

Transcript for Working Remotely: Time Management

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Slide 1 - Introduction (00:00-1:00)

This video focuses on time management particularly when working remotely. Effective time management is particularly important when you're not physically at university. You will have discovered all sorts of different ways of working at university but now there are going to be potentially many more distractions such as maintaining a home, you might have caring responsibilities, the need to keep in touch with family and friends, keeping abreast of current affairs, as well as looking after your mental health. And you may feel that while you had mastered work/life balance before when you were studying or researching at university you now need to kind of reappraise your approach to time management. So this video is going to talk you through some of the basics to time management to forming a particular strategy and thinking about some of the tools you can employ when doing that.

Slide 2 SMART objectives (1:01-1:43)

There are a number of questions that we need to address when thinking about managing our time and if you just take a little bit of time before you embark on a task ask yourself these questions you will often find that it will save you quite a lot of time in the long run.

So we've got the 'what?' and this the most obvious of all the making of the list but also 'how' are you going to approach it? why are you doing it? thinking about motivational factors, when are you going to do it? this is the diarising of any to-do list and the where? just making sure that you have a conducive environment to particularly work in.

So what we'll do is take each of these questions in turn and think about ways of strategically approaching them .

Slide 3 Obstacles to Managing Time (1:44-3:05)

As well as knowing what makes really good time management and what questions to ask ourselves, we also have to think about the obstacles to time management: what is stopping us getting things done. And it might be that we feel we've got too much to do and there of course infinite things that

we can fill our time with. When we say that we've got too much that we want to do, what we possibly mean is that something for us isn't a particular priority right now. 'I haven't got time to do that because I have got to do something else'. And those priorities might be set by deadlines, things that we kind of have to do, the priorities might be set by things that you really want to do and are important for you right now and that's something really to bear in mind when we are thinking about working remotely is making sure that you punctuate your day with things that you really want to do, that make you feel happy and calm and rested and positive.

We may also think about the things that are actually outside our control. We may have caring responsibilities for family and friends or chores to do such as cooking and cleaning and shopping sometimes these impact in a controllable way we can schedule a time to chat with friends in the evening but particularly with caring responsibilities you have to do something right now and addressing those upfront making sure that you know when those demands will be and then you can potentially work around them and that helps you allot particular slots of time to things that are more non-negotiable.

Slide 4 'What?' and 'How?' of Time Management (3:06-5:24)

So to address the first of our questions: the what? What is it that we want to achieve and as I said, this is probably the kind of obvious one, this is the to-do list that we quite often write on a scrap of paper to remind ourselves what we need to get done today. What you need to think about first of all is what you aim is. Whether it is for the next hour or the next day. What is it that you want to achieve, the big overall thing? Then we need to think about the objectives. These are going to be the specific steps you take to achieve a desired outcome and knowing what you want to achieve and the steps you need to take to get there means that you are going to be much more efficient and effective when you are actually working.

Now you might have come across this idea before of setting SMART objectives. And this is an acronym with each letter standing for a particular way of approaching time management.

So think about a specific objective, being precise, that way you know when you achieved something. Rather than having a kind of an overwhelming list of tasks, the idea is that actually this is breaking things down into manageable chunks. that way you can tick things off your list and you definitely get a greater sense of satisfaction i think when you have achieved something even if it is really small.

Then you need to make sure that your objectives are measurable – how will you know when you have finished? Is it because you have spent two hours on something and that was your way of measuring whether or not you have achieved something, was it the quantity you need to actually complete a particular chapter of your thesis. If it is the latter and it is about quantity then make sure you take regular breaks or perhaps have a maximum time allocated to something so that you don't lose productivity because definitely people work better when they have short breaks on a regular basis.

Then make sure that you're objective is achievable. And this kind of is the big question: can you actually do this or not. Have you got the right skills and adequate resources, have you got the right literature in front of you? Do you actually need to take half an hour to watch a video to learn how to do something first?

And then Realistic which seems kind of quite similar but is actually kind of could I do it now? Am I likely to get disturbed or have I over committed yourself with the amount of work, is this a realistic thing to actually ask myself to do?

And then finally about 'time', both is it timely - do you actually need to do it now and time-bound, have you set yourself a time limit.

Slide 5 'When?' of Time Management (5:25-6:46)

So the 'when?' of doing something: this is knowing exactly what you have got to do at a particular time so this when you get your calendar out your diary out you look to the week ahead. It can be really easy to feel overwhelmed by a to-do list so definitely dividing things up by time is really important. You need to prioritise what actually has to be done now and that might be really important things and less important things and then you need to rank them accordingly within that sort of priority of something that needs doing now and then what can be done later and again things that are important should probably be done before things that aren't important. And the best thing you can do here is imagine an ideal scenario so map out your time how you would really like things to progress now we all know that things can take longer than planned or that something unexpected can crop up but think about how you want it to work and when you are doing that be realistic and build in buffers catch up time and then this will allow you to be flexible so you have your ideal one but just knowing full well that actually it is really helpful to have the last half hour of every day or to give yourself an hour and half at lunch so that you can squeeze that slightly and maybe only have a half hour lunch break if need be.

The next thing you need to do then is divide up what you want to do into different time scales.

