



BRADFORD
UNIVERSITY
School *of* Management

**Effective
Learning Service**

Time Management



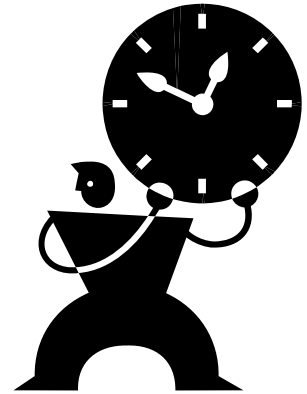
TIME MANAGEMENT

This booklet is about managing your time more effectively. It looks at how you currently manage time, offers a range of advice, and presents case studies of students with time management problems.

First, how well do you manage time?

Try this **Time Management Questionnaire**.

Score yourself on the following questions:
2 for "always", 1 for "sometimes",
0 for "never" and total your score
at the end of the questionnaire. Be honest!



- I do things in order of priority.
- I accomplish what needs to be done during the day.
- In the past I have always got academic work done on time.
- I feel I use my time effectively.
- I tackle difficult or unpleasant tasks without wasting time.
- I force myself to make time for planning.
- I am spending enough time planning.
- I prepare a daily or weekly 'will do' list.
- I prioritise my list in order of importance, not urgency (importance is what you want to do; urgent is what you have to do.)
- I am able to meet deadlines without rushing at the last minute.

- In the past I have kept up-to-date on my reading and course assignments.
- I prevent interruptions from distracting me from high priority tasks.
- I avoid spending too much time on trivial matters.
- I feel I spend enough time on course work.
- I plan time to relax and be with friends in my weekly schedule.
- I have a weekly schedule on which I record fixed commitments such as lectures and tutorials.
- I try to do the most important tasks during my most energetic periods of the day.
- When travelling to and from the University I make use of free time to read course work.
- I regularly reassess my activities in relation to my goals.
- I have discontinued any wasteful or unprofitable activities or routines.
- I judge myself by accomplishment of tasks rather than by amount of activity or "busy-ness".
- I decide what needs to be done and am not controlled by events or what other people want me to do.
- I have a clear idea of what I want to accomplish during the coming semester.

I am satisfied with the way I use my time.

I usually turn up on time for commitments.

Your Total Score

YOUR SCORE

😊 **47 - 50 points:** Congratulations! You are an excellent manager of your own time.

😊 **38 - 46 points:** Generally you are a good time manager, but you may still find the article and the advice that follows of interest to you.

😐 **30 - 37 points:** You are managing your time fairly well, but sometimes feel overwhelmed. Suggest that you read the rest of this booklet and particularly the article that follows.

😞 **25 - 36 points:** Your course here is likely to be stressful and less than satisfying unless you take steps to begin to manage your time more effectively. Suggest that you read the rest of this information booklet and attend a 'Time Management' workshop organised by the School. If you are an MBA student, you may like to take time management as one of the three skills for independent study on the PDP module.

💣 **Less than 25 points:** Your life is out of control. Suggest you read the rest of this information booklet and attend a 'Time Management workshop' organised by the School. You might also want to talk to the Effective Learning Officer about developing your own time management personal action plan.

**TAKE 10 MINUTES OUT OF YOUR LIFE TO READ THIS
ARTICLE**

This article by **Andrew Northedge** is on the most important skill to learn at university – managing your study time (Source: 'The Guardian', 24/9/1991, with their permission).

Schedule for Passing the Test of Time

I was in a student coffee bar during my first week at university soaking in the atmosphere when a lad from Oldham, of conspicuously cool and languid manner, announced calmly that he intended to get a first. He would work 25 hours a week, study five hours a day on weekdays and leave the weekends free. That would be sufficient.

I was vaguely committed to endless hours of work. I imagined that at some point I would spend weeks of intensive study. The vice-chancellor had told us in his address to Freshers to look at the person on either side and note that in all probability one of us would not be around the following year. The message struck home: I would turn myself into a paragon of academic virtue. I could see that the lad from Oldham had got it all wrong, or was bluffing.

Three years later he sailed to his first whilst other friends struggled to very modest achievements. As I discovered when sharing his lodgings, he worked more or less to the plan he had outlined. He slept late in the mornings, only stirring himself if there was a lecture to attend. He played cards with the rest of us after lunch. Then he moved to his desk and stayed there until around seven. The evenings he spent more wildly than most – hence the late mornings.

Nevertheless, when I came to look back I realised he had studied more than anyone else I knew. Through sticking assiduously to a modest but well-defined, realistic plan, he had achieved a great deal. He had enjoyed work much more, too.

He argued that it was not possible to work productively at intensively intellectual tasks for more than a few hours at a time. I aimed to do much more. But I was easily distracted. By the time it was apparent that whole stretches of a day had slipped away, I felt so guilty that I blotted studies out of my mind, comforting myself with the thought of all the days which lay ahead.

I was too inexperienced at looking after my own affairs to realise I was already failing one of the major tests of student life: the organisation of time. I thought that success in studying was to do with how brilliantly clever and original you were. I had yet to discover that one of the central challenges of adult life is time management.

At School the work timetable was defined for us and teachers made sure we fitted all that was required into the school year. At university however, I was in trouble! Time came in great undifferentiated swathes. What to do with it all? With 168 hours in a week – or 105, allowing nine a day for sleeping and eating – how many was it reasonable to spend on study? Individuals vary and different subjects make different demands.

