

Introduction

Hello my name is Ithaela Shields, Student number 2602024. My presentation on academic study skills which support learning at a degree level is focused on visual note-taking and the Pomodoro technique. Visual approaches are often helpful for learners with Specific Learning Differences such as dyslexia. Dyslexic learners may find large amounts of text challenging to process, so breaking information down into visual cues can make study materials more accessible (Godwin, 2018). Visual note-taking strategies such as diagrams, colour coding and mind maps can help to reduce cognitive load and support clearer organisation of ideas.

The Pomodoro technique provides a structured method for managing work, research and multiple tasks. By dividing study into timed intervals with scheduled breaks, it helps maintain focus, reduce fatigue and make workload feel more manageable. Together, these techniques offer practical ways to organise learning, sustain concentration and support effective study habits at degree level.

Visual planning tools

Visual planning tools can be beneficial to learners when organising academic tasks by breaking them into manageable and clearly structured components. These tools use visual formats such as mind maps, timelines, colour-coded calendars, flowcharts and visual checklists, all of which make complex information easier to interpret and reduce the mental effort required to hold and organise details. This is particularly valuable when learners are managing several deadlines or working with dense material.

These visual supports set clear and predictable expectations, which can help to reduce academic anxiety (McDowall and Kiseleva, 2024). By offering step-by-step organisation, visual planning tools lower the risk of cognitive overload and help learners approach tasks with greater clarity and confidence.

These approaches can be especially suited to the strengths of dyslexic learners, who often benefit from visual, physical and sensorial experiences (Abbott-Jones, 2022). Visual planning tools can promote academic confidence in neurodivergent students and visual learners. For example, by using checklists which make progress visible, students can establish accessible study routines, increase motivation and reduce procrastination. Mind maps can support learners in breaking down essays, assignments and revision topics into smaller, achievable steps. These tools provide external memory support, so that learners are not required to retain every detail mentally. Colour coded calendars can enhance long-term organisation by visually mapping deadlines and workload distribution across a period of study.

The Pomodoro Technique

The Pomodoro Technique, developed by Francesco Cirillo in the late 1980s is a structured time-management method. This technique divides study into short, focused intervals designed to support concentration and reduce fatigue. It involves 25 minutes of focused work followed by a 5 break, with this cycle repeated four times over. After four cycles, a longer break of at least fifteen minutes is recommended to support recovery.

(Cirillo 2018) Concentration typically declines after around twenty-five minutes, making scheduled breaks essential for maintaining attention. The technique creates a clear boundary between work and rest, which helps to limit distractions and reduce burnout.

Breaking work down into smaller, manageable steps reduces what Honeybourne calls “overwhelm” and supports steady progress. Short, achievable sections help maintain focus (Honeybourne 2025). Regular breaks also support transitions between tasks, as well as providing a fresh perspective, preventing mental fatigue.

The Pomodoro Technique encourages active engagement with different elements of a task rather than hyperfixation on any one subject. Its structured, time-bound format supports executive functioning and helps learners to manage demanding academic workloads through improved time management and motivation.

The scheduled pauses can reduce tiredness which promotes healthier, more sustainable study habits. The technique can be particularly effective during intensive study periods, where workload is high, or in times when motivation is low.

Conclusion

Together, visual planning tools and the Pomodoro technique provide structured, accessible ways to support effective study at degree level. Visual approaches reduce cognitive load and make complex information easier to organise, particularly for neurodiverse learners. The Pomodoro technique complements this by offering a manageable time-based structure that sustains focus, prevents overwhelm and promotes healthier study habits. Used alongside one another, these techniques help learners work more confidently, efficiently and independently.

Thank you for your attention and engagement.