

Study habits and skills

A

Time management

West Preston University has a web-based self-assessment questionnaire on time management.

Time management: Rate your ability to organise your time.

	often	sometimes	never
1 Do you begin working on end-of-semester assignments early in the semester?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2 Do you meet deadlines ¹ for submitting work?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3 Do you ever have to request an extension ² for your work?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4 Do you spend hours cramming ³ just before an exam?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5 Do you make a to-do list ⁴ each week?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6 Do you include extra-curricular ⁵ activities when you plan your study time?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

¹ complete your work by the official final day or time ² ask for more time beyond the deadline
³ try to learn a lot very quickly before an exam ⁴ make a list of things you should do ⁵ outside of the subjects one is studying

B

Study habits and problems studying

Here are some students' comments about study habits and problems associated with studying.

'I try to **prioritise**¹ the most difficult or urgent task first, when I feel more motivated.'

'I'm a slow reader. I need to improve my **reading speed**. I find **revision** before exams really difficult. I can only revise for about two hours at a time. **My mind starts to wander**².'

'I always try to **review**³ my lecture notes within 24 hours of the time I took them. I do need to improve my **note-taking**.'

'I use tricks to **memorise** things, like **mnemonics**⁴ and **visualising**⁵. I try to **brainstorm**⁶ the topic and draw **mind maps**⁷ before I write a first **draft**⁸ of an essay.'

'I know **rote learning**⁹ isn't very fashionable nowadays, but I find it useful to learn some things **by heart**¹⁰, especially lists of things.'

'I try to make a **study plan** each semester – but I never manage to keep to it!'

'I always try to get the books I need from the library on **long-term loan**. **Short-term loan** is never long enough, even though you can sometimes extend it for 24 hours.'

'In an exam I make **rough**¹¹ notes for each question, otherwise my mind just goes **blank**¹².'

¹ decide which things are the most important so that you can deal with them first ² I start thinking of things not connected to my studies
³ read or study again ⁴ e.g. a very short poem or a special word used to help you remember something ⁵ forming an image in your mind
⁶ think of a lot of ideas very quickly before considering some of them more carefully
⁷ diagram or drawing showing how different

ideas on a topic are related ⁸ text containing all the main ideas but not in a fully developed form ⁹ (often used with a negative association) learning something so you can repeat it from memory, rather than understand it ¹⁰ in such a way that you can say it from memory ¹¹ not exact or detailed; approximate ¹² you cannot remember a particular thing, or you cannot remember anything

Exercises

21.1 Match the first part of the word combination on the left with the second part on the right.

meet	to-do	extra-curricular	study	activities	an extension	loan	draft
time	long-term	lecture	note-	deadlines	learning	plan	management
request	first	rote	draw	mind maps	list	taking	notes

21.2 Complete each sentence with a word combination from 21.1.

- 1 I always try to _____ but this time I'm afraid I'm going to have to _____ . If only I could stick to the _____ I make at the beginning of every semester!
- 2 You should show the _____ of your essay to your tutor before you do any more work on it.
- 3 Helena missed the class but she borrowed the _____ from a friend.
- 4 Some people find it more helpful to _____ when they are studying than to take traditional notes.
- 5 This is an incredibly useful book. Fortunately, I've been able to take it out of the library on _____ .
- 6 Students who are working part-time as well as studying have to be particularly good at _____ .
- 7 Some students get distracted from their studies by all the _____ which most universities offer.
- 8 I always make a _____ when I'm getting ready to go on a trip.
- 9 _____ is often considered a very old-fashioned way of learning nowadays.
- 10 _____ is very important during lectures; you can't remember everything.

21.3 Answer these questions about study habits.

- 1 Can you think of an example of a mnemonic?
- 2 If you were brainstorming some good study habits, what would you write down?
- 3 In your opinion, what sorts of things are useful to learn by heart?
- 4 When do you start cramming before an exam?
- 5 Does your mind ever wander when you are studying? If so, what do you start thinking about?
- 6 Have you ever experienced your mind going blank during an exam?
- 7 Do you try to prioritise certain types of work? Which types?
- 8 Why is it a good idea to make rough notes before answering an exam question?

21.4 Here are some more useful words relating to study habits. Say in your own words what each expression in bold means. Use a dictionary to help you if necessary.



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FOLLOW UP

Ask some of your fellow students about their study habits using the questions from the questionnaire on the opposite page.