Nevertheless with a target you can plan your studies, not just stumble ahead in hope. Even the sketchiest of weekly timetables, setting aside 40 hours to cover all study, is an invaluable aid in defining time. Then you can divide it into segments and use it strategically, rather than let it dribble away.

Defining what to do is harder. Take the booklists. How many books are students expected to read? How long should a book take? It took me so long to read just a few pages that I felt defeated when I looked ahead. Should I take notes? How many? What would I need them for?

I would sit in the library for a whole day, dipping into one book after another, often with glazed-over eyes. What was my purpose? How would I know when I had achieved it? By comparison I went to lectures gratefully – at least I knew when they started and finished. Although my lecture notes weren't up to much, I could tell myself I had accomplished something, which would bring down my anxiety level.

Much later I discovered I could learn a great deal from close reading of selected sections; that taking notes could sometimes be very satisfying and at other times was not necessary. The trick was to take control; to decide what I wanted to find out – something specific – and then work at it until I had taken in enough to think about for the time being.

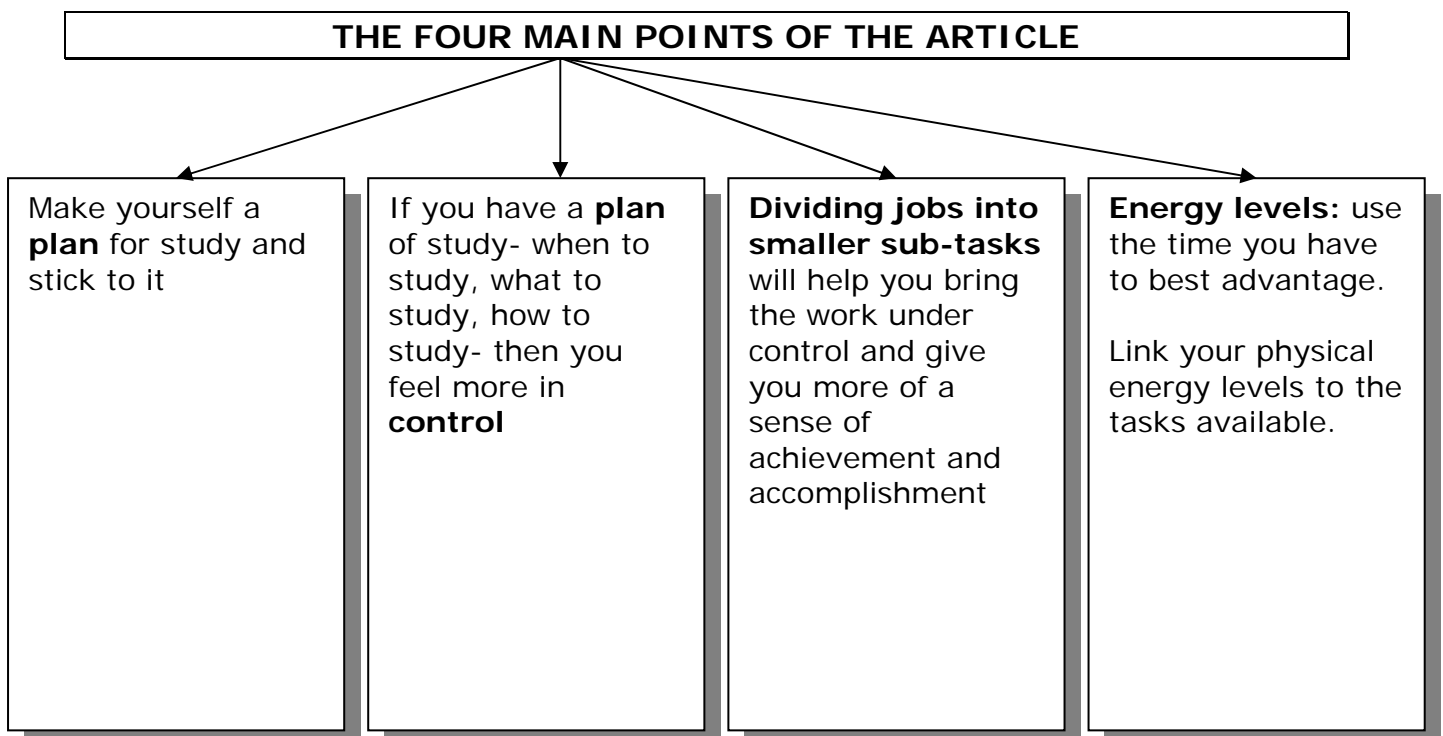
Dividing big jobs into smaller sub-tasks helps to bring work under control, allows you to set targets and check your progress. There is so much pressure to be ambitious – to go for the long dissertation, to read the huge tomes. Yet achievement arises out of quite modest activities undertaken on a small scale. The trouble with the big tasks is that you keep putting them off. Their scope and shape is unclear and we all flee from uncertainty. The more you define your work as small, discrete, concrete tasks, the more control you have over it.

