

TIME MANAGEMENT SKILLS

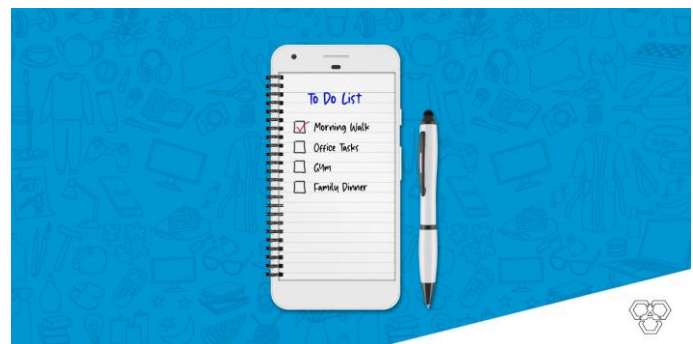
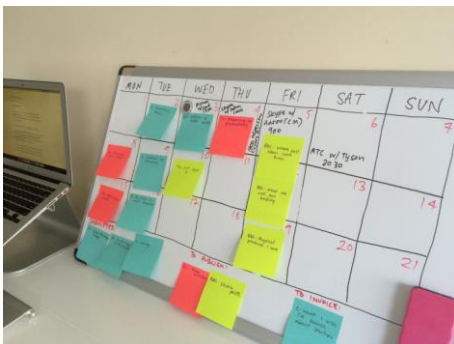
“Time management concerns pacing yourself. It’s a bit like running a marathon rather than a sprint. You need to realise you are in for the long haul.”

Flanagan C. and McGee J. (2018) *EPQ Toolkit for AQA* , Cheltenham: Illuminate Publishing

One of the biggest changes from studying for GCSEs to sixth form and beyond is managing your time effectively so that you can balance a healthy lifestyle and potential employment with fulfilling your potential in your studies. Getting it wrong is very common but can be avoided with planning and forethought and, even if you have to alter your plans, the effort you have put into defining your tasks and prioritising your activities will pay dividends.

WHAT TIME DO YOU HAVE AVAILABLE?

- Find a way of scheduling that works for you: paper diary/electronic calendar/whiteboard
- Plan in your studying: when do you work best? Get up early or go to bed late
- Take time off! Make sure you socialise, sleep (8 – 10 hours) and exercise
- Allow longer than you think to complete tasks
- People who think that being last minute makes them works better for them are, I’m afraid, kidding themselves! Unfortunately, rushing leads to errors.



“Every minute spent in planning saves as many as ten minutes in execution.”

– BRIAN TRACY

TO-DO LISTS

Why do a to-do list?

- Focus your mind on important objectives
- Don't forget
- Order your thoughts
- Decide on priorities: the most important and the most urgent
- Less likely to become side-tracked
- Feel more in control
- Get the reward of seeing progress as you complete things on the list
- Always know what needs working on

To consider:

Identify activities that involve working with other people and those which involve accessing information resources.

Be aware that you need to build in additional time to allow for materials not being available or delays

Always build in some flexibility to allow for the unexpected.

- App on phone or laptop
- Whiteboard
- Pen and paper
- Wall planner

Whatever works for you!

Don't forget to update it daily

How to record it?

- Identify each individual task
- Break into smaller tasks, which are preferably no more than 1 hour to do
- Think about how long it will take
- Note when it is due by
- Be as specific as you can: so not "do 45 minutes maths", but "attempt all the questions in section A"

Prioritise: The Eisenhower matrix

Reference:

Productive Person (date). *Eisenhower Matrix for Students – How to be More Productive*

Available at

<https://aproductiveperson.com/eisenhower-matrix-for-students-how-to-be-more-productive/> (Accessed June 2021)

What to record?



What is the Eisenhower matrix?

The Eisenhower matrix is a decision making grid divided into four quadrants. Whichever quadrant you place a task in determines the priority it takes in your schedule and what you do with it.

The grid is separated into four quadrants:

- Q1: Important and Urgent
- Q2: Important but not Urgent
- Q3: Urgent but not important
- Q4: Not urgent or important

Each quadrant has a corresponding action:

- Q1: Do it
- Q2: Schedule it
- Q3: Delegate it
- Q4: Delete it

CREATE A TO DO LIST



THEN
Organise tasks based on urgency and importance



URGENT TASKS:

Those which require your immediate attention. Failure to take action on them usually leads to immediate consequences.

For example:

- Assignments/homework with looming deadlines
- Cramming for exams
- Last-minute prep
- Emergencies



IMPORTANT TASKS:

Work which counts towards your final grade
Going over class/lecture notes
Scheduled revision
Exercising
Time with friends/family



NOT IMPORTANT

Anything that does not lead to your long term success can be defined as 'not important'

Not important task examples:

- Binge-watching Netflix
- Endlessly scrolling social media
- General time wasters



PUT THE TASKS INTO THE GRID

After going through your to-do list and deciding which category each task fits into, it's time to put them onto the matrix.



