

Managing your time is an important skill, particularly when you are studying and have many conflicting priorities and deadlines. Not only do you have the competing deadlines of many subjects, but you also have home and work commitments.

Time management is important to achieving your aspirations and goals with the least amount of stress, with personal satisfaction and enjoyment, and with your wellbeing intact!

## Your wellbeing is your priority

Time management is about scheduling – making sure you know what needs to be done and when you have time to do it. The most important thing is to schedule time for your social, emotional, spiritual, physical, and intellectual wellbeing. Time for work and study comes next. By placing a priority on your wellbeing your work and study will be more productive.

## Tips for optimal time management

**Keep a 'to-do' list.** Keep a list of the things you have to do as they come up. It will help you feel in control if you are not relying on your memory and it's on the list. Enjoy the satisfaction of crossing things off your to-do list as you achieve them.

**Set personal goals.** Know what your values and goals are. This helps motivate you to strive for success. If you don't know why you are doing something there is no drive to do it! This is when procrastination and lack of motivation can come into play.

**Prioritise.** Prioritise your wellbeing first. Eating and sleeping well, exercising, relaxation, and time with friends and family (including pets!) are the highest priority. Next determine which tasks that need to be done are the most important. For e.g. What do I need to do to ensure the family is okay? Does work take priority over study, or the other way around? Which assignments are due first? Which subjects do you find more difficult and will need more of your time?

**Make a plan.** Schedule time for your wellbeing followed by work and study. Use a planner – this

can be handwritten, a spreadsheet, or a scheduling tool from university. Break your study time down into "shifts" that are no more than two hours long. Even half an hour shifts are effective. Schedule breaks in between each "shift". The key is to start and end your shifts on time.

**Take breaks.** Use your breaks to take your attention away from your thinking and to focus on the present. This gives your brain and body a complete break. Do something simple like putting the washing on, do a relaxation technique, have a snack, or simply gaze out the window, paying attention to what you can see, hear and smell around you. Your thoughts will continue to generate worries and concerns, but just keep gently bringing your attention back to the present moment.

**Pace yourself.** Allow time for things to go wrong. Remember there are lots of things out of your control. What if you or someone close to you gets ill? What if your car breaks down? When things are going well and you are feeling good, then work a little bit harder, add in another "shift", step up the pace a little. This will allow you to step off the pace and drop a shift or two when things are not going so well - you will have some time in reserve to absorb something unexpected.

**Identify peak times.** Know when you work at your best. Is it morning, afternoons, or evenings? When do you naturally feel more energised and have more concentration? Which times are easier at home - when children are in bed, or your pet is not bothering you for a walk? Schedule high-value, more difficult tasks in your peak times and leave the less difficult, less important tasks for your "down" times.

**Manage distractions.** Distractions are a productivity zapper! Before you know it, you're off task, off schedule and getting behind. You then start scrambling to catch up, taking time away from your wellbeing and leading to increased stress. Distractions can be anything - email, social media, friends, pets, colleagues, hunger! Let people know when your breaks are scheduled and when you will be responding to social media and email. Eat regularly and schedule regular time for your pets so that they too know what to expect!

**Stay motivated.** Procrastination and lack of motivation are very much related. If you lack the drive to get started and stay on track, you will find it increasingly difficult as things begin to build and become overwhelming.

**Say no.** Are you a person who has “too much on your plate”? Do you find it hard to say no to people? Do you think that being busy means you’re being productive? Being busy can provide an adrenaline buzz but rarely means you are being effective and that buzz of adrenaline will eventually lead to chronic stress. Learn to say no more and focus on your priorities and your plan.

**Focus on one task at a time.** Research shows that multitasking is not effective. Try to focus on

one task at a time and complete it. Break tasks into mini-tasks if you find it difficult to stick on one topic for very long. While on task don’t be checking your emails or social media at the same time. Schedule separate times for these, perhaps a few times a day, so you’re not tempted to look at them while you’re on another task.

Good time management makes life easier and more enjoyable. If competing priorities are causing you distress, you are falling further and further behind in study, work or what needs to be done at home, then seek help. Contact JCU Student Equity and Wellbeing: <https://www.jcu.edu.au/student-equity-and-wellbeing>.

## Further information and support

- The JCU Learning Centre offers some great information and tools on time management <https://www.jcu.edu.au/students/learning-centre/getting-started>
- Download the JCU Student Equity and Wellbeing information sheet series <https://www.jcu.edu.au/student-equity-and-wellbeing/resources>
- MindTools Time Management [https://www.mindtools.com/pages/main/newMN\\_HTE.htm](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/main/newMN_HTE.htm)
- SkillsYouNeed Time Management Skills <https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ps/time-management.html>

## Student Equity and Wellbeing

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