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<!-- Col Count:2-->Module:	Personal Development and Well-Being
Skill:	Managing Your Time

Overview: Managing Your Time

When you are studying, time can become a slippery thing. One minute you feel positive, on top of your workload and ready for anything; then you remember the essay that is sitting, almost finished on your laptop. In that moment, it does not matter that you only have a few hundred words to go, or that you have made a really good plan. All that matters is that it is lurking, and you have a 'to do' list that seems to be huge, and you are tired already ... and now time has become your enemy. Of course, you tell yourself, you do not have enough hours in the day, there is no way you can see how to finish it on time. The pressure builds and you have a problem.

That is one of the challenges with time for many of us: the real and the imagined time. You recall that person you know who is always moaning about their workload? Who feels victimised by too much to do and seems to be wallowing in the pressure? Someone who perhaps seems to identify as little more than a 'too-busy person'? If you analysed that person's day, it might be that they have too much to do, or it might be that they simply have no clear idea on what needs to be done, or how to go about managing their time effectively.

For many of us, time feels like the enemy when we feel stressed, so it is worth thinking about three key aspects of managing your time:

1. Sometimes you genuinely are short of time, and you need to be able to recognise these 'pinch points' in your schedule, ideally in advance, so that you can be ready. This is especially the case if you know you will face time pressure at certain regular points (such as a long day of face-to-face learning sessions one day each week with little time between them). You might not be able to change the situation, but you can prepare to do very little that day except attend those events.
2. For most of your studying life, you have far more control over how you use your time than you might appreciate right now, and this will continue into your professional life.
3. If you feel stressed, you might blame time when in fact you are simply feeling anxious about a task or your next challenge. Knowing that your time is under control can make you feel more in charge of all aspects of your life and so reduce that stress.

This skill section begins with where you are now: how you feel about time and how well you tend to use the time you have. We will think about how to make time, how to save it, and how to use it to best effect, before moving on to time management planning. The section finishes with the chance to think about time management as an attractive asset to employers and how you can make the most of the skills you have gained as a student.

Suggested Readings

Becker, L. (2019). *Study your way to your perfect career: How to become a successful student, fast, and then make it count*. SAGE.

Rebel, K. (2020). *Manage your time SAGE super quick skills*. SAGE Publications.

Collins, E. (2020). *Little habits mastery: 7 secrets to create successful habits, overcome procrastination and make lasting changes*. Elena Collin

Cirillo, F. (2018). *The pomodoro technique: The life-changing time-management system*. Ebury Publishing

Zahariades, D. (2017). *The time chunking method: A 10-step action plan for increasing your productivity (The Art of Personal Success Book 1)*. Independently Published

<!--Col Count:2-->Table of Contents Heading 2:	A Positive Relationship With Time
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Topic 2.1: How Do I Know if I Need to Work on My Time Management?

You need to work on your time management. It is as simple as that. You do, I do, everyone does, because every day throws up new challenges and a multiplicity of demands upon our time. To do well at university or college, you must maximise your opportunities and work in the smartest way you can, so that you use your time to allow you to shine.

[Start scenario 1: explore your options]

Scenario 1

Take a few minutes to think about your particular time management challenges – we all have them, and identifying them can help you make the best use of the effort you are about to put into taking control.

Think about what you would consider to be a normal studying week for you. How does time feel to you in that week?

I don't really think about it much. I do things as they come up and hope that I will get everything done.

o This will work for many students, for much of the time, but it does leave you open to the stress of the unexpected. If you are tackling your tasks on a day-by-day basis, rather than taking a long view, you might find it hard to relax at the weekend if any of your tasks overrun.

I never seem to have enough time, so I feel a low level of stress every week.

□ The stress you feel here might not be so much about timing as it is about taking control. For you, being able to plan your timing will allow you to gauge if you really do not have time, and then help you work out what to do about that.

It is fine at the beginning of a term/semester, but then I find myself panicking as the deadlines creep up on me.

□ Planning your workload and timing at the start of each term or semester can reduce stress instantly – even if it reveals a heavy workload.

With my course, we all know that there is too much to do in the time we have, so we just keep our heads down and get on with it.

□ This approach can leave you feeling disempowered. It is common to find groups of students all telling each other that there is too much to do, but you need to introduce some time management into your studying so that you can decide if this really is the case – and then fix it.

I don't have a problem with time, but I do struggle to get myself organised and so this tends to leave me feeling stressed.

□ There are so many areas of your study life where organisation helps – and the modules in this resource will help you with most of them – but time is often the most productive aspect to manage. This is because it forces you to look methodically at the tasks ahead and challenges you to become more organised in other areas of your studying.

I find the time runs smoothly during each week, but I am not sure that I work hard enough because I am not achieving as much as I would like by the end of the week.