Organising tasks into the time available can itself be divided into strategy and application. It is useful to think of yourself as 'investing' time. Some tasks require intense concentration and need to be done at a prime time of day, when you are at your best and have time to spare. Others can be fitted in when you are tired, or as 'warm-up' activities at the start of a session. Some, such as essay writing, may be best spread over several days. Some need to be done straight away.

There are few reliable guidelines. Essentially you have to keep circling round a self-monitoring loop: plan an approach to a task, try it out, reflect afterwards on your success in achieving what you intended and then revise your strategy.

Once you start to think strategically, you begin to take control of your studies rather than letting them swamp you.

Summary



GET A GRIP ON TIME

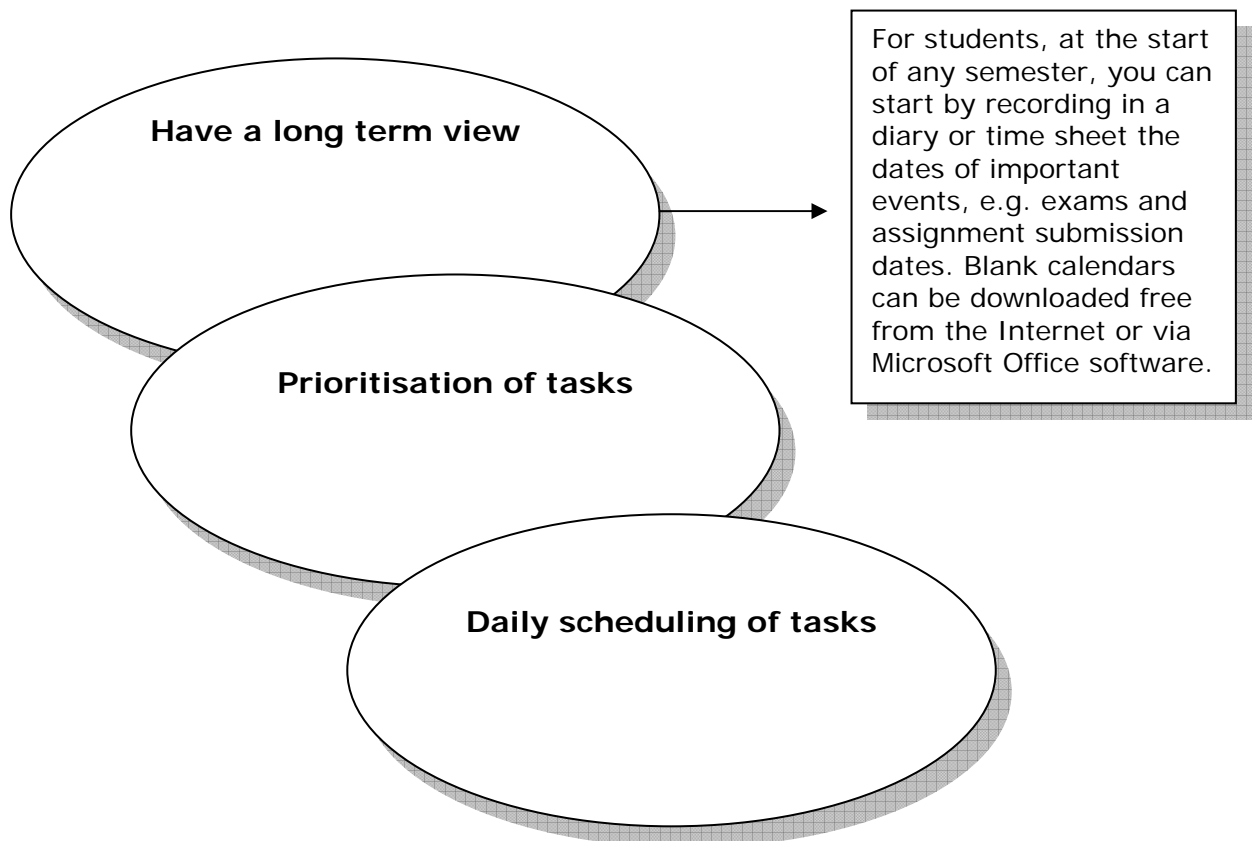
Some commentators advise that you should keep a record of how you use time over a day or a week, so you can see how well (or not) you have used it.

Although this is good advice and can highlight interesting areas for improvement, few people (outside of time management classes) have the patience to do this!

The most effective and sustainable time management systems are those that are the simplest and make the task of managing your time as easy as possible.

