

Personal Organisation and Time Management

Applying a strategic approach to study through the use of effective organisation and time management techniques will give you a greater chance of achieving academic success. Students who are well-organised approach their studies with greater clarity and confidence, which allows them to learn more effectively. Good organisation and time management strategies also help students to gain a sense of control, manage stress and avoid burnout.

Have a read of the tips below and consider how you can utilise some of these strategies.

1. **Set up a designated study space.** Ensure that it is in an area that is well-lit and well-ventilated, and is stocked with everything you need but free of excess clutter. If you know that home is a place where you are likely to face continual distraction, perhaps consider establishing a practice of using the campus library (or your local public library) as your primary place of study.
2. **Use a diary or planner.** Whether you prefer a paper-based diary or an electronic calendar (such as Outlook or Google Calendars), it is important to maintain some sort of diary to keep track of due dates, assessments and classes – as well as other things happening in your life. Ideally, your diary should be something that you look at every day so that you can be aware of impending assessments and prioritise tasks accordingly. One strategy is to use a wall planner for the semester, where you keep track of all your assessment tasks and their due dates. This will help you to get a sense of the time you have available to complete each task. There is also a great feeling of satisfaction in crossing off each task as it is completed.
3. **Plan ahead.** If you have early morning classes, you want to give yourself the best possible chance of getting out the door on time and with everything that you need. It's a great idea, therefore, to pack your bag the night before (or, write a list of what you need to pack in the morning). If you are required to wear a uniform, lay it out the night before and ensure that it is clean. Charge your devices and if travelling on public transport, make sure you have money on your Myki. Taking a packed lunch to campus will save you a bit of money – plus, you are likely to make healthier choices!
4. **Prioritise tasks according to due dates and assessment weighting.** If you have a pile of assessments to do and are not sure where to start, make a list of them all along with their due dates and, if relevant, how many marks they are worth overall. This will help you to see what is most *urgent*, as well as what is likely to require the most *time* and *effort*, which will help you to identify which tasks need to be prioritised. If you are feeling completely overwhelmed and are unsure as to where to start...start with the task that feels easiest. This will help to build your confidence and momentum so that you can then move onto the more complicated and challenging tasks.
5. **Set SPECIFIC time blocks for study.** If you have an assignment to do, rather than saying you will do it "at some stage over the weekend" or "one day this week", it is important to specify a specific time and day (eg "I will start this assignment at 2pm on Saturday afternoon"). Given that we are naturally inclined to procrastinate (avoiding the unpleasant feelings

associated with the important task), if we don't set a specific time we are likely to prioritise other, more enjoyable activities. Often, this means that the assignment is left to the last possible opportunity – leading to increased stress and potential sleep deprivation.

6. **Harness your energy.** When planning your daily schedule, it is worth taking into consideration the time of day that you tend to feel most alert and energised. If you're a morning person, for example, make use of this time and plan to get some study done first thing in the morning.
7. **Give yourself a time buffer.** Where possible, aim to get your assessment tasks finished a couple of days *before* the due date. This will allow time to reflect on the content, proofread and make any final adjustments as necessary. Often, you can also submit your final draft to your teacher for feedback before the due date so that you can ensure you have met the essential assessment criteria and make any necessary amendments before the final submission.