□ One of the great benefits of organising your time is that it helps you to see what you are achieving. It can leave you feeling proud of yourself and your study successes, rather than remaining under the impression that you are somehow not doing quite enough.

There are only so many hours in the day, so why worry about it?

□ This is the perfect attitude – but only once you have ticked off (or repositioned) every task on your personalised time management planner. At that point, this becomes a fantastically useful approach. The ability to switch off and relax is something to work on throughout your study life – it is a study skill like any other.

[End scenario 1: explore your options]

A note before we go any further: 'wasting' time is one of the great pleasures of life, and it is also essential to successful studying. While you rest, your mind mulls over what has been learnt recently; taking a weekend off can sometimes be the most productive option. With this in mind, this skill section aims to help you control your time so that you can work well, but also take the time you need to recuperate and let your brain quietly process information.

Topic 2.2: How to Make Time

It sounds too good to be true, but you really can give yourself more time each week to study, or relax, or learn a whole new skill. You make time by working out where you are losing time. Just for 1 week (mainly because this is so tedious to do that you are unlikely to last longer) make a note of how you use every hour in each day. You will find the results startling and fascinating. You probably have no idea, say, that you spend 1 hour and 10 minutes each lunchtime doing nothing much. You might have no clue that you waste 25 minutes, four times a week between classes because it has never occurred to you to study in that time. It is easy to work out that, in an 11-week term or semester, this is nearly fourteen hours of time that has given you no use and little pleasure.

Time management cannot be about using every spare moment, but it is about putting yourself in the position of knowing where those spare moments are and then deciding what to do with them. If the spare moments actually turn out to be spare hours that you had not noticed you were losing (you always get talking between midday and 2.30 p.m. on a Tuesday, waiting for your regular lab slot, but then you always have to work on Tuesday evenings when you are tired), you will have made a quick win with just one technique.

Finding useful gaps can be relatively easy to do and will make you feel good straight away. Exploring another way in which you could make time might be far less easy, and it will not necessarily make you feel good in the short term. Understanding, and then reducing, the ways in which you procrastinate will always offer you the potential to find more time. Procrastination is the art of putting things off. For most students, this does not mean doing nothing and simply not working; it means doing anything – anything at all – that does not involve productive work. The best procrastinators I know are also usually the busiest people I will meet each day, because they are always catching up with themselves.

Human beings seem to have a natural talent for procrastination, and it is important to know the difference between useful and unproductive procrastination. As I have been writing this section, I have also been reheating a pasta sauce, which apparently needed the addition of fresh tomatoes, and then a sprinkling of paprika and then, for no apparent reason at all, I nipped to my kitchen just now and added fresh cream. Why? Because I am trying to think how best to express the help I hope I can offer you, and that is not always an easy task, so I procrastinated several times.

This is probably an example of useful procrastination, because I am reheating a sauce and thinking furiously at the same time. Later this evening I plan to have a delicious dinner and mull over what I hope will be a useful topic for you to read. If I were making the sauce from scratch, and spent an hour in the kitchen doing it, that would simply be me putting off the task rather than introducing a few minutes of space to think.

One way to value your productive procrastination is to recognise it for what it is. You will probably already have procrastination habits that you have used for some time: putting on some washing, checking your emails, reordering the books on your shelves, organising and rearranging your calendar. There are other more study-focused procrastination activities that you could introduce to your repertoire. You can also learn more about procrastination in the topic 'Understanding Procrastination' in the academic integrity and referencing module. [link to topic "Understanding Procrastination" in the skill "Preventing Academic Misconduct with Time Management"](#) in the academic integrity and referencing module.

I have asked a group of successful and experienced students what they would list as their top productive procrastination activities and I am sharing them with you here. Each of these will give you a break of no more than half an hour. This is about as long as you can take without losing your thread of thought for the main task you are facing:

[begin feature box]

Notes From the Field

Checklist – some useful procrastination study tasks

- Working through your notes to check references of any sources that were mentioned.
- Reducing a set of lecture or seminar notes to essential notes for revision later on.
- Going over your notes to see if you can make any useful connections between your courses/modules.
- Looking through your latest reading list to plan your next library trip (virtual or online).
- Proofreading the assignment you must submit later in the week.
- Looking at two or three screencasts or online video clips that support your learning.
- Preparing some notes for your next study group meeting.
- Thinking of useful questions for your next seminar.
- Checking out the descriptions of courses you might choose next year.
- Skimming through some online or journal articles to decide whether you need to print anything off and work on it.
- Start work on the first few slides for a presentation later in the term.

