

# Time Management Techniques

Level 4

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#### Our Mission:

To provide a worthwhile and effective service to teachers, students and parents, enhancing students' learning skills and abilities through dynamic programs, resources and strategies to unlock the power of the mind and enable greater success at school and in life.

#### Our Commitment:

As part of ELES' commitment to education, 5% of all gross income is donated to charities that help and assist children.

#### Our Staff:

The majority of our resources are created by Prue Salter (B.A., B.Math., Dip.Ed., M.Acc., M.Ed.), founder and director of ELES. Prue has over 20 years' experience in the Education Industry in Australia. With a strong background in teaching and pastoral care, Prue was frustrated by the absence of high quality resources available to help students develop and maintain effective study skills. A committed scholar, passionate about learning, Prue combined her natural organisational and time management abilities with her research in how students learn to develop a series of resource kits designed to address the gaps and to present them in a format that is entertaining, as well as simple and effective.

For further information about ELES or our products or contact details: info@enhanced-learning.net

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You can t turn back the clock. But you can wind it up again.

Anonymous



SECTION 1 - 1A

# Introduction to Time Management

Let's consider what 'time management' actually means.

"The skill of being able to organise and allocate time to activities, situations or tasks in such a way that you use time effectively and achieve the required results without wasting time or being waylaid."

Effective time management requires balance. Too little or too much management of time can be problematic. The aim is to develop skills that help rather than hinder you. Some students become so caught up in the details of time management that they don't ever actually accomplish anything. In the TV series 'Red Dwarf', one of the characters spends so much time making and remaking study timetables, using coloured pens for different subjects, and making the timetable as beautiful as possible, that weeks pass, the examinations arrive and he has actually done zero study. He resorts to desperate cheating, and writes notes all over his body only to have the sweat make them all illegible, so he simply presses a handprint onto the page and leaves the examination room. This is an example of making time management another excuse not to do any work with not-so-good consequences.

It is important to also point out that perfect time management skills won't turn you into a perfect student. On the other hand, poor time management skills don't necessarily mean you won't succeed either.

Then why bother with time management? What time management skills can give you is choice. Choice about the strategies you implement and ways to make the most of your time. Time management helps you structure your time to make the most of the time available. But most importantly, it helps give you peace of mind and takes some of the stress and worry out of the things you need to do.

In the space below, write down how you think time management skills might be of benefit to you:

Before you start your analysis of yourself, you might like to take a short break and read through the following.

# THINKING ABOUT TIME

What is Greenwich Mean Time (GMT)?

The Alexandrian astronomer Ptolemy created a world atlas in the second century A.D. and plotted latitude and longitude lines on his atlas.

- Longitude lines or meridians are imaginary lines of the same length drawn on a map of the world from the north pole to the south pole.
- Latitude lines or meridians are lines that are drawn around the earth in rings that
  increase in size from the north pole to the middle where the biggest circle (the equator)
  is. The rings then decrease in size as they head to the south pole.

Ptolemy had placed the zero (prime) meridian of longitude off the west coast of Africa. In the eighteenth century the zero meridian was at times placed at London, Paris, and Berlin. It was not until a conference in Washington in 1884 that Greenwich, south of London, England was selected as the Prime Meridian 0° longitude for all maps. That means the north south line that is selected as 0° actually passes through the town of Greenwich (pronounced Gren-itch) near London. Why Greenwich? Because that was where the Royal Observatory was located and the observatory was known for their accurate and reliable publications of navigational data.



Since the earth rotates 15 degrees of longitude per hour, the earth's 360 degrees were divided into 24 zones, each measuring about 15 degrees in width. Time zones to the west of Greenwich decrease by one hour, but going east they increase. Greenwich Mean Time is the mean solar time at the prime meridian of zero known as GMT (0) from which time in other zones is calculated. It can be a bit confusing though as the individual zone boundaries are not straight because they have been adjusted at some places to suit certain countries. It would be really inconvenient for different countries to have too many time zones in their individual country.

Exactly opposite the Greenwich meridian, 180 degrees away, the meridian going from north to south is called the International Date Line. It is located out in the Pacific Ocean. This is where you change your date by one day when you cross this line. East of the line it is one day earlier than to the west of the line. This is why people talk about 'losing' a day or 'gaining' a day when they travel.

OK, enough trivia. Let's look at how you use time.

SECTION 1 - 1B

# Time Self-Analysis

## Where does your time go?

Compare yourself to the 'typical' student below. Of course there is no such thing as a true 'typical' student, but it will give you a guide to start with.