Getting Started

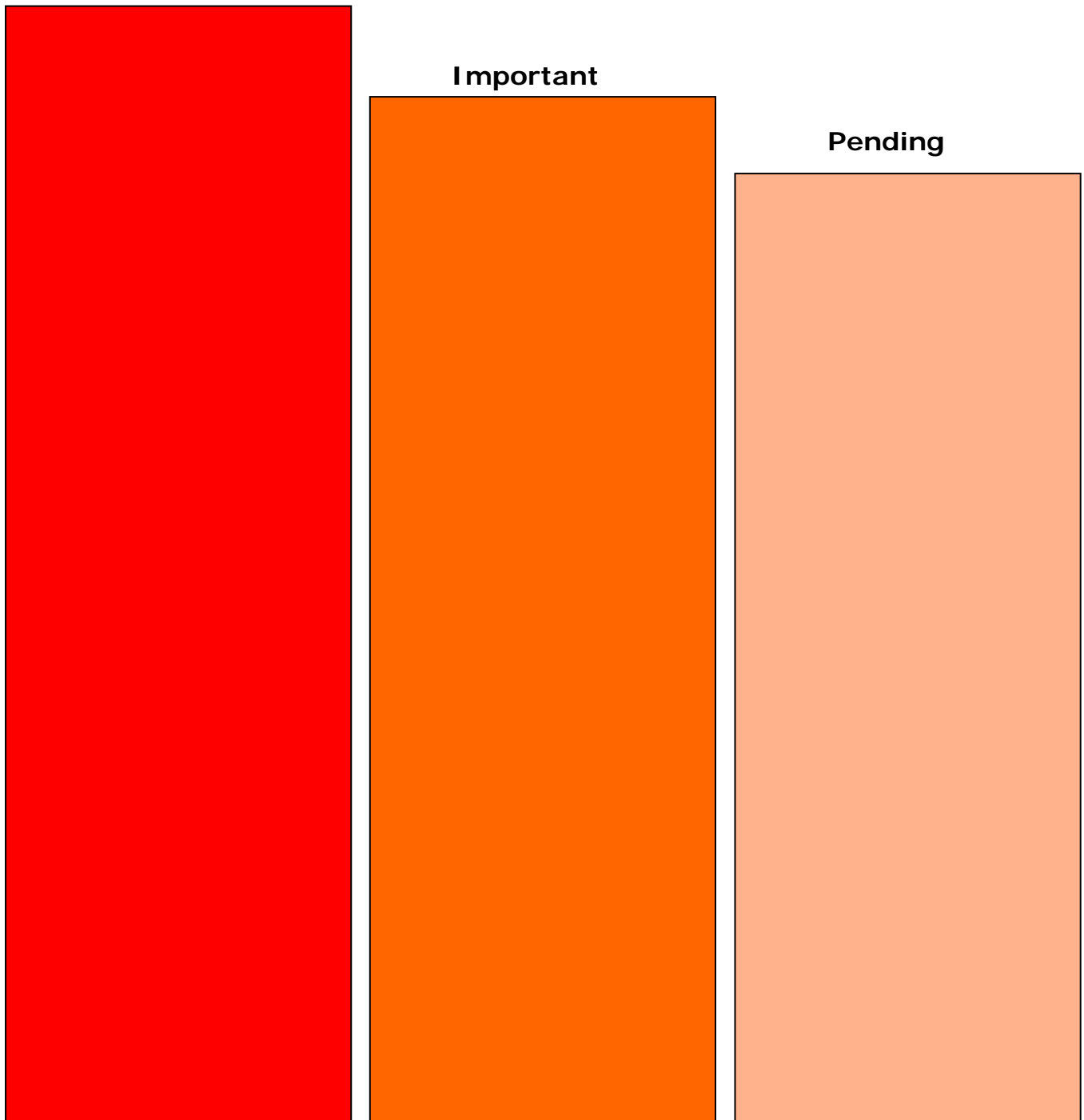
There are three elements to scheduling and prioritising time:



PRIORITISATION OF TASKS

Above all, this is the key to the effective management of time. With this system, you simply prioritise all the tasks you need to accomplish in a particular time period into three categories (see below). You can use yellow 'Post-it' stickers to list the items and to move across columns.

PRIORITY



Rank tasks in each column in order of time scale and priority

ALLOCATING TIME

Prioritisation is an important stage of the process of time management.

But the big issue for students is allocating and using effectively the free time they have for independent study. They know when they have to attend lectures and tutorials; that's not the problem. The problem is managing free time so that independent course work and revision is done without frantic rushing at the last minute.

Try this exercise.

There are 168 hours in a week. Start by calculating the estimated time you spend on the following activities:

Activity	Calculation	Each total
Number of hours of sleep each night	X 7 =	
Number of hours per day grooming (washing; grooming; dressing)	X 7 =	
Number of hours for meals/snacks per day - including preparation time	X 7 =	
Total travel time (weekdays)	X 5 =	
Total travel time (weekends)	X 2 =	
Number of hours of work (paid or voluntary employment) per week		
Estimated number of hours in scheduled lectures and tutorials per week		
Number of average hours per week on leisure, family and social activity		
Other things you have to do, e.g. chores, domestic and family responsibilities etc		

Total =

Plus 7 extra leeway hours:

+ 7 =

Grand Total =

Now go to the next page.

168 Hours

There are 168 hours in any week. Deduct the total committed hours from 168 to give you an approximate idea how much free time you have left for independent study and course work.

Deduct total hours = from 168 = free time

Allocating Time

With your free time in mind, and the need to allocate differing amounts of time to independent course work, you need to plan ahead and allocate time to the tasks you need to do.

However, you need to allocate time on the basis of what is:

1. Priority
2. Important
3. Pending

(See page 8)

Priority tasks are obviously the ones you need to concentrate on, and you need to work out exactly when you are going to schedule time for these.

You can then schedule time on a weekly block basis, using a calendar similar to the one on the next page, and on a daily task basis: see example on page 12.

Weekly Planner

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
6.00							
7.00							
8.00							
9.00							
10.00							
11.00							
12.00							
13.00							
14.00							
15.00							
16.00							
17.00							
18.00							
19.00							
20.00							
21.00							
22.00							
23.00							
24.00							

Daily Schedule

Once you have a time plan over a block period, you can then look at a daily plan. A simple daily organiser is all that is needed.