[end feature box]

Each of these tasks might take you far longer than 30 minutes, so you will need to practise sticking within the time limit that suits you for productive procrastination (it may be less than 30 minutes if you find that you struggle to get back to your main task). One way to do this would be setting an alarm on your phone so that you recognise when your allotted time is up. Some students find this helpful because they can let themselves become absorbed by the productive procrastination, knowing that they cannot overrun on time by mistake; other students hate it and feel too pressured by the alarm. Maybe try it and see how it works for you.

Topic 2.3: How to Avoid Losing Time

[Insert scenario 1: explore your options]

Scenario 1

You will find many ways to procrastinate, both good and bad, so you will always need to look out for unproductive procrastination, while appreciating the productive procrastination that you have also introduced. Procrastination that gets you no further forward in what you are trying to achieve that day is the single most common reason for students feeling under pressure. It is also dangerously addictive.

Consider this situation that happens to all of us. You have just lost an hour because you planned to check your emails for a few minutes, you got caught up and the time just slipped by. How do you respond?

Now you have lost your thread of thought, so you are finding your study task far more challenging than it was earlier

You will be reluctant to take another break (that is what got you into this situation), but you could mix it up a little. If you are making notes, try using a new method of note taking. If you are writing an essay, take a few minutes to work on making your plan more detailed so that your mind is back in the work. You will have moved forward and now studying will not seem so daunting.

Disheartened, you take another break, and that leads you to peek for a moment at social media

This seems so harmless, but it is going to take your mind a long way from thinking about studying. If you feel tempted to look at something online, either limit yourself to no more than 3 minutes (which is a long time in the social media world) or engage with media related to your course, such as a study group chat. In this situation, always make sure that even this is time limited to no more than 10 minutes.

Now your time is out of control and, quite understandably, you decide to give up for the day.

Funnily enough, this last move (which sounds so negative) might actually be your smartest move, at least in part. To give up on that task means that you will come fresh to it the next time you face it. If you can see it that way, you are less likely to just 'give up for the day', giving yourself the chance to take control, take back your day, and get on with more studying.

[End scenario 1: Explore your options]

The mention of social media in this scenario is a problem that is well recognised by most of us, and so we tend to have mechanisms already in place to resist that temptation. The problem more usually lies in recognising your particular procrastination habits. We all have our favourite go-to time wasters, but we do not always recognise them for what they are.

Think for a minute or so about what you tend to do when you are trying to study but something is hindering you. It could be that you are tired, or anxious about an assessment, or unsure of what you are trying to achieve. What do you do to escape for a little while? If the first thing that comes to your mind is to eat, drink, or nap, you need to address this before anything else. If you are hungry, thirsty, or tired, you are not going to be able to study efficiently. One of the secrets of time management – which can come as a surprise – is that you need to keep hydrated, fed, and alert in order to make the most of your time. For some students, just tending to those basic physical needs can transform their study life.

Moving beyond the physical, as you try to identify your procrastination habits so that you can take control of them, you might find this checklist of descriptors useful. To learn more about other time management tools, check out the topic ‘Essential Time Management Strategies’ in the skill Preventing Academic Misconduct with Time Management in the academic integrity and referencing module.

[begin feature box]

Notes From the Field

Checklist – unproductive procrastination activities:

- Help you to avoid a significant problem in your study life.
- Regularly swallow up more than 10% of your study time.
- Become so absorbing that you struggle to return to your principal task.
- Distract you so that you cannot focus properly when you return.
- Make you feel guilty because you know that the procrastination activity is becoming more important to you than the main task.

[End feature box]

Once you have made a note of the checklist and the strategies that you want to use to avoid procrastinating, watch the video from Rahasia, a student at the University of Brighton, for her experience and tips for avoiding procrastinating.

[Video 1](#). How to Fight Procrastination

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Although losing time can be demoralising, there is a way to make yourself feel better, and it is important to put yourself into that better mindset so that you can get back to the work of taking control.

At the end of a day when you feel that time has run away with you, it is easy to look at your still very full ‘to do’ list, or to ponder the study timetable you have made for yourself and notice how few ticks there are to be seen. What you had hoped would be a good day now feels like a failure, and tomorrow is looming with even more things to do.

Take a moment – then flip it. Rather than allowing yourself to dwell on what is left undone, make a list of every single productive study task you did conquer in the day. These achievements might not have been planned, but they are still important, so I am listing some examples here.

[begin feature box]

Notes From the Field

Checklist – unplanned wins in your day:

- Talking to a fellow student who agrees to work with you on a group project.
- An unexpected chat with an academic that has given you great ideas for your next assignment.
- An internet browse that led to some brilliant material for your studying that you did not know existed.
- Answering an email to give details of yourself so that you can register with your university's support services more easily.
- Exploring a new revision app that is going to make your life easier.
- Taking a nap and then studying all evening.

[End feature box]

Once your list is complete, take the time to reflect on it. You know that you may have to rework your plans because you did not get through your list today, and you may feel that the rest of your week is going to be a little harder than you had expected, but you are ending the day with a strong sense of what you have achieved – you are back in control.

