

# Developing Essential Study Skills

## Introduction

There are numerous skills required to enable a student to study at university to the best of their ability. Each skill is equally important, and they all contribute to the success of an assignment. (Gettinger and Seibert 2019). Good study skills include things such as note taking, academic reading, paraphrasing, critical analysis, research, referencing and many more. Below is an overview of four of the skills that are needed to enable study and an assignment to be successful.

## Time Management

Time management is an important study skill. It is having the ability to make time purposeful by using the time effectively. In order to do so, a person should organise and share their time between tasks or events they need to complete whilst planning how much time they need to spend on each task or event to ensure that they are complete within the appropriate time. According to Cottrell (2019) a person should set themselves deadlines for completing assignments earlier than the official submission date and leave time to fine-tune their work so that enables them to manage any unforeseen circumstances. For good time management to take place, Mcmillan and Weyers (2012) support the fact that breaking initial barriers is important. They suggest that if a person lacks initial motivation to begin work, they should think about the degree and focus on how the task is going to help them to reach the final goal. Even though the task may seem small at the time, it is essential to enable them to achieve. Three time management issues that students can overcome, are planning, procrastination and perfectionism. Students can gain problems regarding time management if their plans are not realistic or are unclear. Some students struggle to manage their time due to procrastination. Another problem for students can be perfectionism. Spending too much time trying to get things perfect can cause other tasks to build up and become unmanageable. (Moore 2010). A student's time can be managed using techniques or tools such as a study timetable, a diary or planner or lists that can be checked off as each target is met. (Cottrell 2019).

## Wellbeing

Mcmillan and Weyers (2021) point out that wellbeing is a physical state as well as the condition of state of mind. They say that it can be defined as being happy, healthy and comfortable and believe that people should adopt a positive outlook on life. Whilst they recognise that it is not always possible with some of the pressures and challenges that people face, they believe that people should try to maintain a balanced perspective. Hughes et al (2019) claim that a certain amount of stress is good for a person. They believe that it gives “targets to reach, ambitions to fulfil and success to achieve”. (Hughes et al, 2019, p. 99). Whilst they believe this to be true, they also point out that too much unhealthy and destructive stress can take a person into a zone that can be detrimental to their mental wellbeing and may cause depression or anxiety. Watchwellcast (2013) believe that sleep can influence a person's wellbeing as it can be connected to physical and mental health. They point out that one should develop a relaxing ritual at bedtime whilst maintaining a routine and a good sleep pattern for at least 6 days of the week. During the time spent at university studying, Cottrell (2021) maintains that students should gain as much support, inspiration, advice and guidance as possible, using the professional services on campus or online. She says that gaining support is essential if a student is unclear of the steps of progression.

## Research

Before beginning any research, a student should ensure that they are going to be researching information that is relevant to their subject and that it will also contribute to their prior knowledge. (Bedford and Wilson 2020). Wilson and Bedford (2009) state that when conducting their research, a student should use key words and phrases and avoid being vague, this will help gain an effective search of information. They also suggest that students ensure that they use appropriate sources that are reliable, credible and academic. Whilst carrying out research, Eales-Reynolds et al (2013) argue that a person needs to take a critical thinking approach to the information received so that they can make positive and negative judgements, without being biased, whilst also questioning the authority and authenticity and not simply believe the information to be true. Wilson and Bedford (2009) say that when researching, it is important to take into consideration the date the information was written. This will also ensure that the data is current and relevant. When a student has completed the research, it is important that they review and evaluate their findings to make sense of the information before writing it up and paraphrasing it ready for an assignment. (Smale and Fowlie (2009). Once a student has researched, paraphrased and written a section into their work, it is then important that they reference it in their writing. This demonstrates that they have understood what they have read whilst acknowledging that it is someone else's work and supports them in avoiding plagiarism. (Cite them right, no date).

## Note Taking

According to Pritchard (2008) good note taking is a way of reflecting critically. Taking notes should be a brief understanding of the material a person is reading which is then recorded in their own words. He believes that to take good notes, a person must be able to think about the words they are reading and analyse the information. O’Hara (2005) also suggests that to enable good note taking a person needs to be actively listening whilst making connections to their prior knowledge relating to the information they are receiving or reading. To be able to take good notes a person needs to find a method that works best for them. This could be using pen and paper, or it could be using a digital device, but it is important to use the one that suits best personally. Whilst taking notes it is also important to find a strategy that one is comfortable using, this could include the outline method, the Cornell method or mind mapping. (Jenkins 2017).

## Conclusion

In my conclusion, time management, wellbeing, research and note taking are all essential skills required whilst studying at university level, and all equally contribute to the success of an assignment. It is important that all study skills are continued throughout and are improved upon as the degree progresses to enable a student to reach the higher levels included in a degree.

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