Time management
Study Guide

Time management skills will help you to balance your workload and achieve the best results in your studies.

Planning your time

Become aware of how you use your time by keeping a log of your time for a week or two:

- Consider the time that you waste – waiting, procrastinating, worrying, daydreaming, attending to distractions – and make a conscious effort to minimize wasted time
- Note how you feel when doing each activity and your energy throughout the day:
  - Are you tired in the morning, alert at lunchtime, flat in the afternoon and at your peak in the evening?
  - Adjust your work and study time around your energy levels
- Plan your time for the short term and the long term:
  - Use a yearly planner for long term planning and write in due dates for assignments and exams and the start dates for each task
  - Use a weekly planner, diary or mobile phone and record all your activities, for example work, sport and family commitments
  - Fill in the times with your TAFE lectures, tutorials and small group meetings
    - Record when assignments, presentations, etc are due and allow yourself extra time outside of classes to work on these to ensure they’re completed before the deadlines
    - Allow some time for watching TV or DVDs, sleeping or going for a walk
    - Allow flexibility in your schedule for unexpected frustrations, for example computer breakdowns, illness, train strikes

Prioritising

Setting goals will help you determine what you need to prioritise. Set your goal before you begin studying and set one which you can reach.

Think about the tasks that you need to complete and use the ABC method to decide on your priorities:

- Priority A – “must do” critical items
- Priority B – “should – do” medium value items
- Priority C – “nice – to – do” items that can be postponed

Use a daily to-do list and enjoy the satisfaction of crossing items off your list or deleting the reminder from your mobile phone.
When, where and how should you study?

Work out the best time and place for you to study:

- Do you work best in the early morning or in the evenings?
- Find a place where you can study without distractions to maximize your study time

Break your work up into manageable “chunks”

- Use small amounts of time (15-60 minutes), for instance when you are on the bus or train, for review of lecture notes, proofreading or jotting down ideas
- Use medium time slots 1-2 hours for reading, note taking, first essay draft or exam revision
- Use long time slots more than 3 hours for research or writing the assignment
- Stop regularly for breaks while studying to maintain your concentration

Developing good time management habits

- Focus and calm your mind before beginning any task. Use calming techniques – ‘breathe in… I calm my body, breathe out … I smile’
- Avoid procrastinating – get started and if feeling anxious or overwhelmed refer back to your priorities and to-do lists
- Complete small tasks, easy or fun tasks straight away – tick them off your list
- Instead of spending time on irrelevant tasks, focus on your study goals and vary your study techniques:
  - Do one task at a time without rushing
  - Avoid ‘waiting until you feel motivated’ – it may never happen
  - Avoid the temptation to always put off difficult tasks in favour of subjects that you enjoy or find easier
  - Avoid leaving it to ‘the last minute’ to work on assignments
  - Allow time for the unexpected – e.g. printer problems
  - Don’t overload yourself – learn to say ‘no’ to demands that can’t be easily fitted into your schedule without causing you stress
  - Have ready – or know where to find – the resources you need for your studies – USB, paper, pens, passwords for databases