<!--Col Count:2-->Table of Contents Heading 3:	Controlling Time
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Topic 3.1: How Do You Use Your Time?

You will find that you are saving time by employing the studying methods advocated in this resource – that is one of its purposes. You can also save time – and give yourself some time to relax – by making clear (to yourself and others) what you plan to achieve. You can do this by producing an action list for each day, or week or half semester/term. It works well if you let yourself be flexible about this: sometimes you might need a task list for each day of the week, because there is so much that is pressing, whilst at other times you might feel quite content to produce a weekly or monthly task list.

For some students, an action list is enough: a simple list of what needs to be done, with items that can be ticked off in any order as and when they are complete, gives the students what they need to use their time well. For other students, either because of the volume of work they have to plough through, or the irregular rhythm of their studying lives, it makes more sense to add more timing detail to the list by producing a personalised study timetable.

For many students, their need to feel organised and in control also lends itself to a personalised timetable. Because this can be a major stress reducer, it is the system that is being advocated in this skill section. Be aware, though, that setting up a personalised timetable for the first time can feel a little overwhelming, as you recognise just how much studying you need to fit into each week. It is also affirming, though, to know that you are busy but that you can achieve what you need to do.

Before you can create a personalised timetable, you need to divide your tasks into categories. This will help give you an overview of the time that lies ahead of you: maybe you have plenty of reading to get through, or your main focus is an assignment, or there is an intensive series of long lectures coming up. By seeing the shape of the next spell of studying, you will, without any conscious effort, be preparing yourself to learn.

When you come to try this out, take a few minutes (maybe more) to think through the types of tasks that you face in the next week: it is usually easiest to do this for a week in the first instance. These tasks will vary from course to course, but most of these are likely to apply to you.

[begin feature box]

Notes From the Field

Checklist – types of study task:

- Reading: books, journals, other reference material, either online or in hard copy.
- Revisiting: lecture/seminar/study group notes you have made, to see if they need reducing for ease of use, or if you could highlight certain key points or areas.
- Researching: working on an independent research project.
- Preparing: for your learning events.
- Producing: an assignment, seminar, talk, or presentation.
- Polishing: attending training courses to brush up on your skills.
- Attending: lectures, seminars, lab sessions, workshops.
- Actively seeking help: by seeing a study advisor or librarian.
- Assessing: where you are now. What might your task list look like next week?
- Getting organised: by working through reading lists and your reading notebook.
- Getting ahead: looking at the next study choices you will have to make.
- Giving yourself a break: which is as important as the other categories!

[End feature box]

Topic 3.2: Time Away From University

In the previous topic [Q3: Production: link to topic 3.1 "How do you use your time?"](#), we discussed the different kinds of activities that you are likely to be undertaking at college or university. However, there is one category of activity that is so important it was not included in the general list. This is your life away from university. I regularly find myself talking to students – and sometimes their families – about what seem to be huge problems that are, in fact, little more than miscommunication. A student recently moaned about a seminar presentation and the family thought their child might be about to leave university, simply because the student did not explain that the seminar presentation is not formally assessed and is just the challenge that popped up in conversation, and the really upset tone was purely coincidental.

Although your family and friends will want to support you in what you are doing, within a few weeks of you being at college or university they will probably have very little idea of what you actually do each day. Even if you have siblings who have been to university or college, your routine (and the words you use to describe it) will be different enough for it to be tricky to follow for anyone not actually there with you. That is why it is so important to make a regular note in your task list to keep in touch with your family and home support network and to make sure that they understand what is going on with you.

Once you have been able to analyse your life like this, you will have gone a long way towards gaining perspective and control over it all: that is an achievement in itself, and you should be proud that you have come this far. Once you feel confident about the categories that you need to include in your personalised timetable, you are ready to begin constructing it. If you feel anxious because you are struggling to categorise your day-to-day activities, or if this process has left you feeling stressed or overwhelmed, try talking to some of your supporters about how you feel before you move onto the next topic in this skill section.

Topic 3.3: A Timetable That Works for You

Although every student will, of course, produce a different task list for each week, [Table 1](#) will give you a sense of how yours might look for 1 week towards the end of a term or semester.

