

Becca

Research Student | School of Psychology and Clinical Language Sciences |

Access Reading PhD tutor



Time management and revision techniques

We all know that studying can be stressful, throw in important exams and it can be easy to find yourself overwhelmed and overworked. It's important to manage your time effectively. You'll find some tips for time management, as well as revision techniques below.

Time management

Step 1: Create a list of everything you need to do

It can be easy to forget or overlook things when we are busy or stressed out. Create a list of all the things you need to do. Try breaking larger tasks down into smaller more manageable chunks. Note down any deadlines, upcoming exams or time-bound tasks.

Step 2: Create a schedule

Find a way that works for you, some students prefer to keep physical planners and get creative on paper, others prefer the digital approach and the flexibility of having their schedule on their phone. There is no right or wrong way, just make sure it is clear and structured.

Map all of your deadlines and any other important dates into your schedule. Add on any weekly tasks or regular appointments. Identify what times in the day you are most productive and block these out for academic work.

Be flexible but realistic. Tasks generally take longer than we expect, so give yourself enough time and set regular breaks throughout study sessions. Allow time for your brain to process new information, regularly review your learning to make sure you are learning effectively.

Life isn't just about studying, make time in your routine for socialising and your hobbies and interests. Plan in time for regular exercise, screen breaks and fresh air.

Step 3: Avoid procrastination and distractions

Procrastinating when we have multiple deadlines or exams is normal, we all do it, it's especially common in university student. It doesn't mean you're lazy or a bad student, so give yourself a break and consider ways you can minimise distractions and break the cycle of procrastination.

Pinpoint your triggers for procrastination, be honest, what is your biggest distraction? For many of us this will be social media or our phones. Think of ways you could limit this, perhaps putting your phone in another room or turning off all notifications.

Break large tasks down into small manageable steps. This will make tasks seem less daunting and difficult. Tick items off the do list also makes us feel good.

Set realistic goals for your study sessions, try studying for a set amount of time before allowing yourself a break. For example, you may consider studying for 15-20 minutes before taking a quick break. Setting small goals helps you feel in control and improves productivity.

Eliminate distractions, think about where you are studying and how you can change your environment to improve your focus. Turn off notifications, silence your phone, add background sounds, such as classical music or white noise to help drown out other distractions.

When you achieve a goal or complete a task, reward yourself for a job well done. This can help to train your brain into healthy study habits.

Step 4: Set regular study breaks

To be productive you need to take regular breaks. Pulling an all-nighter or working for hours on end isn't a good idea. To process new information and stay alert, our brains need down time.

If you struggle with this, consider setting a time on your phone, to remind you to take breaks.

Consider what you could do during these breaks, stepping away from your desk and give your eyes a screen break is probably a wise idea.

Some ideas for energising study breaks:

- Take a quick walk
- Call a friend
- Stretch and release the tension from your body.
- Have a snack
- Try a mindfulness activity or deep breathing to help relax your body and mind
- Listen to your favourite music or podcast
- Get creative and express yourself through art
- Dance around your house

Step 5: Regularly review progress

Once you've created a plan it's important to regularly review and check that it's working effectively. Don't be afraid to scrap the plan and start a new one if it's not working.

Keep an eye on your to do list and regularly tick off things you've achieved and add anything else that comes up. Regularly doing this will help to reduce the likelihood of you forgetting something.

For more information and helpful guides, head over to the University of Reading's study advice pages - <https://libguides.reading.ac.uk/study-advice-guides/time-management>

Revision top tips

1. **Make a plan!** Check when your exams are and make sure you have plenty of time to revise for each one. Be realistic with your plan and do not cram too much into one day.
2. **Make sure you understand the assessment aims and objectives.** How will you be assessed, what questions/topics are likely to be covered.
3. **Practice past papers.** These are a great indicator of what your assessment will look like, try completing them under exam conditions to help you feel prepared for the real thing.
4. **Mix up your learning materials and approach.** Revision can be boring, try different approaches, study with friends, tell your dog what you've learnt today, get creative and produce a poster of your topic. There may also be helpful learning materials that aren't textbooks, try finding documentaries, YouTube videos or podcasts about your topic. This will help to expand your learning and make it more interesting.
5. **Take good care of yourself!** Your wellbeing is more important than revision. Make sure you are taking regular breaks, eating health meals, getting enough sleep and engaging with activities you enjoy.

If you prefer watching to reading, here is a quick 3 minute video on study tips that are scientifically proven - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p6OrN9JEapg>

And finally...

I wanted to wish you all the best of luck with your upcoming exams! I know from personal experience how stressful and downright boring exam season can be, but it won't last forever, and you'll have the summer to look forward to before your next adventure.

It's easy to be self-critical and frustrated at yourself for not doing enough work or getting distracted. Negative self-talk gets us nowhere. Consider how you would talk to a close friend in this situation and reflect that kindness and support back on yourself. Remind yourself your success and believe in yourself!