



STUDENT NOTES FOR SUCCESS

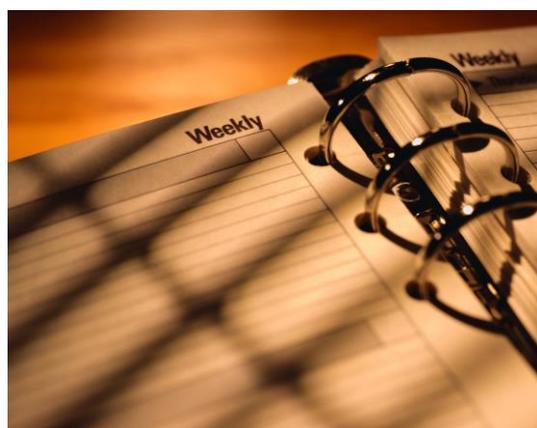
No 12

Time Management

Do you need to manage your time better in order to get things done? The key words for effective time management are: organisation and focus.

Let's begin!

The first thing you need to know is how you already spend your time. Draw yourself a 24 hour clock and try mapping out how you spend your time (including hours of sleep). You will see from this that you may need to cut out some activities in order to allow yourself the time to meet your study commitments. You can draw another 24 hour clock marking on it how you would like to spend your time in order to cover study and life commitments.



How well do you manage your time now?

Try this simple test. If you answer 'no' to any of the following except question 4, then you probably have a time management problem:

1. Do you usually turn up on time?
2. Do you keep most appointments?
3. Do you manage to fit in most of the things you need to do?
4. Do you find you often have to rush things at the last minute?
5. Do you meet deadlines?
6. Do you have any time for yourself to relax? (Cottrell 1999, 64)

Plan ahead - get a schedule going

Using a schedule or diary will keep you informed of what needs to be done and when it needs to be done by. A weekly schedule or diary is useful but you may also need a semester 'at a glance' one-page calendar so you can see important due dates over the semester. On your weekly schedule you should first write in pen all the things that are fixed (that is, that cannot be changed), such as lectures, tutorials, test dates and dates assignments are due. Things that can be changed (your social activities, your hours of study) can be written in pencil and changed if necessary.

Review your 'pencil' commitments regularly. Can you cancel anything that is not important? Can you move commitments around so that what is most important receives priority?

Tackling your assignments

In your schedule, map out the days and times needed for each assignment or task. This means planning how much time you need to:

- gather and read information and make notes (research)
- write (draft)
- review and refine (proof read and edit).

As a general guide, begin essays/assignments at least three weeks before the due date, and allow 10% more time than you think you may need.

Group work

If you are doing a group assignment, remember that you will need to allow *more* time. This



includes time to meet regularly with your group members, discuss the assignment together, and carry out final edits. Group tasks can often be a bad experience due to lack of communication or miscommunication, so you need to be organised from the beginning, and aim to finish well ahead of the due date, to take into account unexpected eventualities. Of course the usual rules apply for getting the job done, but here are some tips that might help you with group tasks in particular:

- Collect all the contact details (home phone, mobile phone, email) of each group member, and distribute a list to everyone.
- Schedule a start and a finish time for each meeting, so that people commit to the whole meeting and do not rush away before you have finished.
- Try to be focussed during each meeting, and do not get distracted by things that are not important in your assignment.
- Set out tasks to be carried out between meetings. Each person should have a particular task assigned to them, and should be able to report back at each meeting.

Set goals and prioritise

Having a clear plan for study involves setting long term goals like getting your degree, having a career, and staying healthy, as well as more short term goals such as completing an assignment or unit. Make a poster of these for your study wall to keep you focussed and motivated. Keep a daily or weekly 'to do' list. Tick items off as they are done, and give yourself little rewards such as some relaxing time, a movie, or a chat with friends.

Research: be pro-active and orderly

Read and highlight assignment information in your unit outline as soon as you receive it. Begin your research as soon as possible. This will save you time when you are busy. As you take notes, be sure to take all the bibliographical details that you will need for referencing such as author, date, title and page numbers. Consider using Endnote to assist you with referencing.

Avoid putting off tasks – don't procrastinate!

We all do it: put things off, get distracted and waste time. Know how and where you waste time. Write down your main time-wasters and distractors and be aware of these.

Bear in mind that peak working times vary between individuals. While some may study best in the morning, others may find it easier to study late at night. Know when you are most productive and schedule this time for important study tasks.

However, whatever your best time, be aware that you will need to have short breaks every hour or so. Stopping for a short burst of exercise and fresh air, by going for a walk or playing a game, will help to re-energise you and keep you alert.

Want to watch your favourite TV program? Why not record the program and watch it as a reward *after* you have finished a study period? Reward yourself for finished work. Spoil yourself after completing an essay draft or block of study!

If there are too many interruptions at home, then the Curtin library is a good place to study. Ensure your phone is off and study for a good 50 minute period without interruption.

Stay focussed on the long-term goals

Sometimes bad time management reflects a lack of focus. It's important to stay focussed and motivated. Remember to include exercise into your daily work schedule. This is helpful for managing stress and keeping motivated. Include some sport or a walk in your study plan.

Adapted from

Cottrell, Stella. 1999. *The study skills handbook*. Basingstoke UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Find out more at the CBS Academic Communication Development website:

<https://businesslaw.curtin.edu.au/study/student-experience/academic-communication-development/>

You might also be interested in *Handy Handout 14. Planning and pre-writing*.

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