Yellow stickers are useful to list each item for the day; there is a sense of satisfaction gained from taking these off as each planned task is accomplished.

However, the number of daily tasks scheduled should be **manageable** for any one day otherwise you will inevitably get stressed.

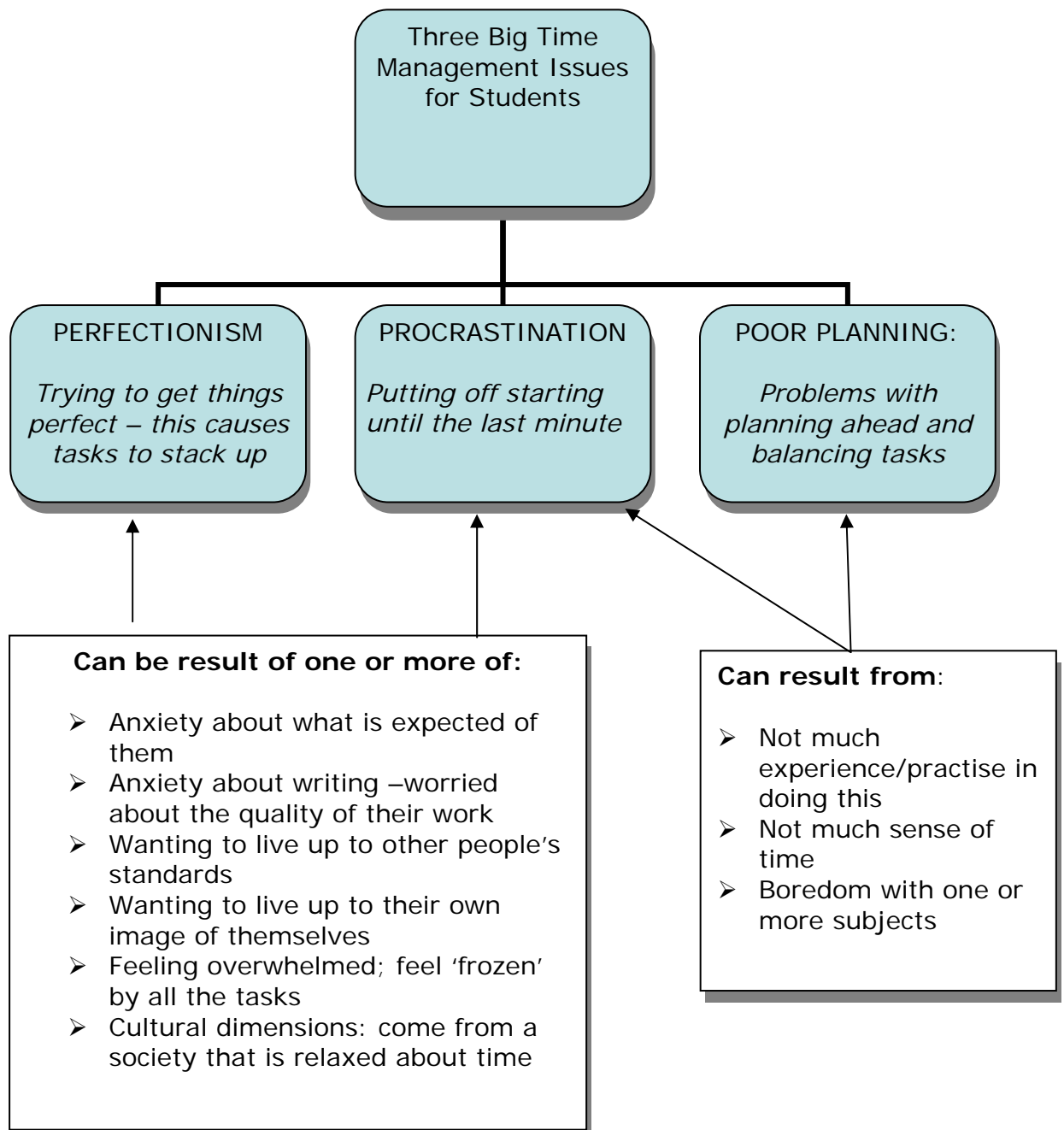
Be fair to yourself – don't give yourself more daily tasks than you can realistically manage. The Effective Learning Officer can give you an A3 sized poster along the lines of what is illustrated below, or you can easily make your own.

TO DO TODAY



YOUR ATTITUDE TO TIME

Planning is important, but you also need to think about your attitude to time and time management.



THE TRAP OF PERFECTIONISM

Doing your best is about working as well as you can in the time available. Sometimes your talents and interest in the task will lead to exceptional results; other times the results are less spectacular.

Living your life as a perfectionist, however, will inevitably deny you peace of mind- because demanding 'perfection' from yourself or others usually results in failure.

And even if you achieve an exceptional result, the chances are that you'll still not be satisfied, as you'll find additional reasons for thinking the result was not good enough. That's the destructive nature of perfectionism and that's why it destroys self-esteem. Nothing is ever good enough.

Being a perfectionist may also hinder your future chances of success, in either your personal or your professional life, because you'll eventually be anxious about taking any new actions that might produce an imperfect result. You may also make unreasonable demands on others.