Slide 6 Planners (6:47-08:06)

So however you decide to divide things up into different time scales one way to do it is to use a series of planners. This might be an online diary or a paper diary or actually a piece of paper so that you can plan and you can see at a glance what you have got to do. And to think about it in different scales so first of all think about Long Term - what have you got to do this term or even longer you know over the course of a year or if you have got a particular project for the duration of the project. Then to think about medium term so what have I got to do this week and that really helps you hone in on tasks and that can give you that little bit of flexibility that's the sort of one that allows you to think 'oh gosh, what didn't I finish last week?' um 'what do I have to do at some point?' but it doesn't particularly matter which day and which are the non-negotiables, which do I have to do on a particular day. And then to think about your short term planning so what am I going to do this morning, this afternoon, this evening? So by narrowing down focusing down hopefully that great long unruly to-do list becomes far more manageable and you get a better sense of calm by allocating time to particular tasks.

Slide 7 'Where?' of Time Management (08:07-10:46)

Then the next and final of our questions is where?, where are we going to do it? so first of all thinking about your physical space. Some tasks have to be in a particular room so if one of your jobs is to tidy a room or cook dinner then it will have to take place in a particular space but if you are working remotely you will have to set up a desk somewhere you will have to set up a work space this might be in your room, it might be in a communal area and to think about the challenges that presents. Where possible, try and have a space that is yours, have a box for something to store your materials in so that if the table has to be used for some other purpose you know exactly where your things have gone, they haven't suddenly been distributed around the house. Make sure if you can that you are well-lit, good ventilation, that you feel comfortable and warm in that, try and get the chair at the right height, whether it is using cushions or adapting a table appropriately. SO much sure that your physical space works for you.



Then think about physical notes. what else have you got around you. So you are going to need access potentially to some books to a notepad make sure you are not working on loose leaf bits of paper if you don't then put them in a folder at the end of the day because there is nothing worse than finding things all over the place or in the wrong order.

And then to think about digital files. I see a lot of student who open up their laptop and their desktop is absolutely covered in files. If you can try not to use your desktop as a dumping ground. Try to have as many folders as possible for different files and even get folders within those folders and it is far better to have some empty folders, to try and imagine what you might put in to those places than trying to retrospectively do it because it is really difficult to wade through hundreds and hundreds of files.

And remember that when you are renaming files when you are saving either your own files or pdfs that you have downloaded try and make those names as meaningful as possible. Make them intuitive, so perhaps have a prefix for the type of document that it is if it is an article that you are reading or if it is your own essay or if it is notes um give it a useful title not just Essay 1 or Essay 2 and then some sort of version control. So have a year, have a date something that is going to help you put stuff in order. Because it is very easy to end up with lots of different documents with really similar names. And really this where is the final thing that you need to do in order to prepare yourself before you get started in a piece of work or a task but if you end up spending half an hour every day sorting out your work environment sorting out things on your desktop whether that is physical or digital then actually that is time lost and unless you actually factor that into your day it can feel like you're constantly chasing yourself.

Slide 8 Tools for Managing Your Time (10:47-13:22)

The good news is that there are all sorts of tools out there to help you manage your time. Um really obvious things that we said some sort of planner or a piece of paper next to your computer that has a to-do list on to calendars as well and there are some particular bits of software that really promote themselves and are aimed at trying to make you as productive as possible.

First of all thinking about calendars. I tend to use Google calendar but there are lots on phones on email clients um it can also be a physical calendar or a diary as well. The nice thing about organising your work through a calendar is that it forces you to decide how much time you are going to spend on a task, rather than just a to-do list where everything is kind of on an equal hierarchy in your calendar you can block out two hours of working time and then you can put in, perhaps you have got an online meeting with a Director of Studies or a Supervisor and then that is non-negotiable, you have to go to that meeting. So it helps break up time it helps you see the pattern of your particular day. Um there are lots of task functions as well. Again I use Google Tasks and the nice thing about these is that recur if I haven't ticked them off. So if I don't do something one day it will move on to the next day.

There are other ways of keeping plain to-do lists, you can put Stickies on your desktop, Microsoft does that, there is Google Keep, OneNote which is through Microsoft or Evernote and Evernote is something that I use a lot for notemaking but it also has a to-do list function um and you can set up alerts that will then sync with your calendar again if you haven't actually achieved something that you said you were going to. Another bit of software out there is Roam Research. This aimed at notemaking and writing but very much for researchers and has an advanced to do list which integrates really nicely with the work that you are carrying out.



Other bits of software to try particularly relate to things like project management; this idea of having ongoing tasks. Um so there's software such as Any.do, Notion, and Trello.

And Trello is something that I have used quite a lot so you can have different panes for different/particular tasks so you have an overarching topic and then all thing that you need to achieve to get to that final one. That's quite nice you're working on an essay, we know that just 'do essay' isn't going to be a very useful um entry on our to-do list whereas actually if break it down into different sections then when we we've completed we can drag and drop those sections out into a completed folder.

[Slide 9 Contact Details \(13:23-14:03\)](#)

So this is just a very quick overview some of the main things to think about if you find that you are not managing your time particularly well or you are looking for tips to manage your time but if you do have any particular questions relating to your own circumstances or about any of the tools that we have mentioned in this slideshow then please do get in touch with me either by email (academic-support@wolfson.cam.ac.uk) or you can message me on Microsoft Teams (lkj26).

