

We're here to help.

# Time Management

## MAKING THE TIME TO FIND THE TIME

Many students struggle to find a way to organise their time around all the things they have to do and all the things they want to do ... and to use the time that is available as productively as possible. If this applies to you, try incorporating the following strategies into your approach to study.

### **Where does your time go??**

It is very difficult to make a time management plan without first being aware of exactly where the hours in each day go. For one week keep an accurate record of what you do during every hour of every day. This will help you to identify your regular commitments, those activities that are important to you, the times that you do have available for study and how much time you actually do not make good use of.

During this week also focus on monitoring your study habits. What are the times of the day, the locations and the circumstances under which you are most productive? How long can you sit and concentrate on one task and remain productive and when does your attention start to wander?

### **Your values and priorities – links to motivation**

The next step is to spend a bit of time thinking about your values and priorities and to check if you are spending your time in accordance with these. For example, if you value your family life most and see this as your number one priority, you would expect to spend more time doing family things than anything else. It is important for you to consider carefully where study fits within the list of demands on your time. The more you value study and the higher it is on your list of priorities, the more motivated you are likely to be to find time to devote to it and to use this time effectively. If study is lower down your list you will need to be particularly careful to allocate sufficient time to it and be aware that you may need to work harder to motivate yourself to achieve your goals.

Clarifying where study sits in your list of priorities will also help you to set realistic expectations regarding results. If study is a lower priority for you and you are unable to devote a great deal of time to it, it is probably not realistic to expect to achieve high distinctions for your subjects. Realistic expectations regarding results have a huge impact upon motivation. It is very difficult to maintain your motivation if you are setting yourself a goal of achieving distinction plus grades but continue to receive passes and credits.

Always take the time to reassess your goals and adjust them accordingly – your circumstances are likely to change a number of times during your years at university.

### **Constructing your time management plan – the weekly planner**

Time management is all about preparation and planning. Keeping tabs on where your time goes, how, where and when you study best and clarifying your values and priorities are all part of the preparation necessary to make an effective plan. You are now ready to create a timetable that is right for you and your needs.

The Weekly Planner (downloadable from the Support and Equity website) is a blank, pre-made timetable with instructions on the reverse for the development of a time management plan that can work for you..

Take the time to complete the Weekly Planner and then use it, in conjunction with the other strategies below, to better manage your time while at university (and beyond!)

#### **WHAT TO DO WHEN ...**

So far you have identified when you will study. The next step is to clarify what you will study during the time available. This is about goal setting, prioritising and making productive use of your time. The following strategies will assist you with this.

### **(1) The Yearly Planner**

It is important to start by getting your semester or year into perspective. This will then act as a guide to setting your shorter-term goals. On a year planner enter all your known commitments for the coming year. These may include social activities, holidays, work commitments and especially due dates for assignments and examination dates.

Once the information is entered, stand back and examine the planner. Look out for bottlenecks when many things coincide in a few days. See if you can rearrange any of these commitments to ease the load at that time. If not, at least you are forewarned and can prepare accordingly.

Hang your planner in a prominent position in your study area so that you can refer to it regularly and make additional entries when necessary.

### **(2) Essays and Exams**

The best way to manage large tasks is to break them down into smaller components. Essays and exams are a good example of this. You can plan ahead for each essay and exam and set small goals and deadlines for yourself so that the workload is spread over a period of time rather than all being done in the week (or night!) before.

Essays can be broken down into:

- choosing and defining the topic;
- identifying and collecting reference material;
- reading references and taking notes;
- planning the essay;
- writing the essay; and rewriting and/or editing.

Exam preparation can similarly be broken down into smaller tasks, according to the type of exam it is:

- Studying particular sections of material can be allocated to different days or weeks.
- Start with organising or summarising and go on to learning the material for a particular subject.
- Different exam techniques, for example, multiple choice, short-answer, essay writing, can each be focused on and practised for a set amount of time.

It can be very useful to make a written plan of attack for each essay and exam you will have, including details of each short term goal, time required and deadlines. See the other Support and Equity fact sheets on related topics, including Effective Exam Preparation and Effective Exam Techniques, for more helpful hints. All fact sheets can be downloaded from the web: [www.support-equity.utas.edu.au](http://www.support-equity.utas.edu.au).

### **(3) 'To-Do' Lists**

We all carry around in our heads lists of things that need to be done in the next day, the next week, the next month and even the next year. The problem with having all this information in our heads is that it is very easy to miss things, forget things and conveniently overlook things, particularly those things that we are not very keen to do. One way to avoid this is to write the list in your head out onto paper. This then enables you to look objectively at what needs to be done; prioritise, plan and then have clear goals to work towards. It also frees your brain up to focus on other things.

Here are some suggestions about how to create and work with 'to-do' lists:

- On Sunday nights, sit down with your diary, weekly planner/timetable, year planner and exam/essay plans and write a list of all the things you need to do over the next 7 days. This includes not only study commitments but any activities, tasks and chores which you need or want to complete within the next week.
- Once you think you have it all down, enter any things that are locked into specific times into your diary and/or timetable. These can then be crossed off your list. Leave all other items on the list.
- Beside each item write an estimate of the time it will take to complete the task and the date by which you want/need it to be completed. This will help you to prioritise the tasks and to identify appropriate time slots for them.
- As things are done, cross them off the list. Reward yourself in some way for each goal you achieve, regardless of how small it may be.
- Continue to add other things to the list during the week as you think of them.
- On the following Sunday evening sit down with your diary, timetable, and old list and begin by transferring all remaining items to a new list. Add to this new list any extra things that need to be done during the week to come.

## NEED MORE HELP?

Learning to manage your time is a process that takes practice. Other helpful resources to improve your practice include:

- Peruse/borrow books from the Support and Equity counselling resource library.
- Seek counselling through Support and Equity to explore options for managing your time differently.
- Access UniStart online materials available through WebCT. You can enrol in the program and access these materials at any time. For more information go to:  
[www.utas.edu.au/unistart](http://www.utas.edu.au/unistart)

## OTHER FACT SHEETS AVAILABLE

Support and Equity has a range of Fact Sheets available including:

- Access to Assistance for Students with Disability
- Addressing Job Application Selection Criteria
- Alcohol and Drug Abuse
- Being Successful in Tertiary Exams
- Counselling Information for Students
- Depression
- Disclosure in the Application Process
- Effective Exam Preparation
- Effective Exam Techniques
- Financial Management
- Graduate Recruitment – are you ready for the next step?

- Improving your Sleep
- Information to Help you Cope with a Traumatic Event
- Interview Skills
- Managing Exam Anxiety and Stress
- Normal Healthy Eating and Eating Disorders
- Stress Management
- Support for Off Campus Students
- Telephone Interviews
- The Hidden Job Market: Networking
- Thinking of Withdrawing?
- Vacation Work and Work Experience
- Writing an Application Letter
- Writing a Resume

*We would like to acknowledge our gratitude and appreciation for the ideas and information obtained from Charles Darwin University, NT.*