[Table 1](#). Example: Personalised Timetable for 1 Week

Task type	Task	Done?
Assignment	Decide on essay title for module ST1CGH	
Reading	Journal article for Tuesday seminar – URGENT!!	✓
Reading	Reading notebook skim through in Monday break?	
Attending	Lecture Monday 9-10, Room 249	✓
Polishing	IT skills session Monday 3-5, Room G90	✓
Attending	Lecture Tuesday 2-3, Room RF55	✓
Attending	Workshop Wednesday 10-1, Room 84	✓
Attending	Seminar Wednesday 4-5, Room 84	✓
Polishing	IT skills session	✓
Organising	Check out references from last lecture for reading notebook – Wed	✓
Home life	Home Thursday night – Make next week's task sheet beforehand	✓
Career	Sign up for CV workshop	✓

As you will see, this shows the task list at the end of the week. Most tasks have been completed, but a couple ran away from this student, and that is not a problem – they can be included in next week's list. I have shown this example as a list with some days mentioned, but you might prefer to set it out so that it looks more like a timetable, with a column for each day. You can download a blank version of this timetable to help you get organised.

Personal Timetable

[[link file: Academic_Timetable.docx](#)]

The point of a task list/timetable is not to work yourself into the ground each week. It is about being able to assess what is coming up and how you might handle it. That is why it is fine to include tasks on there that you know you might not complete. In the example above, the student chose to have lunch with a friend on Monday, rather than scanning through his reading notebook to check on some references. This will not be a problem at all – it can be transferred to next week's task list – but it means that he was able to make a positive choice to have that lunch break, rather than walking around with the uneasy feeling that he was falling behind with something.

You might wonder why 'Attending' tasks need to be included in this list. After all, they are already on your student online timetable. Apart from the fact that timetabling systems go down from time to time, reminding yourself of them in your personalised timetable is a useful way to see the shape of your week. Seeing that both Wednesday events are in Room 84, which happens to be in the building next to the library, will remind the student that Wednesday is a good day to work in a study space in the library – that is why the reading notebook task is in there for Wednesday. In this example, the student also used to struggle to attend the 9 a.m. lecture on a Monday. Although this is no longer a problem, including it in the task list reminds him of its importance to the overall shape of his study week.

There are also some very easy wins in here: signing up for a CV workshop is a matter of moments online, and he is unlikely to find it difficult to go home for a long weekend. They are on there, even though they are easy, because that way the student has a record of what he has done, and also has the pleasure of some 'easy ticks'. On weeks when study life is very busy (and this is not one of them), he will appreciate being able to feel a sense of achievement with some easy tick tasks.

Not every category of task I gave you in How do you use your time? [Q4: Production: link to topic 3.1 "How do you use your time?"](#) is included in this example timetable. That is because not every student needs to be covering every aspect of study on a weekly basis. This is a relatively light week for the student, and so he has decided to make the most of it by reducing his task list to a pleasant level of activity, ready for his weekend at home. This list – alongside his previous and future lists – reassures him that he can afford to give himself this slightly easier week.

What do you do, though, if your personalised timetable for a week (or more) looks hideous, completely unmanageable, and depressing? You get help, and the best tool you have in getting that help and advice is your personalised timetable itself. If you tell your tutor or lecturer that you feel too pressured by time,

or that your workload seems unmanageable, you might be offered sympathy but little practical help, because that person has no details to consider. If you can share your personalised timetable, which shows why you are feeling that way, you then have a document that you can work on together, deciding between you what can be moved and/or reduced.

You might also use your timetable in more general conversations with your academic tutor or mentor or other supporters at university, as this will give them the chance to see your study life from another perspective. This will not only allow them to make timely interventions to support you, but also help them recognise when you need to be left to get on with it with minimal interruption. This will be part of developing a productive relationship with your supporters at college or university, so it is a good use of your time in every sense. Watch the video to hear how one student manages her time and uses a timetable to keep herself organised.

[Video 1](#). Using a timetable at university

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[transcripts are uploaded in SMART in four formats as file type 'Other']

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[Download transcript](#)

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Topic 3.4: Using Your Time Well

Two questions will help you make good use of your time: how do you work best each day, and how long can you focus? There is no reason to believe that you will become a new person just because you are at university or college, and this is to your advantage in using your time well. If you know that you prefer to work in the early morning or late at night, or that you like to take a nap each day, your study life allows for all of this. The systems that support you (your timetable, opening hours for your library or resource centre, even the availability of key tutors) will have been designed with this in mind.

All you need to do is remind yourself of how you like your day to work, and then aim to accommodate that in the way you use your tasks list, and in the time you set aside for hard work study, easier study tasks, and time off from studying altogether.

If you have never noticed your best study time of day, you could think more generally about your life when you are not studying. Do you naturally wake up early, or fall asleep on the sofa at 10 p.m.? Do you find that you can spend longer on any task in the middle of the day, perhaps, or late at night? All these clues will help you work out your best daily routine, and trial and error will do the rest for you. It will not take more than a week or so for you to decide upon your perfect study routine.

