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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1) Start</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working out what is required &amp; brainstorming.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2) Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gather &amp; reflect on research data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3) Organise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group &amp; select information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4) Write 1st draft &amp; review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5) Complete final draft &amp; review</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Action now (describe what action needs to be taken and date)</th>
<th>Action later (what action needs to be taken and date)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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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).

![Graph showing student performance with breaks](image)

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

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 the Academic Skills Team

For further study skills advice, please enrol on our Moodle page:
https://moodle.city.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=38922

To make an appointment for one-to-one study skills support, please complete this form:
https://city.tfaforms.net/4723090 or email skills@city.ac.uk

References