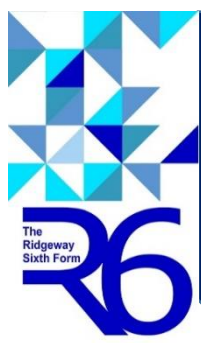
WORK ACCORDING TO THE GRID

The tasks in Q1 are both important and urgent, so you need to address them first. Failing to complete a Q1 task will have an immediate impact on your academic life.

Once you've dealt with the tasks in Q1, you should switch your focus to those in Q2. Tasks in quadrant 2 are not urgent, but they are important. They are the activities which move you closer to your goals and ensure you're a productive student overall.

Once you've got through your tasks in Q1 and Q2, only then should you focus on those in Q3. Tasks in Q3 are usually the admin type of jobs you need to do – they don't lead to any tangible impact on your grades or growth, but they're a necessary evil.

Tasks in Q4 are quite easy to deal with – you shouldn't be doing them (most of the time). If you've got stuff to be doing, then binging Netflix isn't a great idea. You don't need to eliminate Q4 activities all together – use them as a reward.



AVOID PROCRASTINATION



“Everyone procrastinates. The difference between high performers and low performers is largely determined by what they choose to procrastinate on.”

Tracy, Brian (2017) *Eat that frog! : 21 great ways to stop procrastinating and get more done in less time*. Oakland: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

Here are some tips to keep distractions at bay:

Think about where you study best: does studying with friends make you more or less productive? For some, studying with friends can limit their productivity. But for others, studying in groups can help to increase motivation and avoid procrastination.

Have a clear workspace. Make sure it is comfortable, attractive and not cluttered. Sit up properly.

Do something now! Do not wait for the right moment to start. Procrastination often involves preparing, preparing and preparing. Often it really is a good idea to start doing something before you feel ready. You might be surprised by how much you know already.

Take a task-oriented, not a time-oriented approach. Be specific about what you need to do. Don't say "I'll read for three hours," say "I'll read 10 pages." Framing a task in terms of the task itself and not the time it should take, frees you up to focus on getting the task done and you are likely to be more efficient with your time.

Don't stop because something is difficult. If you come up against a problem, ask for help. If you put everything on hold when you meet a problem, it will never get resolved.

Be realistic. Set realistic and incremental goals for your work. Include time off and relaxation after an effective work session. Don't expect to be able to work for hours on end without a break.

Consider your lifestyle. Consider how your lifestyle supports your procrastination. In particular, try to establish a regular sleep pattern.

Limit electronic distractions: leave your phone downstairs and close any tabs that aren't directly related to what you are working on



BE REALISTIC



NOT PERFECT IS ACTUALLY COMPLETELY FINE

Stop trying to make it perfect.

You are conducting academic work, and by its very nature, this means it is not yet complete. Academic work is always open to interpretation and evaluation by others. Your research, in your 6th Form subjects and beyond, will become part of a much bigger debate and discussion in your subject area. This might seem intimidating, but all academic work goes through this process – you are joining a great discussion of ideas and theories. The quality of your project will be clear from thought and energy you put into it. There's no need to strive for perfectionism. This means you can relax and focus on the ideas and the research at hand - in serious academic work, nothing is really finished with, and nothing is ever perfect. Your goals should be toward building a solid piece of research. The quality of your project will be clear from the work and thought and energy you put into it. Your job is not to create something perfect.

REALISTIC GOALS

- Set realistic goals based on your own wants and needs. Look at what you have accomplished in the past and what can be realistically achieved in the future.
- Modest improvements. Don't aim for the stars to begin with! Set goals in a sequential manner, moving up one level at a time.
- Aim for less than 100%. Experiment with your standards for success. See what it feels like to aim for less than 100% and notice that the world does not end if you are not perfect.
- Focus on process. Focus on the process of an activity, not just the end result. Evaluate your success in terms of your enjoyment of it, not just your level of accomplishment.
- Feelings check. Use feelings of anxiety and depression as an opportunity to ask, "Have I set up impossible expectations for myself in this situation?" If the answer is yes, then talk to someone straight away.
- Face your fears. Understand what fears are driving your perfectionism. Ask yourself, "What is that worst thing that could happen?" The answer is usually that nothing bad will happen at all. Ask for help. Talk to people you trust.
- Celebrate your mistakes. Recognise mistakes as opportunities for learning. When you make a mistake ask, "What can I learn from this experience?"
- Discriminate. Prioritise your tasks and put your best effort into the tasks that are most important to you. On less important tasks choose to put in less effort.

References

Writer, G. (2021) '7 Time Management Tips For Students'

Available at: <https://www.topuniversities.com/blog/7-time-management-tips-students> (Accessed: 17 July 2021)