How long you can focus on a task is not usually about how clever you are; it is more about a habit of working. You might be amazed and delighted to find that, during the days when you are writing a lengthy assignment, the time you can spend on just sitting writing increases dramatically, so that you can sit for 3 hours at a stretch after just a week. You might then be disappointed to discover, when you face your next assignment some weeks later, that you lose focus after just 30 minutes or so. This can be disconcerting, but it is perfectly normal and is a clue to how we all perform.

Concentration is about habit as much as anything else. The ability to sit for long periods and focus on a task comes with practice and, sadly, tends to leave us again if we are not required to keep up the habit. If you can recognise your optimal focus time, you will not waste any of your potential study time. So, for example, if you can work productively for no more than around 40 minutes, setting aside an entire afternoon to write an essay is pointless. You will not produce as much as you had hoped, and you will be disappointed and a bit confused. If you knew that your optimal focus time was 40 minutes, you would have been able to set aside an hour a day for 5 days to write that essay.

The hour I mentioned in that last paragraph is important. Although you might discover that 40 minutes is your optimal focus time, you can expect that time to increase quite quickly as you work on a task over time. It would not be surprising to find that you had increased your optimal focus time to an hour within 2–3 days and perhaps one and a half hours by the end of a week.

There is a simple way to ascertain your optimal focus time. Take a repetitive study task and count how much you achieve in 20 minutes (say, how many paragraphs in a journal article you can read and make notes on, or how many pages of lecture notes you can reread and condense ready for future use). Repeat this for the next 20 minutes, and the next ... in one of those 20-minute slots you will find that your work rate drops like a stone. You will have covered perhaps

half as much as you were able to manage in the previous 20-minute slot. So, now you know your optimal focus time – it is the end of the 20 minutes when you last managed to keep up a good work rate.

[Begin scenario 1: explore your options]

Scenario 1

To help you analyse your use of time, think about the last time you were left unhappy at the end of a study day because it had not gone as well as you had expected. How did you feel?

I had such high hopes and then I could not keep to any task for more than 20 minutes.

If you could usually expect to work well for longer than this (and that is likely), then it is probably an external factor that tripped you up. Were you hungry or thirsty, cold or too hot? Had you had a poor night's sleep? Was something aside from your studying worrying or upsetting you?

I thought it was going so well, but by the end I realised that there was so much further to go.

Trust your instinct. If you felt it was going well, chances are that it was. Go back and check the lists of tasks you had set yourself. Was it too long to be realistic? Or did one of the tasks expand in a useful way as you were working, making your original list impossible? This would have been a good thing.

I had a feeling that something was wrong, and when I read my essay back to myself it was awful. I had to start the whole thing again.

Were you working longer than your optimal focus time? It is easy to feel demoralised in this situation, but it is unlikely that the whole essay was ruined. It is far more likely that you produced some very good material that now needs to be copied across to a new and better version of the essay. By doing this, you will not have wasted all of your time, and you will save time moving forward.

I felt a failure because I had coffee with a friend to take a little break and the afternoon just slipped away from me.

Have you included enough break opportunities in your personalised timetable? If you cram each day too full, the useful breaks that need to be part of your routine will be squashed out. You will be left feeling tired and guilty – you need to revisit your personalised timetable and make it more realistic and forgiving.

[End scenario 1: explore your options]

It is frustrating if you lose focus just at the point when you want to drive forward, especially if you have not given yourself quite enough time to complete a task with a deadline, but there is little point in pushing yourself beyond your optimal focus time. You will produce substandard work that you will then have to rework and revise. Much better to give yourself a complete break and return to it later, even if it means working a longer day and taking your relaxation in breaks throughout the day and evening. If you return too soon your optimal focus time will automatically shorten, so make sure that the breaks you take are long and thorough enough: a nap is often a good idea.

<p><!--Col Count:2-- >Table of Contents Heading 4:</p>	<p>Looking to Your Future</p>
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Topic 4.1: When Should I Start Preparing for My Future Career?

Managing your time within your study life is just one of two time challenges you face. You might also be thinking about the overall time of your study, and where this leads you. Some of this thinking might be around how you are going to develop the skills and knowledge you need to gain an impressive

qualification, but this leads you to the next thought: what happens next? Using some of your time at university or college to think forward to your professional life will pay dividends in the long run, of course, but you will want to be strategic in how you go about this.

For most students, it is not possible to sort out your entire career vision and make a workable plan to achieve your career goals over just the last few weeks of life as a student. Equally, coming to college or university with a firm conviction of exactly what your career will be, and refusing to budge from that, brings dangers with it, because you might miss opportunities to interrogate your career plans as you develop. Without doubt, you can achieve a tremendous amount in the last weeks of your course, but taking an incremental approach to your career plans, little by little each term, will give you the best chance to face the career marketplace with a solid and well-thought-out vision and a workable plan for success. Watch the video for the story of how one student managed his time to start preparing for his career after university. What advice does he give? How can you begin to implement this advice into your experience at college or university?