Preventing perfectionism begins by saying 'no' to making unreasonably high demands of yourself or others that produce only failure and frustration. It also means saying 'goodbye' to the expectations of others in the past that may have moulded you to this way of thinking.

The new way of thinking requires you to choose goals that are easier to achieve within reasonable time limits. Moderate your expectations, and stop focusing or fixating on faults and flaws. You could start this process by:

- Describing one situation or part of your life in which you would like to be less of a perfectionist?
- What are some specific ways that you could moderate your goals in that particular situation/area?
- What consequences might follow from such changes?

You can simply have this discussion with yourself. But you can also talk to the Effective Learning Officer (in confidence) about this issue.

PROCRASTINATION AND DISTRACTION

Do you have a problem getting started with work? And once started, do you get distracted easily from reading or from starting a written assignment or other course related task?



Yes? Well, you are not the only one. A study by O'Brien in 2002 suggested that over a third of students feel that procrastination is a significant problem for them. Another study by Taraban et al (1999) found that many students tended to over-condense their work close to academic deadlines and failed to make use of learning support services and resources earlier in the semester. However, this is a recipe for stress and poor results!

Students know that procrastination is poor practice, so why do they do it?

A study, by Burka and Yuen (1983), suggested that procrastination occurs because it is often a means of distancing oneself from stressful activities; the most difficult tasks are often put to one side mentally until the last possible minute. The researchers suggested that recognising, understanding and dealing with the underlying stressful aspects of the tasks faced can assist in reducing the extent of procrastination.

And procrastination is the cousin to distraction.

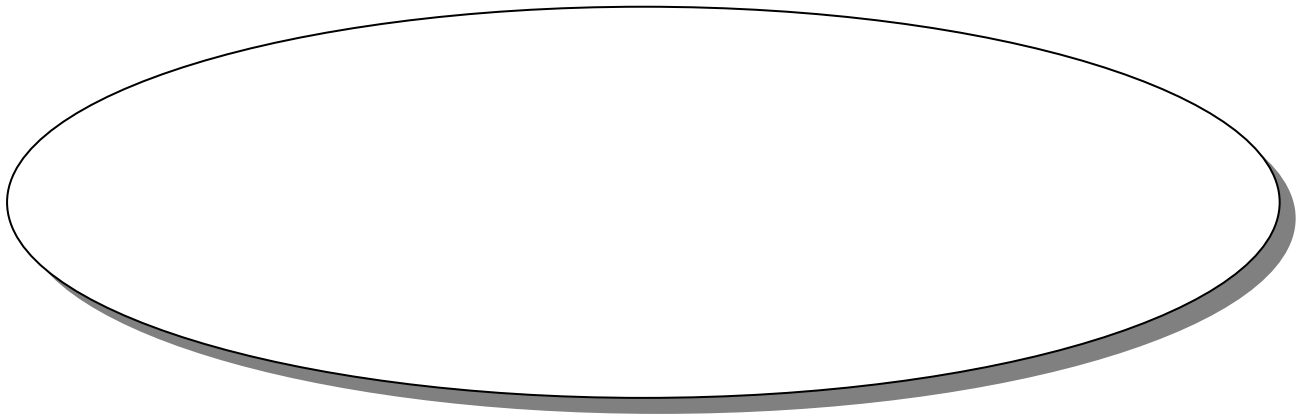
Sometimes you need distractions when you study; it is your mind's way of saying 'you've had enough for one day, so let's switch off'.

However, if distractions are deflecting you from **starting** work, or your mind continually wanders from your reading, then you need to ask yourself why is this happening?

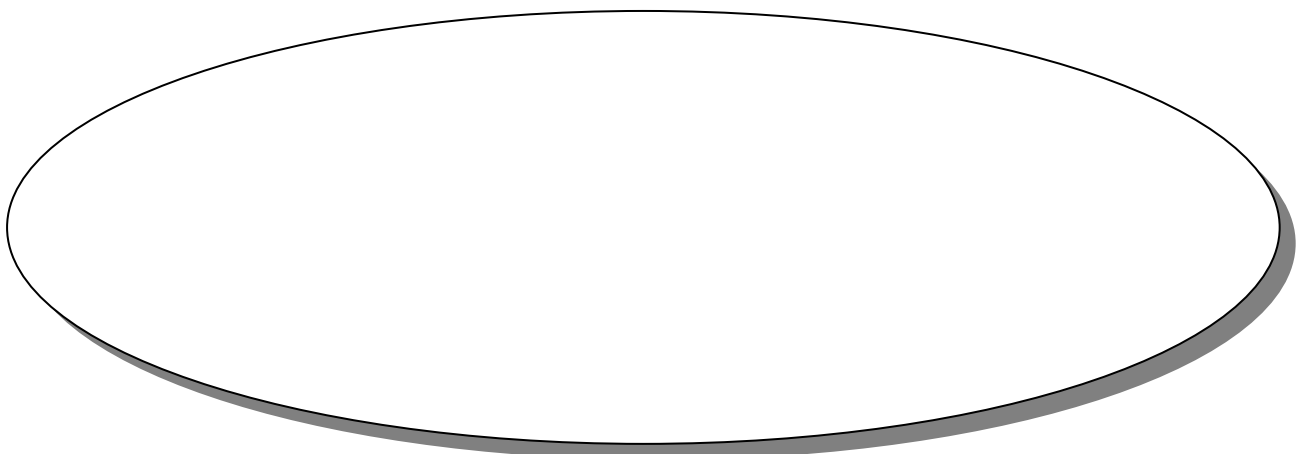
You get distracted because (tick which apply):

- Other students around you are doing or saying things that appear to be more interesting
- You are struggling to make sense of a subject(s) you find either difficult or irrelevant
- You feel the subject is presented (in text books or lectures) in an uninteresting way
- You are not sure what is expected of you
- You do not like to be still or seated for too long
- You are not making notes as you read

If you have a **problem getting started**, are you aware of the things you do, or say to yourself, to put the dreaded moment off?



