

STRATEGIES FOR GETTING ORGANIZED

- 1) **CHECK UP ON YOUR MOTIVATION.** Remind yourself of your reasons for studying – revisit your motivations, hopes and goals!
- 2) **PLAN AHEAD!** Use a semester planner to make deadlines clear and to provide the “big picture” of busy periods. Use weekly planners to set yourself study sessions and weekly goals. Use daily session “to do” lists to prioritize work.
- 3) **BREAK EACH ASSIGNMENT INTO MANAGEABLE CHUNKS.** Give each chunk a realistic deadline. Chunk deadlines can then guide you on what to work on each week. Just focus on one chunk at a time. This approach can help you “sneak up” on getting the task done!
- 4) **WORK AT TIMES OF THE DAY THAT ARE MOST PRODUCTIVE FOR YOU.** Do you work better am or pm? Use this information to help plan when you’ll do your study sessions. Plan to do easiest tasks (eg filing notes) at your least productive times.
- 5) **ORGANIZE YOUR ENVIRONMENT** Create a simple filing system, have plenty of pens and paper, a comfy chair and good lighting. Make your room or study area tidy and conducive to work in.
- 6) **ANTICIPATE AND COUNTER POTENTIAL DISTRACTIONS.** Eg: the refrigerator!, phones, noise, TV, unexpected visitors etc – see the “timesaving strategies” handout for hints.
- 7) **HAVE CLEAR PRIORITIES FOR EACH STUDY SESSION.** Know where to start. Rank the tasks for each session (and don’t just do the low ranking ones!).
- 8) **ANTICIPATE AND CHALLENGE “STINKING THINKING!”** such as: “I need some fun first”.... “I’m not in the mood, I’ll do it later”.... “I’ll do it tomorrow”..... “I need to get out and clear my mind first”..... “I work better under pressure”.....
- 9) **TAKE REGULAR AND REJUVENATING BREAKS.** Schedule 5-10 minute breaks every hour. Choose break activities that are a) different from what you are doing (eg. don’t read the newspaper if your eyes are tired); b) are in your control to end quickly (eg. don’t sit in front of the TV and stay for the entire programme!!) and c) rejuvenate you: eg. get some fresh air; do stretching or physical exercises; or go for a brisk walk. (From: Being a More Effective Learner, Learning Centre, 2001. p 21.)
- 10) **REWARD YOURSELF.** Reward yourself when you complete a scheduled session or task. Also give yourself mental encouragement along the way eg: “yeehaa one chunk down!”, “I CAN get this done”. You can also try a little positive peer pressure to keep you going: eg. tell everyone what you are going to achieve today. Make sure that you keep a balance between work and play.
- 11) **START TO DRAFT EARLY.** Just get started! The biggest mental block in getting an assignment done is usually after the research/reading and before the writing stage. So, making those first notes, points or sentences is a significant emotional and cognitive breakthrough! Limit time allocated to research and leave plenty of time for drafting in your overall plan. Tell yourself: “Just make a start - I can fine tune later”. “Be realistic. Don’t aim for perfection!” “Handing in adequate, completed work is better than missing the deadline, getting penalized and feeling awful again”.
- 12) **ASK FOR HELP.** If you don’t understand what a task involves ASK a tutor or friend to explain it! OR If financial, relationship or family problems are getting in the way of study talk with someone about working things out e.g. see someone at the counselling service.