



Time Management

Time Management Will:

- help you achieve goals
- reduce pressure and stress
- help you become more productive

Analysing your goals

There are many types of goals. Part of time management is categorising your goals. Your goals may be:

- personal; study-related; work-related; family-related
- short-term (today or this week); medium-term; long-term (one or more years from now)
- quick to achieve or require a lot of work
- want-to-do goals or have-to-do goals

Obstacles to effective time management

Obstacles can get in the way of effective time management. Consider how you could overcome internal and external obstacles.

External obstacles

Competing commitments - the activities of one goal become obstacles to achieving another goal. Learning to manage competing commitments through prioritisation and time allocation is an essential skill of time management.

Dead spots and delays – time where little practical is happening, or a necessary task takes up a disproportionate amount of time (e.g., supermarket queues, transport delays). Can the delay be avoided by shifting the activity to a later time? Can a useful activity be carried out in a dead spot?

Time stealers – interruptions, phone calls, unscheduled visits. Can you create a situation where you will not be interrupted, or interruptions can be dealt with quickly?

Poor work environment – noise, distractions, inadequate work equipment (e.g., faulty computer). What can you do to improve your work environment?

Internal obstacles

Lack of clear goals – review your goals on a regular basis.

Inability to prioritise – each day, give several key tasks priority and do not let yourself be sidetracked from them.

Procrastination – delaying important tasks till a later date. Break up large (and anxiety provoking) tasks into several smaller, easily achievable tasks. Make a conscious note of achieving each section of the larger task.

Crisis motivation – can you act only when things become urgent? If so, you will move from anxious bursts of over-production to periods of burn-out when you can't do a thing.

Doubts and uncertainties – are fears, doubts or other negative feelings about your study affecting your work? University counsellors are skilled in dealing with these problems.

Emotional upsets – relationship problems can affect your ability to manage your time. Talk over your problem with friends or a professional counsellor.

Four levels of planning

The big picture

Create a positive vision of why you are here, what you really want to achieve. Write these goals down in a place where you can read and review them. This will:

- help you through any difficult times
- help you decide what activities are important to your goals

The semester plan

Create a plan for due dates for assignments, exams, study breaks, and any major one-off events in your personal life.

Record all these events in a diary or a semester planner over six months. Do this early in semester— in the first week or two.

Make a note of deadlines for large tasks and consider breaking these into smaller tasks ahead of time.

The weekly plan

- Create a weekly record of your usual activities.
- Create a table for an average week with each day divided into one hour or half-hour portions.
- Record what you do in each segment. Include classes, travelling, eating, sleeping, studying, watching TV, meeting with friends, part-time job, and any other regular activity that you do.
- After you have recorded fixed activities such as your lecture hours, put aside regular times for both study and relaxation.
- Think of full-time university as a full-time job in which some hours are fixed, but others are up to you to plan.

Most days you will not stick exactly to your plan, but planning will help you to establish a routine.

Decide on the best study time for you. Choose a regular location with everything you need to get your study done! Plan to **study difficult subjects first**, while you are fresh. Break long study periods into shorter periods with brief time out sessions.

The daily plan

The daily plan (“to do” list) focuses on what you need to achieve that day.

- Make a new plan each day.
- Be specific about what you will do.
- Prioritise activities.
- Break tasks up into smaller units.
- Don't let the unpleasant tasks drop to the bottom of the list each day.

The Time Management Matrix

To help you prioritise, use this matrix to assign each task a number (1-4), based on its urgency and importance.

	Urgent	Not urgent
Important	1. Crises: pressing problems; deadline-driven work; assignments; urgent reading	2. Preparation planning: organising reading ahead; maintaining health; appropriate sleep & relaxation; maintaining relationships
Not important	3. Interruptions: phone calls; unexpected visitors; pop-up emails	4. Time wasters: unnecessary cleaning up; watching TV reading magazines idle conversation

Adapted from Covey, S. (1989). *The seven habits of highly successful people*. New York: Simon and Schuster.