

Time management

Time is a non-renewable resource. There are only so many hours in each day, and you may already have some commitments which cannot be neglected: paid work, family demands, leisure and exercise priorities, social events. Accordingly, you need to think about how you are going to make the best use of those hours to achieve your study goals.

Good time management means

- Planning your tasks and activities to make the best use of your time
- Being well organised so that you don't waste time
- Doing the things you have to do and still having time for the things you want to do
- Feeling in control so that you can manage your stress levels

The basic rules are

- Use study timetables or diaries: you need a master yearly planner as well as a weekly planner
- Make lists and prioritise
- Identify timewasters

What you should do

- Start with your **Yearly planner**: note dates for the following
 - tests
 - exams
 - due assignments
 - holiday periods, including school holidays if you have children
 - paid work commitments
 - social events and family commitments like birthdays, family visits, other celebrations
- **Weekly planner**: you may want to use your student diary for this
 - Fill in class and tutorial times
 - Bring across any important dates (assignments, tests, exams) and necessary work, family, social or other commitments from your yearly planner
 - Write down a list of the things to do which must be completed during the week
 - Prioritise them and allocate time accordingly but be flexible – some things may take more or less time than you expect

- Keep your goals for the week specific and realistic. Divide the tasks (especially assignments and exams study) into manageable chunks and set deadlines for each chunk
- **tips for getting the most out of your study time**
 - Choose a study space which is comfortable, well ventilated and as free from distractions as possible
 - organise your study desk and make sure you have all the resources you need on hand (computer, pens and pencils, marker pens, paper, class materials, books and other resources, notes you have made while researching for the assignment etc.)
 - think about the time of day when you are most productive – some people are morning or afternoon people, some are night owls.
 - establish a planned study time each day. This helps you get into a regular routine and also makes it easier for friends and family to know when you will be available and when you will not
 - do the most difficult sections of your weekly list of tasks when you are at your best; it is hard to concentrate when you are tired
 - attention spans vary. Work out how long you can study for effectively without a break; it might be half an hour or an hour or some other period of time. After this period, stop for a short break to refresh your mind and help you stay focused
- **identify timewasters**
 - try to avoid postponing difficult tasks. We all procrastinate but the longer you delay, the harder it will become. Most tasks are more formidable in the mind than in practice so try to get started as soon as possible
 - avoid interruptions by telling your family and friends when you are not available to socialise
 - turn off your cellphone!
 - keep televisions, game consoles and iPads out of your study area
- **plan for the unexpected**
 - emergencies and unexpected events will happen – at work, at home, in your social life, in your health
 - try to plan ahead in case something arises – work out possible strategies for dealing with things before they happen
 - try to avoid doing assignments or study at the last minute. If you can get ahead in your studies, you will have a bit of time to play with if things do go wrong
 - do not over-commit – learn to say “no” (in a nice way!)
 - if you are getting behind, talk to your tutor sooner rather than later. You may be able to negotiate some deadlines

-

- **reward yourself!**
 - Don't forget your social life. It is important to keep time for relaxation and exercise so that you maintain good health. It is also important to spend time with family and friends
 - Plan a small treat when you have completed a task – a movie, a meal, a family outing, etc.

Adapted from:

Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology. Organising your time. Retrieved from http://library.cpit.ac.nz/learning_services/learning_and_study_resources/study_skills/organising_your_time, 24 May 2013.

Open Polytechnic. Time management. Retrieved from <http://www.openpolytechnic.ac.nz/study-with-us/study-resources-for-students/time-management/>, 24 May 2013.

Open Polytechnic. How to manage your time. Retrieved from <http://www.openpolytechnic.ac.nz/study-with-us/study-resources-for-students/time-management/how-to-manage-your-time/>, 24 May 2013.

Wellington Institute of Technology. Research process. Retrieved from <http://library.weltec.ac.nz/Library%20Web%20Page/Skillzone/Research%20Process.htm>, 8 May 2013.

Further reading (resources available from TPP library)

Cottrell, S. (2013). *The study skills handbook*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Gutman, E. (2004). Organising your life & time management, in Gutman, E. *Study skills*.

Bondi Junction, N.S.W.: E, Gutman & Kidz Korner, p. 11-18.

MacKenzie, A. & Nickerson, P. (2009). *The time trap*. 4th ed. New York: Amacom.

Mancini, M. (2007). *Time management: 24 techniques to make each minute count at work*.

New York: McGraw-Hill.

Moss, G. (2001). *Time-savers: guidelines, checklists & golden rules*. 2nd ed. Wellington, N.Z.: Moss Associates.