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A short guide to time management



Academic
Skills Centre

A short guide to time management

Why is it important to manage your time?

Managing your time allows you to organise your work and leisure much better. This will help you both personally and academically, and reduce your stress.



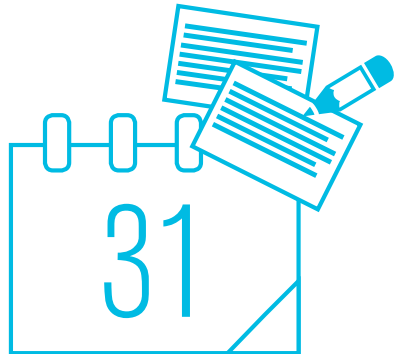
Top time management techniques:

1

Use a to-do list and a calendar to organise and manage your tasks

Using a to-do list and calendar helps you break down your tasks and visualise the time slots needed to pursue them.

Paper copy and electronic calendars have their own advantages and disadvantages. Which ones suit you best?



2

Reminders

Unless you have a brilliant memory, use reminders to prompt you about:

- **Your goals for each day**
- **Meetings**
- **Deadlines**
- **Study sessions**

You probably already use apps on your phone or tablet, and link notifications to your calendar, for instance through Google Calendar™ or Outlook.com®. If not, try an electronic calendar and see if it helps. Be creative and include musical reminders or pictures, if that helps you to do the right task at the right time!

3

Prioritising your tasks is a key skill

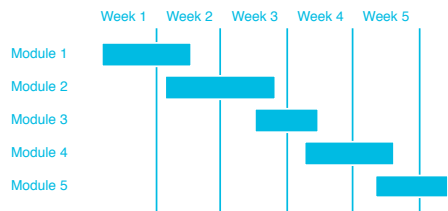
Prioritising your tasks over a period of time reduces feelings of stress, and helps you take a step-by-step approach to academic work. Identify your most important tasks and tackle them first.

You could also try attempting more difficult, less enjoyable tasks early on, so you can cross them off your list and stop them from hanging over you.

4

Create timelines and break your work into smaller, more manageable tasks

Knowing that you have to write a 2,500-word essay may initially seem scary, especially before the start of the writing process. To simplify your work, plan to write a particular amount of words per day. For example, you could set a target of 300 words per day. Breaking down your work into chunks makes it so much easier to handle.

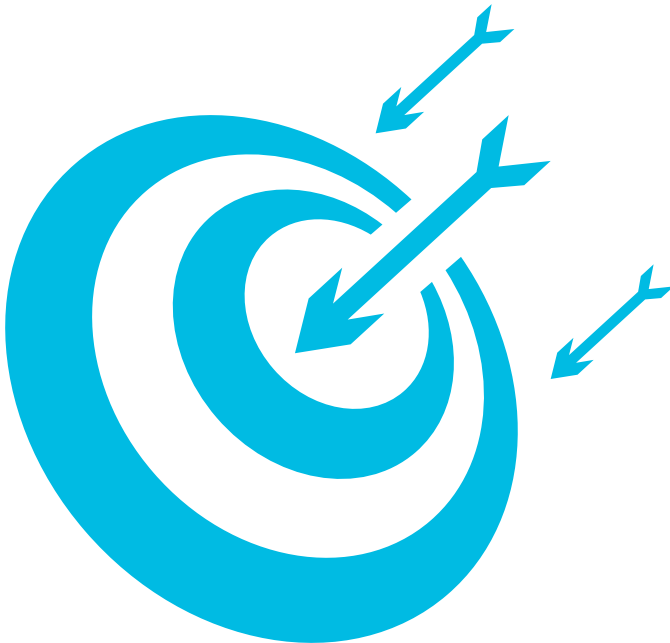


5

What are your goals?

When creating your timeline, set short and medium-term goals and deadlines for yourself, according to the amount of work you need to put in.

Then you can estimate the time needed to write an essay draft or work on a presentation. Your goals should always be challenging but realistic.

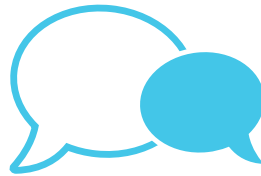


6

Talk to your tutor and friends about time management skills

You can arrange to meet your tutor to help you prioritise your work.

Personal tutors have probably been in your position when they were students, so their advice could make a significant difference.



Also, talk to your friends about how they manage their time – everyone has their own method.

7

Take time to relax

Go for a walk or a run to defocus your mind from all distractions and concerns. If possible, get out to a park or a garden. This can contribute to maintaining good mental health. After a walk, you may be surprised by the fresh ideas and energy that you have.



8

Build good habits!

Many aspects of time management are actually about developing good habits. Try the following approach.

What gets in the way?

Work out what's getting in the way of good habits eg, procrastination, the lure of social media, fear of failure, inability to concentrate.

Conscious improvement.

Work on study routines. If you keep practising, good habits will become automatic, so you don't even think about them. For example:

- **Prioritising your tasks for each day**
- **Updating your to-do list**
- **Checking your calendar**
- **Avoiding distractions**
- **Continually reviewing your progress**

Conclusion

Getting organised and using your time more effectively are key skills for studying and for life in general. Start trying some of these techniques today and discover what works for you.

Further reading

University of Birmingham. Library Services Academic Skills Gateway. *Managing your time effectively.*

Available at:

<http://libguides.bham.ac.uk/asg/time>

(Accessed: 9 May 2016).

You'll find some excellent sources of information on the University's Academic Skills Gateway.

<http://libguides.bham.ac.uk/asg/home>

It is definitely worth exploring.



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Library Services

Edgbaston, Birmingham,
B15 2TT, United Kingdom

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