[Video 1](#). Managing Your Time Effectively to Prepare for Your Future Career

[insert video coding here as per encoding guidelines: ID is V1069889]

[transcripts are uploaded in SMART in four formats as file type 'Other']

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[Download transcript](#)

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Topic 4.2: Career Moments

Your career is not something that happens to you separately from your course; it is joined up with your studying life. By thinking about your career from time to time, you will be able to see the strong connection between what you are learning now and what you will be achieving in future. It will also allow you to see yourself as a developing professional, who any employer would be happy to engage. It is simply a case of recognising what those 'career moments' might look like for you.

We know that time can run away amazingly fast, so adding the term 'career moment' into your personalised timetable will, at the very least, give you pause for thought regularly. It may sometimes be no more than this: the chance to take a little time to reflect. You could be surprised at where that reflection leads: are you really an employee or more of a freelance person? Do you want to take time to travel or explore when you graduate? Would starting your own business appeal to you? How much does money matter to you? What would put you off a career option?

These career moments can be more productive if you mix them up a little. Sitting alone and reflecting is good, but so too is spending some of your precious time with fellow students to discuss your professional ideas and plans and – crucially – share information. You will feel even more inspired if you also make some more structured career moments, attending a course that you believe will help you develop your professional skills, for example. This can make you feel good – I really am doing something to further my career – and take the pressure off your usual study life for a short while, which in itself can be a good thing. It is a win-win situation.

Topic 4.3: What Would 'Career Moments' in My Personalised Timetable Look Like?

It can be difficult to imagine what these 'career moments' [<!--Q5: Production: link to topic 4.2 career moments-->](#) might look like in your study life, and if you do not have any clear sense of what they might be, it is difficult to stay motivated.

From the preceding topic, you know that some of them will be as simple as sitting for a while and reflecting on your career aspirations. To make the most of these, you could add some structure:

1. Buy a notebook that you use exclusively for your career moments, so that you can jot down your ideas as they arise and remind yourself of how your thinking has been developing. A set of notes on your phone or tablet might also work, but students tell me that they prefer this to be a physical notebook.

2. At the end of each career moment, you might make a note of what you want to do during your next career moment.
3. Add some research into your reflection so that you make the most of the time. Looking at the practicalities (and the starting salary!) of a professional role can help you focus on where you want to be.

If you are meeting with your fellow students, you can also maximise the benefit of your time together:

1. Always ask yourself if you are sitting with the best people for this. Your friends might have career plans that are very different from your own, so try to build a network of like-minded students with similar career goals so that you can work together effectively.
2. Change things up: Your career moment group might be large, but from time to time you might prefer to meet with just one or two fellow students to research a particular career area together.
3. An agenda for your meetings might seem too formal, but some preparation will save time. A list of a few of the things you might discuss can be useful.

If you are not reflecting alone or meeting with other students, your career moment will still be in your timetable. At times you might use this as a placeholder, a way to remind yourself to find some training, or do some career research. At other times you will have a specific career task in mind.

In the checklist below, there are well-defined career tasks you might undertake. It is not intended as a 'one-hit fix': you will be returning to these tasks repeatedly, so you need not feel that any of them represent a huge amount of time. Little and often is the best way with this.

[begin feature box]

Notes From the Field

Checklist – career moments in your action plans:

- Attend a drop-in session at your institution's Careers Service.
- Check out any life skill or life coaching sessions your institution runs – these often translate well into graduate attributes.
- See if your university or college is offering career tests online, such as finding your perfect career, or psychometric tests.
- Ambush yourself with your CV, if you have one: a quick glance, imagining you are an employer, can be very revealing.
- Browse around your university/college and Careers Service websites for a short while: what is on offer?
- Carry out some research into a career that you have heard about recently.
- Make a checklist of what you absolutely do not want from your career.
- Start listing the transferable skills that you have: these are skills that you are using or developing now that would be attractive to an employer.
- Note down some examples of achievements that would sound good at interview, and think about which skills or personal qualities these showcase.

[End feature box]

You could use your career notebook to list more career activities as they come to your mind. That way, you will have a list ready whenever you make your next personalised timetable.

There will be times in your study life when thoughts of a career are far from your mind, and other times when you are more focused on your professional future. Using your time in a planned way, by introducing these career moments, reduces the risk of your career being too far from your mind for too long, eliminating the feeling of panic that you might otherwise suffer from time to time. Career moments do more than that, though: they can make you feel positive about the future, and that can only ever help you.

Topic 4.4: How Do I Recognise My Mastery of Time?

Another skill in your time management skillset – and one that it takes years to master perfectly – is to recognise, quickly and reliably, the difference between ‘urgent’ and ‘important’. Busy people often have many urgent things to do and can wear themselves out in the doing of all of those tasks. Smart people are those who recognise, from the mass of demands upon their time, what it is truly important for them to achieve each day.

