

# Time-management and prioritisation

Stephen Griffin  
Academic Skills Centre



UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM

LIBRARY  
SERVICES

**Academic Skills Centre**  
[intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/asc](http://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/asc)

# What is time-management?

- Time-management is about organising competing priorities in limited time
- It often has very little to do with time
- It is about organising your life around things you designate as important, confronting more emotional issues like fear, inadequacy and other people's demands



# Where does your time go?



# The importance of managing your time

- You are an independent learner
- You have multiple commitments
- You need time to process new ideas
- You have intersecting deadlines



# The enemies of time-management

## Enemy no. 1: You

- Procrastination
- Perfectionism



# The enemies of time-management

Pr

facebook

LIX

- Putting
- Putting
- 
- Yo



PS4™



UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM

LIBRARY  
SERVICES

Academic Skills Centre  
[intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/asc](http://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/asc)

# The enemies of time-management

## Overcoming procrastination

- Identify smaller goals
- Start with a pleasant task to kick-start the activity
- Give rewards when goals are reached
- Time yourself, but do not underestimate requirements
- Ask someone to check up on you (accountability partner)
- Do one task at a time
- Use the Pomodoro technique, or similar



# The enemies of time-management

## Perfectionism

- Trouble getting started: waiting to be in the 'right mood' or for the 'right time'
- Trouble finishing: not knowing when enough is enough



# The enemies of time-management

## Perfectionism

- There is no 'right' time – get started as soon as possible; it's easier to edit a draft than to write something perfectly
- Set clear limits before you begin; how much is enough, given time and resources?



# The enemies of time-management

## No. 2: Your friends and family

- Learn to say no
- Educate others regarding your space and time



# The enemies of time-management

## Learn to say no

- No-one will think you're a bad person if you don't always say yes
- FOMO can be intense, but only leading up to an event, rarely after
- The stress caused by overloading yourself will impact on the people around you
- Your priorities come first – stick to your plan



# The enemies of time-management

Educate others regarding your space and time

- Set clear boundaries on when and where you are going to work
- Advertise these to those who may interrupt you
- They will learn to adjust, and you will relax more readily in your time off



# A six-step time-management strategy

1. Establish the scope of your work
2. Divide tasks into smaller units of activity
3. Prioritise conflicting tasks
4. Arrange activities using a timetable
5. Complete tasks according to timetable
6. Review and repeat



# 1. Establish the scope of your work

- Make a to-do list of tasks that need to be accomplished
- Include study and personal tasks
- Make a note of the deadlines for each one
- How much time do you (realistically) need to devote to each one



## 2. Divide tasks into smaller units of activity

- Carve wholes tasks into smaller, 25 minute units of activity
- Bullet-point practical steps to be completed within each unit
- Review to make sure all aspects of the task are covered



# 3. Prioritise conflicting tasks

	Urgent	Less Urgent
Important	<b>Crises</b> <b>Pressing Problems</b> <b>Deadlines</b> <i>Get these done</i> <b>A</b>	<b>Preparation</b> <b>Planning</b> <b>Relationships</b> <b>Leisure Time</b> <i>Bring these forward..</i> <b>B</b>
Less Important	<b>Interruptions</b> <b>phone calls</b> <b>meetings</b> <b>paperwork</b> <i>Can you delegate any?</i> <b>C</b>	<b>Junk mail</b> <b>Time wasters</b> <b>Escape activities</b> <b>Some phone calls</b> <i>Work to eliminate</i> <b>D</b>

## Quadrant A - Urgent and Important

The Quadrant of Necessities - reactive approach to tasks that need to be done

## Quadrant B - Important but not Urgent

The Quadrant of Quality - proactive approach to tasks that need to be done

## Quadrant C - Urgent but not Important

The Quadrant of Deception - where has the time gone?