Once you have started, what things easily **distract** you from a task?



Getting Started

Difficulties in getting started on work are often more connected to anxiety (about getting poor results), than the actual difficulty levels of the work involved.

Try this strategy to get started. Just set yourself **10 minutes** initially to do one relatively easy task.

At the end of 10 minutes, set yourself another **10 minutes** to accomplish another small and manageable task.

At the end of this time, see how you feel then. The chances are you will have gained momentum from the two short study periods and you will want to continue.

Motivation can come **from** action; it does not always have to precede it!

Avoiding Distractions

- **Start with the unpleasant tasks first** – get them out of the way early. The problem with postponing unpleasant tasks is that you leave them until the last minute and then you have to rush to finish them.
- **Set yourself a short time limit for reading:** 40 – 45 minutes tends to be the maximum time most people can read before their concentration slips. At the end of the set time, stop and take a break. The relatively short time you set yourself for reading at any one stretch will help concentrate your mind.
- **Combine short bursts of reading, with active reading.** When you read, make notes of the key ideas or points. Continually looking for main points in any paragraph and highlighting or summarising them in your own words, will help keep your mind focused.
- If you don't like sitting down for too long, try the **read-walk technique**. You read for **just 20 minutes** at any one time, but then get up and walk around for 10 minutes. As you walk you think about what you have just read. You then return to reading for another 20 minutes, then walk again. Do this over several hours. It really works!
- Distraction problems can occur when the subject being studied appears totally removed from the real world. So, to overcome this, as you read, keep asking yourself, '**how does this relate to real life?**' Try and connect the subject to the world about you and your everyday life.

- If you find a particular set book hard to follow, **try another that offers you a simpler or clearer explanation of the same subject.** Finding an easier book initially to read will ease you onto the set book in due course.
- If other students are distracting you, go somewhere else where others are concentrating and working. Where others are working quietly, you are likely to do the same.

Five More Tips for Managing Time

1. Get organised: the Wall Street Journal reported that the average U.S. executive wastes six weeks per year searching for misplaced information. That ends up being about **five hours wasted each week.**
2. A chaotic working area can add to your feelings that things are getting out of control. If your working area is in a mess- with papers, books everywhere – this will slow your progress. You have to hunt around for what you need, wasting time in the process.
3. Having a neat working area has a positive psychological effect. It can speed your work because it makes you **feel** more efficient and in control- and you will respond positively to this feeling.
4. Concentrate on one thing at a time: forget the other things you have to do; just focus on one task at a time.
5. Always finish what you start – this gives you a sense of accomplishment. But don't start more than you can finish in one session.

STUDENT CASE STUDIES

1. Under-Estimating Time to Complete Tasks

Zak keeps missing deadlines for handing in assignments. He tends to underestimate the length of time it takes to complete the different stages of writing essays and reports. This is a very common problem for many students.

What Zak could do about this:

- He could map out his week, so he is clear exactly where he spends his time (see the exercises on pages 9-13 of this booklet).
- He could be more conscious of the ways he avoids getting started on work or gets distracted easily from work he has to do (see pages 15-18 of this booklet).
- He could try making his study time more organised, more pleasurable. The booklets, 'Accelerated Learning,' and 'Effective Note Making', available from the Effective Learning Service, offer advice respectively on effective learning and note making strategies.

2. Anxiety About Beginning a Task

Suzy often delays starting an assignment because she is worried about her writing ability generally, which leads to a fear of getting started. She rarely leaves enough time to redraft and proof-read work, so her writing is full of unnecessary errors. Suzy is afraid of failing, but her fear is leading to the thing that worries her most.

What she could do about this:

- A written assignment does not have to begin when she makes time to sit down and write it. Suzy could begin to plan her ideas for the assignment as soon as they occur to her. The process of writing the assignment can begin as soon as she knows the assignment title.
- Suzy should not worry about organising her ideas into a readable form at this stage. The important thing is to gain confidence by just noting her ideas for the assignment. The more practise she gets at doing this the better.
- Suzy should also set herself more than one day for writing her assignment, and not attempt to try to start and finish it in one session. She could, for example, set aside time simply to write the first draft. The draft can be written out quickly, roughly, and without worrying about spelling, punctuation or grammar at this stage.
- Suzy can then put the work to one side and then come back to it later to improve it gradually and over one or more additional sessions.
- Suzy could find someone to work with: a 'study buddy' who will give constructive feedback to her, and vice versa. Both will benefit from this.

