University of Johannesburg | PsyCaD Career Services

Career Services Quick Tips

STUDY SCHEDULE

UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG

MANAGING YOUR TIME EFFECTIVELY

University life comes with a lot of responsibility, and managing your time effectively is essential to success. Creating an effective study schedule is one of the most important tools for students to stay organised, meet deadlines, and reduce academic stress.

ASSESS YOUR CURRENT SCHEDULE

- **Identify Your Fixed Commitments** – Before planning your study time, make a list of your non-negotiable commitments, such as class schedules, part-time work, extracurricular activities, and family obligations. This gives you a realistic picture of your available time.
- **Track Your Time for a Week** – Spend a week noting how you use your time, whether you are working on assignments, socialising, or procrastinating. This helps you see areas where you can improve time management.
- **Determine Your Peak Study Times** – Some people are more focused in the morning, while others study better at night. Identify your peak productivity times and schedule your most demanding tasks during these hours.

SET REALISTIC AND CLEAR GOALS

- **Break Down Large Tasks** – Avoid feeling overwhelmed by big assignments or projects. Break them down into smaller, manageable tasks. For instance, instead of saying "Write the paper," break it into tasks like "Research sources," "Create outline," "Write introduction," and "Revise draft."
- **Daily and Weekly Goals** – Set achievable goals each day and week. For example, "Complete two chapters of biology notes" or "Review lecture slides for 30 minutes." Having these small targets will make it easier to track progress.
- **Use SMART Goals** – Make your study goals are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound (SMART). For example, "Study Chapter 3 for 1 hour before 17:00."

PRIOTIRISE YOUR TASKS

- **Identify Your Most Urgent Tasks** – Look at your upcoming deadlines, projects, and exams. Which tasks require immediate attention? Start with the highest priority tasks first.
- **Use the Eisenhower Matrix** – This system helps you categorise tasks into four types:
  → Urgent & Important (e.g., assignment due tomorrow), Important but Not Urgent (e.g., long-term project, exam prep), Urgent but Not Important (e.g., emails, social media), and Not Urgent & Not Important (e.g., distractions, TV).
- **Set Time Blocks for Difficult Subjects** – Study challenging subjects first or during your peak times when you are most focused.

BUILD A BALANCED SCHEDULE

- **Balance Study and Break Times** – Studying for hours on end can lead to burnout. Schedule breaks between study blocks. A typical recommendation is 50 minutes of study followed by a 10-minute break.
- **Mix Subjects and Topics** – To avoid mental fatigue, alternate between different subjects or topics. This method keeps your brain engaged and prevents boredom.
- **Do Not Overload Yourself** – Avoid cramming too many tasks into one day. Overloading can lead to anxiety and reduced productivity. Aim for 4-6 study blocks per day, depending on your energy levels.
- **Include Time for Socialising** – Balance is key. While academics are important, socialising is essential for mental health. Schedule time with friends, hobbies, or relaxation to recharge.

STICK TO A ROUTINE

- **Be Consistent with Your Study Time** – Try to study at the same time each day, building a consistent routine. When study time becomes a habit, it is easier to stay on track.
- **Avoid Procrastination** – Procrastination is the enemy of a good study schedule. Combat it by using techniques like the the 2-minute rule (if a task takes less than two minutes, do it right away).
- **Start Early** – Do not wait until the night before an exam or the deadline for an assignment. Begin preparing early and gradually, so you do not have to rely on last-minute cramming.

ADJUST THE SCHEDULE FOR FLEXABILITY

- **Be Adaptable** – Life is unpredictable, and unexpected things may come up. If you miss a study session or something does not go as planned, do not stress. Just adjust your schedule and move forward.
- **Adjust for Peak Study Times** – If you notice that you are more productive at different times (e.g., late night or early morning), adjust your study blocks to fit your natural rhythm.
- **Change Based on Deadlines** – When exams or projects are approaching, adjust your study schedule to give them priority. Allocate extra time for review as deadlines draw closer.

INCORPORATE BREAKS AND SELF-CARE

- **Take Regular Breaks** – Give your brain time to recharge by taking short breaks every hour. Taking breaks during study sessions can improve retention and reduce mental fatigue.
- **Engage in Physical Activity** – Exercise, even in small doses, can improve your focus, reduce anxiety, and boost overall mood. A short walk, stretching, or yoga session can be refreshing during a study break.
- **Mindfulness and Relaxation** – Practice mindfulness, deep breathing, or short meditation to reduce stress and clear your mind between study sessions.
- **Sleep Well** – Avoid all-night study sessions. Getting sufficient rest is crucial for memory consolidation, focus, and overall mental health.

SEEK SUPPORT

- **Study Groups** – Join study groups for collaborative learning. Discussing materials with peers can deepen your understanding and offer new perspectives on difficult topics.
- **Ask for Help** – If you are struggling with certain subjects or tasks, ask professors, tutors, or classmates for help. UJ offers ADC services which can help you succeed.
- **Accountability Partners** – Pair up with a friend or classmate to keep each other accountable for meeting study goals. This can be a great motivator.

REFLECT AND REVIEW

- **Weekly Check-Ins** – At the end of each week, review your progress. Reflect on what worked, what did not, and make necessary adjustments for the upcoming week.
- **Celebrate Small Wins** – Celebrate completing study sessions or reaching milestones in your study goals. Positive reinforcement will help you stay motivated.
- **Evaluate Your Goals** – If certain goals or tasks seem too overwhelming, reassess them. Break them down into smaller steps or adjust the timeline as needed.

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