## Quadrant D - Neither Urgent or Important

The Quadrant of Waste - can involve time wasters



List of things to do	<b>A</b> <b>Importance</b> Need to do scale 6 (unimportant) to 10 (essential)	<b>B</b> <b>Urgency</b> Do now scale 1 (must be done at once) to 5 (it can wait)	<b>C</b> Subtract the score in column B from column A. The higher scores in column C are priorities.	<b>D</b> Order of priority
1. Submit your essay for today's deadline				
2. Start to prepare your presentation for next week				
3. You require an urgent doctor's appt.				
4. Readings and notes for seminar tomorrow				
5. Book holiday for next summer				



List of things to do	<b>A</b> <b>Importance</b> Need to do scale 6 (unimportant) to 10 (essential)	<b>B</b> <b>Urgency</b> Do now scale 1 (must be done at once) to 5 (it can wait)	<b>C</b> Subtract the score in column B from column A. The higher scores in column C are priorities.	<b>D</b> Order of priority
1. Submit your essay for today's deadline	10	1	9	1
2. Start to prepare your presentation for next week	8	3	5	3
3. You require an urgent doctor's appt.	10	1	9	1
4. Readings and notes for seminar tomorrow	9	2	7	2
5. Book holiday for next summer	6	5	1	4



## 4. Arrange activities using a timetable

- Arrange units into a formal timetable
- All units should fall before task deadline (or, if possible, a premature deadline)
- Assess the feasibility of these actions



## 5. Complete tasks according to timetable

- Work in 25 minute bursts, followed by five-minute breaks (reward yourself here!)
- After four rounds of units, take a longer break (reward again!)
- Check off bulleted goals at the end of each burst
- Save ALL other activity for the breaks
- See Pomodoro Technique guidelines



# 6. Review and repeat

- At the end of each block of study, review your progress
- Are you on track?
- If not, how can you reprioritise your time to accommodate?
- Can lower priority tasks be cut or deferred?
- Repeat the planning and prioritising steps, if necessary



# Exams

- Implement personal revision plans
- Be active and interactive
- Use past papers
- Use other students
- Talk through your ideas and arguments



# Academic Skills Centre



**First floor,  
Main Library**

**[asc@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:asc@contacts.bham.ac.uk)**

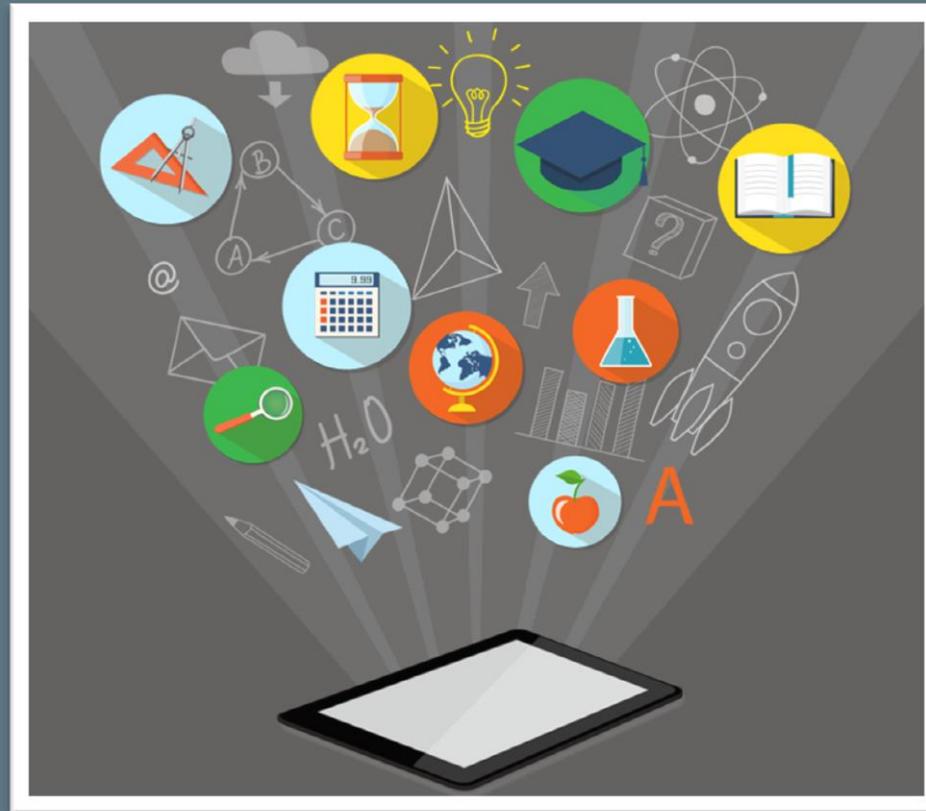


**UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM**

**LIBRARY  
SERVICES**

**Academic Skills Centre**  
[intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/asc](http://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/asc)

# Academic Skills Gateway



<http://libguides.bham.ac.uk/asg/home>



UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM

LIBRARY  
SERVICES

**Academic Skills Centre**  
[intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/asc](http://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/asc)