

How to manage your time effectively

A guide for students with Specific Learning Differences (SpLDs), such as Dyslexia

Do you have more than one assignment to do at the same time?

Not sure how to create a realistic plan or how to get organised?

Don't worry. Many students with SpLDs find time management challenging.

This guide provides ideas and strategies for managing your time, help to overcome challenges and suggestions on how to take care of your own wellbeing at the same time.

Start by:

Writing down all your personal appointments, deadlines, lectures and social activities. It is important to allow time for leisure activities, sleep, breaks and meal times.

You should identify commitments for one to three months in advance, in order to take into account deadlines of essays and create a detailed plan.

Examples of a timetables and planners: Academic year plan

Weekly plan

1. Enter any your commitments that cannot be changed (personal or academic) on the plan. Do this for at least for 3 months or 1 semester, colour coding to identify different activities and topics.

For example: All lectures might be blocked out in red, all seminars in blue.

2. Enter submission deadlines for your essays, dates of assessments and meetings with your tutor/supervisor.

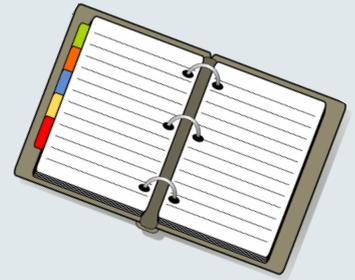
3. Now enter meal times, regular leisure activities and commitments that could be moved to different times but are essential for your health and wellbeing.

Remember: This is your timetable and you can change it, but it's good to have a plan!

You have now identified your key deadlines and 'fixed' commitments.

Next, define your plan in more detail, ideally for one month at a time:

- Mark what tasks you will be doing.
- Estimate how long each task will take.
- Decide where you will study – home, library, café etc.
- Break down large tasks into mini tasks.
- After lectures, allow time for reviewing lecture notes.



For essays, work backwards from your submission deadlines and set yourself mini tasks to do before the main deadline. See the example planner below:

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
Start essay	Research	Organise	Organise	Start writing	Edit	Finish
Analyse brief, and brain storm. Create outline.	Search for and explore research.	Search for and explore research.	Select and organise Information.	Write first draft and review.	Write second draft and review.	Complete final draft and review.

Smart targets:

Identify which days you will be working on each essay, how many study hours you will be allocating. Be specific with what you want to achieve. If you put time for study set **SMART** targets.

S – Specific - you know exactly what you are going to read.

M – Measurable - read two chapters, precise amount of work to be completed.

A – Attainable – goals that are achievable. If you have too many chapters planned, it is demotivating. However, if you manage to read more, you will feel good.

R – Relevant – Is this relevant, make sure by referring back to your essay breakdown.

T – Time Bound – Set aside two study periods to achieve this. On the day, if you don't manage to finish, then make a note and find time in your plan.

Example study period:

- ⇒ 3 pm to 3.45 pm: HR Text Book - Scan and Skim read Ch 2 & 3 (ATS, Library)
- ⇒ 3.45 pm to 4 pm: Get coffee and go to cashpoint – SUSU Shop
- ⇒ 4 pm to 4.45 HR: Read identified paragraphs and take notes (AT). Catch 5pm bus.



Summary:

Don't forget: Colour code blocks of time according to module and activity, creating a visual reminder.

Remember: Leave gaps for breaks in between study periods. Divide your day into three, ie morning and afternoon for study, evening for free time.

Regular breaks between study sessions improves your effectiveness and wellbeing. Each study period should be 30 to 50 minutes maximum... Otherwise the quality of your work and your wellbeing are both impacted.

The amount of dedicated study time will vary for courses and individuals, however organising and motivating yourself to study is vital.

Why not try the [Pomodoro Technique](#) to manage your study periods.