

MAKING THE MOST OF STUDYING

Studying, getting homework and assignments done and sitting exams can be difficult at the best of times, and they feel even harder if you are stressed out. Developing good study habits, managing your time and dealing with stress as it happens can all help you to stay on top of your study so that it doesn't get you down.

STUDY HABITS

Good study habits can help you to learn better and makes sure that you get everything done. Here are some tips for a helpful start:

- 1. Have a study area.** Make sure it is well lit and away from noise and other people in the house. If this is not possible, it might be better to study at the library. Make sure your study area is comfortable BUT also tidy and organised – this helps with concentrating on study and learning!
- 2. Avoid distractions.** Phone calls or emails are not a good idea when you are trying to study. It might help to put the answering machine on or get others in the house to take messages for a while. You can always ring people back later.
- 3. Battle procrastination.** Even when you want to study, it can be hard not to procrastinate. Procrastination is when you do everything except what you need to do. It is normal to do this a little, but too much procrastination can just add to your stress and result in you not giving yourself enough time to study.
- 4. Manage your time.** To avoid procrastinating, find ways to manage your time. Ensure you have ample time finish a task.
- 5. Set a long term and mini goals.** Setting targets for yourself will really help you study effectively. Mini goals are especially important, as they pave the way to achieving long term objectives. Reward yourself after the successful completion of each mini goal.
- 6. Have regular breaks.** Getting up, moving around and away from your desk at least every 50 minutes for 10 minutes makes you concentrate and learn better.
- 7. Know your preferred learning style.** 'Learning styles' refer to how you process information. Everybody has different learning styles and it helps to work out which is most useful for you. For example, some people work better using text-based memory tools (like acronyms), while others find visual tools (like mind maps or tree diagrams) more useful.

Meeting deadlines for homework or assignments or preparing for exams can sometimes seem overwhelming. It can be helpful to make a study timetable so that you can balance study and your other commitments. Write down all the things you need to do each day of the week, and how long you need for each, including time for enough sleep, relaxation, and exercise.

MANAGING YOUR TIME

Exams. If you have exams coming up, find out the date of each exam and work out a study timetable leading up to them. Include mini tests that will help you identify gaps in your knowledge. This can give you some direction and help you focus on what to study each week or day.

Coursework. If you have multiple deadlines, find out the precise due dates. From there, breakdown the workload so that assignments can be completed in a realistic and timely manner.

Calendars and timetables. This can be bought, made or even created online or on your phone. Leave it where you will see it and make sure you have frequent access to it. Use bright and colourful sticky notes and pens to warn of approaching deadlines.

To do lists. Each day you sit down to a task (coursework or study), make a 'to do' list. Prioritise what needs to be done first. Breaking what you need to do down into small, manageable tasks will make it seem less overwhelming. Crossing each thing off as you complete it can give you a sense of achievement and helps you manage the time you have left.

Studying smart does not just happen – it is a skill that needs to be developed. So, allow yourself time to get good at it! Remember to be successful at study also means taking good care of your mental and physical health. You are not a machine!

KEY POINTERS

- If you still feel lost, that is OKAY. However, **TELL SOMEONE** about it. A parent or adult friend can help you get things in perspective or offer advice on better ways to manage your study.
- Alcohol or other drugs (including lots of caffeine or other energy boosting drinks) won't take away the pressure of study and the after-effects often make you feel even worse.
- Being organised will help you to make sure that you don't leave everything to the last minute, and will also make you feel more in control.
- Even though you might not feel like you have time, exercising, eating well and plenty of sleep are also important.
- Having a balance of activities in your life can help you to avoid burning out. It's a good idea to find time each day for relaxing, being active and hanging out with friends.