

## Time management

### Importance of time management

Managing your time might not seem like something for you, especially if you're used to 'winging' your studies, but it's actually a useful skill to develop for both school, and later in life. There will be points in your life when you feel like there's simply too much to do. Knowing how to prioritise and 'juggle' tasks can help you tackle this problem and keep you feeling calm about your workload. You may not realise it yet, but good time management can also save you a lot of effort in the future!



### Planning and scheduling

It's easy to say – 'I want to be organised and find more free time.' But how do you actually do it?

The first step is to know what to do and when. That's where a calendar comes in handy – I got a pocket one when I was 14 and I can't imagine staying on top of my work without it! When you have all your deadlines in one place, the risk of forgetting about something important, and then getting it done last minute, is a lot smaller than if you have the dates scattered around different notebooks. You can try having an electronic calendar if that works for you as well.

Once you've got all your deadlines and dates in front of you, you can start work – and work smart! It's a good idea to have a to-do list, but it's only worth it if it's a reasonable one. You need to think realistically about how much you can do in one day, and count in breaks, as well as other responsibilities like chores.



You'll feel naturally overwhelmed if there's too many tasks on your list at once or if they seem too big to handle, and that's often the reason for procrastination. The first step is to break the big tasks down into smaller ones. For example, if I had an essay to write, instead of putting "write an essay" on my to-do list, I would schedule smaller tasks, like "Essay: Research," "Essay: Write introduction," "Essay: Finish first draft" etc. You don't have to do it all at once! That overwhelming piece of work can turn out to be just three 30-minute sessions, spread throughout a week, but for that to work, you need to plan in advance.

To ensure you have enough time to spread the workload over different days, try setting your own deadlines – but set it a few days before the work is actually due. What I discovered is this way, if something comes up – whether it's an impromptu shopping trip with your family, if you feel unwell one day, or if your friends want to hang out, you have a few extra days to shift your plans around and not be stressed about it.

It's also good to know that not every task is equally important. A simple system that reminds you to focus on the important stuff could be to write your to-do lists in order of priority – for example, getting things like graded assignments done before you start the extra credit homework. It may seem obvious, but I can't remember how many times I've started a less important task because I felt more up for it, and by the time I finished, I had no time left to deal with what was a lot more urgent.



## Helpful methods

'Is there a special trick that will make me a good time manager instantly?' No. But there are methods that can help! If you struggle with focusing on your schoolwork and find yourself mindlessly scrolling through social media, there are loads of free online tools that will remind you to get back to work. Or – if you want to be more strict with yourself – there are apps that can even block your access to certain sites for a set amount of time, just Google 'anti-distraction apps' or 'browser extensions' (remember to verify they're from a trusted source).

Another tool that helped me when I was in school was the [Pomodoro technique](#). You usually break a large task into smaller tasks, set a timer for 25 minutes, focus on one of the smaller tasks, and when the time is up, you take a 5 minute break before moving on to another 25-minute task. After four times, the break is longer and you can adjust the timeslots to suit your needs. Even when I study for longer, I find that this technique keeps my mind fresh and rested. Try it, you can find a useful tool, and even a link to an app, online [here](#).



Of course, no method is perfect and some techniques won't work for you, but it's worth a try just in case they become your new favourite tricks!

## How to avoid burnout

Burnout is a normal reaction to being overwhelmed and stressed with the work you have to do – whether it's school, chores, your hobbies, or all of these at once. People experience burnout differently, but it often shows-up as being permanently exhausted. Signs are often different for everybody, but can include feeling irritable and snappy, sleeping more than usual, struggling to sleep, having trouble waking up and/or staying awake, losing motivation, and not finding enthusiasm for the things you usually enjoy. If you think you may be overworked to the point of being burnt out, it's worth talking to someone you trust. This could be your parents/guardians, school counsellors or even organisations like [Mind](#), who can advise you on how to get back on track and take care of yourself. *Don't ignore it, your wellbeing should always come first.*



To prevent burnout, time management is key.

It's also worth scheduling time for yourself to just do what you enjoy. This is a good opportunity to practice a hobby you're not being assessed on, a little something you do just because you like it. You know best what you like to do to relax, so make a bit of time during the week, put it in your calendar, and recharge – a treat for yourself for working so hard!

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