

# Managing your time when studying independently

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Staying motivated and productive can be challenging while studying at home, but there are some simple tips and techniques you can use to help manage your time.

## Establish a routine

Set an alarm, get dressed, eat breakfast, and set aside time for your studies like you usually would. Set up a distraction free work environment too. Put your phone in another room or set it to do not disturb. There are a number of apps that can help you stay focussed too. **StayFocused** is an extension to chrome which allows you to specify which sites to temporarily block; **ColdTurkey** does the same for windows.

The **Pomodoro Technique** can help you to stay on task too. Simply choose a task you want to get done, set a timer for 25 minutes and work until the timer rings. Then take a 5 minute break. Repeat this 4 times then take a 30 minute break. The **Tomatoist** offers a countdown tool to keep you on track.

During your breaks eat, stretch your legs and get a change of scenery or reward your hard work. Use catch up TV or Netflix as a reward for completing tasks you needed to get done.

## Break tasks down

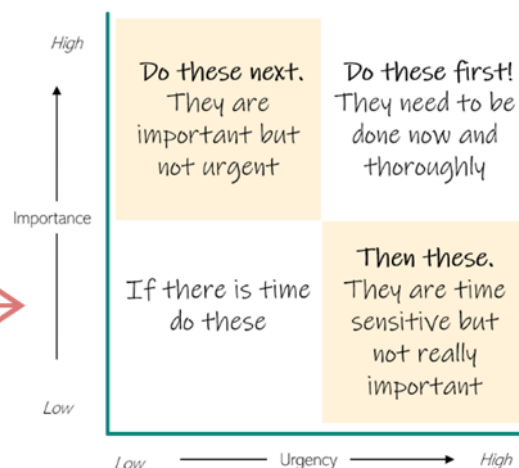
To-do list can help you keep track of what you need to complete. Break assignments down into manageable tasks that you can tick off e.g. reading a key text or drafting an essay plan.

## Prioritise your tasks

Using your time effectively is key. Not all tasks have the same importance or the same deadline, so ask yourself things like:

- *Is this work assessed?*
- *What percentage of the module grade is the assignment worth?*
- *Will doing this task improve my understanding of a lecture or seminar?*
- *How much time will it take?*

A **prioritisation graph** can help you figure out when to tackle each task.



## Stay organised

Knowing what you need to complete and how much time you have to do it, is key. Use a **calendar** or study planner, either online or on paper. Plot unmoveable items like deadlines, online lectures you need to attend and other commitments. Then you can be more realistic with how much time you have to devote to your studies and when.

**Organise your notes** too. Set up specific folders for your electronic notes, giving clear folder names and saving work regularly, so you don't waste time trying to find things. Use Office 365 to keep all of your notes in one place.

**Tip:** when you are reading online, keep a word document for each assignment open to make note of important sources and where you found them.