

# PLANNING PRODUCTIVE STUDY BLOCKS

How to get the most out of your study time

## PLAN AND PRIORITIZE IN ADVANCE:

- Plan and organize your schedule at the start of the semester.
  - See the handouts: **Planning a Weekly Schedule** and **Managing Your Semester**.
- Set aside time each week to look at your **due dates for the upcoming weeks** to decide **what** to work on.
  - **Ask yourself:** What is due shortly? What is easy to do that you could get out of the way? What is **difficult** and might take longer? What is **worth a significant amount**? Decide the number of pages to read, the number of paragraphs to write, etc.
- **Plan a week** of study blocks at a time to complete the tasks you have to do.
- For big assignments, **schedule more time** than you expect to need in case of delays.

## GET TO KNOW YOURSELF:

- Before you can set realistic study goals for yourself, try to estimate how long you can focus and be productive on different types of tasks and then plan accordingly.
- **Ask yourself:**
  - How long does it take for me to **read and take notes** on 10 pages in a textbook?
  - How long does it take for me to **write a body paragraph** in an essay?
  - How long does it take for me to **write a Works Cited or References page**?
  - How long does it take for me to **proofread a five-page essay**?
  - How long does it take for me to ...?

## BREAK ASSIGNMENTS INTO SMALLER, MORE MANAGEABLE TASKS:

- Refer to your **assignment instructions** to figure out the individual **tasks** needed to complete each assignment. Some examples may include:
  - creating an outline of an essay (thesis & topic sentences)
  - finding examples to support your ideas
  - writing one paragraph of a paper (the introduction, a body paragraph, etc...)
  - proofreading and editing a paper
  - researching secondary sources
- **Estimate** how much time you need to accomplish each task.
- **Assign tasks** to study blocks, creating 'to-do' lists. Use an agenda or photocopies of a Weekly Schedule to do this.
- Set out to **accomplish** one small task during a short study block. During longer study blocks, set out to accomplish two tasks.
- When done, cross items off. This can have a positive psychological effect.



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Continued

## TIPS:

### Get motivated and stay motivated:

- **Acknowledge when you are on-track or complete a task you set out to do.** Reward yourself.
- **Let your friends know** your study schedule so you can be accountable to one another, and they will know not to contact you during those times.
- **Create a study group** to provide motivation. It is much harder to neglect your studies if others are counting on you to be present at a certain time and to be focused on the subject. See below for more information.
- Staying motivated helps you prevent procrastinating.
  - See the handout: **Overcoming Procrastination.**

### Create a proper study space if possible:

- Use a clear desk surface with good lighting, a computer, writing supplies, and reference books.
- Remember to turn off notifications on your phone.

### Switch subjects from time to time:

- To avoid boredom and fatigue during longer blocks of time, aim to work on different subjects.
  - For example, do one hour of Economics, take a 15-minute break, then do one hour of Western Civ., etc...

### Set aside study blocks to review your notes regularly:

- After initially reviewing your class notes within a day of taking them, you should still continue to review them regularly, along with notes you have taken on required readings.
- Regularly reviewing your notes, even when a test is not scheduled yet, will constantly reinforce the information in your mind, allowing it to sink into your long-term memory:
  - See the handout: **Using your Notes to Study.**

### Join or organize a study group:

- Study groups can be held during study blocks that are at least **one hour** long. Place your regular study group meetings on your weekly schedule.
- They can be online or in-person, depending on availability and preference.
- They work especially well for classes in which you have a lot of material to study.
  - See the handout: **Learning with a Study Group.**



For more information, contact the Academic Skills Centre (ASC).