm easily distracted and will start chatting to other students in my group so I work in the library on another site to help me concentrate.

Have a space at home that is for you. It could be a corner of the bedroom or living room. Use it for your books and notes so you do not waste time looking for them.



Give yourself a reward for completing a task!

Avoid perfectionism



I've written and rewritten this essay, maybe five times and I still don't feel I can hand it in. I've missed some lectures, left an important assignment for next week, which I know will cause problems. It's ridiculous because I know it's probably good enough but I can't help it. I so want it to be absolutely right.

If you find yourself with such thoughts, consider using the following technique:

The 4-D Approach

- De-commitment: identify things that don't really need doing and abandon them
- Deferment: put non-essential tasks off until after exams or assignments are finished
- Downgrading: do things to a less perfect standard – “good enough”
- Delegation: negotiate with others to do things you previously felt solely responsible for

More advice from Academic Learning Support

For further study skills advice, and information on disability and specific learning differences such as dyslexia, enrol on the Learning Success Moodle page. Log into Moodle, go to tiny.cc/learningsuccess, and scroll down to click the enrol button.

To make an appointment for one-to-one study skills support:

- go to the Learning Success reception in the Student Centre (2nd floor, Northampton Square), or
- call us on 0207 040 0246

References

Bligh, D. (1998) *What's the use of lectures?* 5th edn. Exeter: Intellect.

Moore, S., Neville, C., Murphy, M. and Connolly, C. (2010) *The Ultimate Study Skills Handbook*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

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