This insight will help you at university, but even more so as a professional. We have all seen leaders and motivators who never seem to panic but, somehow, just do a good job and move on: they recognise important and urgent, and are very clear about the difference. This is also a good example of a time management skill that you might not readily recognise in your skillset, but one that you can promote heavily to potential employers or business partners once you develop it.

[begin feature box]

Notes From the Field

I once had a student who kept a record of the steps she was taking to manage her time more efficiently. She returned to her notes regularly, to remind herself of the methods she needed to employ; she also noted down any time management techniques she came across, ready for future use. I thought at the time that she might have been getting a bit too serious about it all, but she kept in touch and, more than 6 years later, she told me that she was known as a lawyer who got things done, just because she reused, repurposed, and refined the techniques she had learnt at university for each new situation she faced.

This example illustrates what you can be doing right now to promote your career, and it applies to every single skill you are acquiring by using this Student Success resource. There are six steps to achieving this goal:

- Record skills that you are developing and those about which you already feel confident.
- Make a note of development opportunities for each skill: these are often the chance to try out a skill or to use it frequently in a study setting.
- Attend any training courses that are available to you for any underdeveloped skills that you know you are likely to need in your professional life.
- As each of your skills develops to a point where you are happy to shout about it, find an example in your study life (and/or perhaps your life away from studying) that demonstrates to an employer just how good you are.
- Make sure you are able to show the benefit that you (or others) have gained from your use of that skill.
- Be selective: No employer will have the time or inclination to read an overly long CV, or to listen to you listing skill after skill at interview, so decide in advance which skills you want to highlight for each professional setting and situation you will face.

[end feature box]

Topic 4.5: Promoting Your Skills

How do you select the best skills for a professional role you want, and how do you show off what you have achieved? The answer to the first is relatively simple: Do your research. Make sure that you have read both the job description and the person specification for any job you want, and also get a sense of what is really involved in the job by talking to professionals or scanning the details of several similar vacancies.

The answer to the second question is about how you present yourself. For the written aspects of any approach (to an employer or as part of your freelance drive), you need to be targeted. This means shouting about those skills and experiences that are most important in showing why you are the best person to bring a positive and sustained benefit to the organisation.

For the interactive aspects of your approach (an informal pre-application chat, a formal interview, a selection day), you still need to be clear about the skills you want to promote, but you can use the process itself to make opportunities for this promotion. Managing your time successfully is a skill you will want to highlight, and there are several ways to do this:

- In an informal pre-interview chat, take the chance to say how much you enjoy using a skill and, if you can, give an example of how much that skill has helped you in your studying (time management is a good skill to use in this situation).
- In an interview, when asked about something that went well for you, you could explain how your excellent time management skills helped you deliver a complex project on time.
- If you are asked about something that went wrong for you, you could turn to a team situation. You will not want to look as if you are blaming others, but talking about a challenge that the whole team faced and then explaining how good management of your time helped you all to bring the situation around, will impress a panel with your time management and also show you to be a great team player.

Taking this proactive approach to showing off your skill in managing your time, and using that to land a good job, is a fair reward for the work you are putting in now. It is also what time management gives you throughout your life: a sense that you can perform without being too stressed, that you can manage a variable and demanding workload, and that you can work with others productively. All of this, as with so much of your study life, is about taking control, and that is what managing your time well allows you to do.

Skill Self-Assessment

1. I am not sure if I have a problem with time management. (maps onto 2.1 How do I know if I need to work on my time management?)
2. I get frustrated because I am easily distracted from my work. (maps onto 2.2 How to make time)
3. I am a procrastinator, and it gets in the way of what I want to achieve. (maps onto 2.3 How to avoid losing time)
4. I don't have a very clear sense of what I need to do each day, or of how my study tasks all fit together. (maps onto 3.1 How do you use your time?)
5. My family are not sure what my campus life is like, and I struggle to find time for them. (maps onto 3.2 Time away from University)
6. I have never made a personalised timetable for myself. (maps onto 3.3 A Timetable that Works for You)
7. I am often dissatisfied with how much I can achieve each day. (maps onto 3.4 Using your time well)
8. I am not sure when to start planning for my career. (maps onto 4.1 When should I start preparing for my future career?)
9. I want to make the most of the time I have now to ensure a successful career in future. (maps onto 4.2 Career Moments)
10. I am not very clear about how my study life will help me achieve my professional goals. (maps onto 4.3 What would 'career moments' in my personalised timetable look like?)
11. I want to impress potential employers with the time management skills I am learning. (maps onto 4.4 How do I recognise my mastery of time?)
12. I want to promote all of my skills at interview. (maps onto 4.5 Promoting Your Skills)