3. Over-Inflating the Task (Imagining it bigger than it really is)

Bob has a tendency to build a task up in his mind into something bigger than it really is and beyond what is really expected of him by his tutors.

He becomes convinced he cannot deliver adequately what he thinks is expected of him by the university in the time available. This reduces his confidence, increases his anxiety and, like Suzy, leads to procrastination in starting assignments.

What he could do about this:

- Bob should not fall into the trap of perfectionism (see page 14). 'Perfection' as a concept and a life target is impossible to attain. It is a slippery eel of an ambition, as perfection will always elude us; a voice in our head will always say '*do more, more, more*'. It may be that others have pushed him too hard and too far in the past in this direction. He needs to aim at doing his best in a conscientious way. If he makes mistakes, so what? This is how we learn.
- He also needs to 'deconstruct' the assignment by re-phrasing the task into simple, manageable terms. With assignment questions, for example, he could try writing a mini-essay (50 words) that simply highlights the main point, or by explaining to another person his opinion on the subject. When you do this you reduce seemingly difficult tasks into something within your grasp. Even complex concepts have a **core or key point**, around which other ideas revolve. Get to the core, understand the core, and you start to **control** the written task.
- Bob could also break the assignment task down into easy manageable sub-tasks, and tackle each one of these separately. Often it is the apparent magnitude of the assignment task, combined with 'perfectionism' tendencies, which lead to procrastination. Dividing tasks up into bite-sized chunks can be the way out of this emotional impasse.

4. Problems Prioritising Time Available

Jayne finds it difficult to prioritise her time. She tends to get overwhelmed with all the things required of her. This includes course work and the chores she feels she has to do for others in her household.

What she could do about this:

- Perhaps Jayne needs to start by looking at the issue of the chores she feels she has to do at home. Are other people supporting her enough with her studies? If not, why not? Is the issue of perfectionism – about chores – one that she also needs to consider (see page 14)? She may need to deal with this issue too, to resolve the problem.
- Regarding course work, she could use the worksheets in this booklet to help her prioritise what must be done in the short to longer terms.
- For example, Jayne could start each day by **listing in writing** the things she has to do on that day, and into the near future. There is something very satisfying about having a list of things to do and ticking these off one by one when you do them! You start to feel more in control. However she needs to avoid starting with an unrealistically long list of things to do at the start of the day.

References

Burka, J. B. and Yuen, L. M. (1983). *Procrastination: Why You Do It and What to Do About It*. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley.

O'Brien, W.K. (2002). Applying the transtheoretical model to academic procrastination. *Dissertation Abstracts International. Section B: The Sciences and Engineering*. 62(11-B): 5359.

Taraban, R., Maki, W.S., and Ryneanson, K. (1999). Measuring study time distributions: Implications for designing computer-based courses. *Behavior Research Methods, Instruments and Computers*. 31(2), 263-269.

<h2>Further Reading</h2>

These are all the titles in booklets in the 'Effective Learning' series:

1. *Return to Part-time Study*
2. *Return to Full-time Study*
3. *The First Semester*
4. *Time Management*
5. *Accelerated Learning*
6. *20 Tips for Effective Learning*
7. *Six Steps to Effective Reading*
8. *Effective Note Making*
9. *Effective Writing*
10. *Essay Writing (1) stages of essay writing*
11. *Essay Writing (2) planning and structuring your essays*
12. *Essay Writing (3) finding your own voice in essays*
13. *References and Bibliographies*
14. *Report Writing*
15. *Pass Your Exams*
16. *Your Assignment Results – and how to improve them*
17. *Presentations*
18. *Group Work*
19. *Introduction to Research and Research Methods*
20. *Foundations of Good Research*
21. *Writing Your Management Project Report or Dissertation*

You can download any of these from the School of Management Homepages: **Resources– Effective Learning** link, or contact the Effective Learning Service, tel. 4414 (internal), Email: C.Neville@Bradford.ac.uk, or visit room 0.10 Airedale Building at the School of Management.

The booklets can also be found in the School of Management library, in the foyer of the Airedale Building and in the main entrance/foyer of the Emm Lane building.

In the School of Management and J.B. Priestley libraries, there is a study skills section at **D.371.30281**

Recommended reading:

Forsyth, P. (2003) ***Successful Time Management***, London: Kogan Page.

Haynes, M.E. (2000) ***Make Every Minute Count***, London: Kogan Page.

Croft, C. (1996) ***Time Management***, Thompson Business Press.

Cottrell, S. (2003) ***The Study Skills Handbook***, Basingstoke: Palgrave (*contains lots of bite-sized chunks of advice and information presented in a lively and visually interesting way. This is an excellent general study skills guide for all undergraduate or postgraduate students*).

Giles, K. and Hedge, N. (1998) ***The Manager's Good Study Guide*** Maidenhead : Open University Press. (*A study skills guide written for business studies students and contains advice and information presented in a clear, readable and subject-specific way.*)

Marshall, L. and Rowland, F. (1998) ***A Guide to Learning Independently***, Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Turner, J. (2002) ***How to Study: a short introduction***, London: Sage.

Other learning material may be available, e.g. videos on time management. Please enquire at library reception.

Some Useful Internet Sites:

www.support4learning.org.uk/education/key_skills.htm (*a good all-round site for study skills advice and information*)

www.bized.ac.uk/ (*a study support site for business studies students*)

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