

How can I manage my time better?

Managing time is one of the biggest challenges of life at Cambridge. Most people find that the volume of work takes them by surprise, and if you're struggling to get everything done it can feel as if you are the only one, even though there are many others in the same boat. This may make you reluctant to ask for help, but please remember that using study time well is a skill that can be learned, and that your supervisors and DOS, as well as other students, may be able to help. There are also lots of great suggestions here:

<https://www.transskills.admin.cam.ac.uk/>. Here are some to get you going:

- Whenever you have a piece of work assigned, look at your calendar, and work out how much time you have to work on it, and if it helps you to do so, break the assignment down into stages or sections so you can see if you're on track. If it's a type of assignment you've not done before, it's OK to ask your supervisor how long it's likely to take and for suggestions about how to use your time well.
- If you have what feels like a mountain of reading to do for an essay, develop ways of approaching your reading list a bit more strategically:
 - You probably aren't expected to read everything cover to cover – and if you're not sure what's expected, ask your supervisor.
 - Especially if a topic is completely new to you, ask your supervisor what to read first. It's much easier to take in and remember information and ideas if you have a general idea of the lie of the land, or 'hooks to hang things on'. Sometimes (though not always) there's one short item on the reading list that will give you this.
 - Try and work out (by asking, if necessary!) what are the key concepts / terms that you need to learn about for the assignment, and then make use of contents pages, indexes, chapter and section headings to home in on the bits of the reading list that you need.
- When taking notes for an essay:
 - try not to write things down word for word unless you think you'll need to quote them; instead, try to summarise the key points in your own words – this will be a good sign that you've understood what you've read.
 - Always note the page number and title of the book/article
 - find a way to differentiate between exact quotes (use quote marks for this), your paraphrases (perhaps use just plain text without quote marks for this) and your own thoughts (square brackets work well for this).

Doing this may take a little more time, but it's a good investment.

- If you realise you've not got enough time to finish the assignment ready for your deadline or supervision, don't give up. Think about what's going to be most useful to do in whatever time you have left. For an essay, this might be completing the whole essay plan to show your argument, even if you don't have time to write everything up in full sentences. For science subjects, it might mean tackling one of each kind of problem so that you are able to engage with the whole supervision.
- If you are finding it difficult to manage your time and get your work done, have a look at your diary and be honest with yourself about why this is. Achieving a good, healthy work-life balance is really important, and this looks different for everyone.
 - If you are working hard every day and it still feels as if you are not keeping up, it may be worth talking to your DOS about additional study skills support.
 - You may realise that you have a lot of commitments or that you signed up for something without realizing how time consuming it would be, and need to create some space.
 - Or you may realise that you're finding it hard to concentrate or focus to make the most of your time, perhaps because of anxiety or another welfare issue – please do be in touch with welfare team if you could do with a bit of extra support.

NB your wellbeing matters: if you are frequently finding that you are sacrificing sleep to get your work done, please don't suffer in silence.