On an average day:

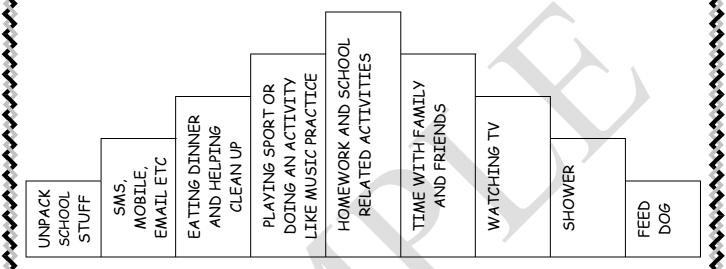
	Typical Student		Уои
	Typical Student		760
3.30-4	Travel home after school	3.30-4	
4-4.30	Get something to eat	4-4.30	
4.30-5	See what's on TV	4.30-5	
5-5.30	Watch a bit of TV	5-5.30	
5.30-6	Start homework	5.30-6	
6-6.30	Do homework / talk to friends	6-6.30	
6.30-7	Dinner	6.30-7	7
7-7.30	Watch TV	7-7.30	
7.30-8	Need to finish assignment	7.30-8	
8-8.30	Work on assignment	8-8.30	
8.30-9	Realise assignment will take ages	8.30-9	
9-9.30	Have a shower	9-9.30	
9.30-10	Get tired so go to bed	9.30-10	
10-10.30	Sleep!	10-10.30	

Of course the 'typical' student is different from the 'ideal' student. The ideal student would probably start their work earlier in the afternoon and also have scheduled the work for the assignment so they didn't have to do so much in one night. They might also be involved in sport or some sort of healthy physical activity.

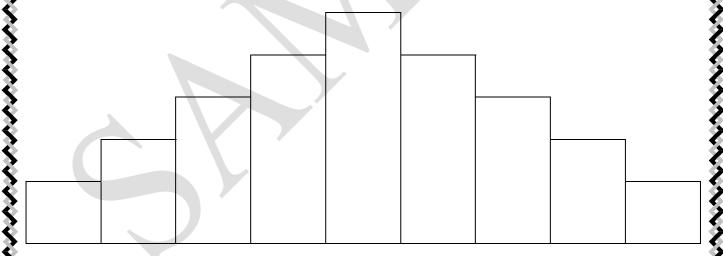
Why do you need to worry about how you spend your time? When looking at time management techniques, students often find it difficult to really know where all of their time goes. It is amazing the clever and innovative ways students can come up with to waste time. Not to mention the old favourites like TV, the Internet, chat, sms, computer games, phone... An essential first step before becoming immersed in time management techniques is to have a realistic picture of where your time goes.

Have a look at your distribution of time on the previous page. Think about how you spend your time in the afternoons and evenings and complete the graph at the bottom of the page using the instructions below:

What do you spend the most time on in the afternoon? That goes in the largest box. What do you spend the next amount of time on? Put that in the box next to the middle one. Continue all the way down on both sides to where you spend the least amount of time. A sample has been completed for you below. This time the mythical 'ideal' student instead of the 'typical' student was used.



Not many students would have the same sort of graph as the one above. Indeed, schoolwork is not necessarily the most time-consuming activity every evening.



Answer the questions below about your use of your time:

1. Are there things you know you should spend LESS time on?

YES / NO

2. Are there things you know you should spend MORE time on?

YES / NO

3. Do you think you have a balanced approach to life?

YES / NO

4. How would you rate your current time management skills?

POOR OK GOOD EXCELLENT

SECTION 1 - 1C

# Time Management Outcome Checklist

What areas do you need to work on?

Although ELES produces 'Time Management Techniques' for each year group, the checklist below is included in every Time Management resource regardless of the year level. It is a fact that students across all levels share common problems in managing their time but that these problems may change from year to year. Indeed, you could ask your parents to fill this checklist out with respect to work instead of school and you would find that they too are often facing similar challenges. In completing the list, don't feel discouraged if you are ticking lots of 'NONE's. Instead, pat yourself on the back for the things you are doing well. Everyone will have areas they can improve on, and that is what working through these worksheets is all about.

For each of the following statements tick either:

ALL of the time, MOST of the time, SOME of the time, A BIT of the time or NONE of the time.

	For You To Do:	ALL	MOST	SOME	A BIT	NONE
1.	I keep up-to-date with my schoolwork without many problems.					
2.	I start working on assignments well before they are due.					
3.	I don't end up leaving work till the last minute.					
4.	I finish assignments on time.					
5.	I hand in all schoolwork on time.					
6.	I don't ask for extensions.					
7.	I don't feel stressed about the work I need to do for school.					
8.	I plan when I am going to do work.					
9.	I use my time in the classroom efficiently.					
10	I use my time at home efficiently.					

	ALL	MOST	SOME	A BIT	NONE
11. I can estimate pretty well how long something will take.					
12. I have time to do all the things I WANT to do.					
13. When I sit down to do work I get lots done.					
14. I am not easily distracted.					
15. I am self-disciplined and can make myself do what I need to do.					
16. I know at the start of the day what I want to get done that day.					
17. I feel in control of my time.					
18. I am able to juggle commitments to family and friends.					
19. I can find extra time to do things if I need to.					
20. I am able to reschedule activities if necessary.					
21. I have ways to make myself do things I have been putting off.					
22. I am able to prioritise things to do by their level of importance.					
23. I am aware when I am wasting time and can stop myself doing it.					
24. I use self rewards to help motivate myself to do things.					
25. I am able to set goals as to what I want to do and work to them.					
Now look back through the list at some of the statements for which of these bothers you the most? Which causes you the most stress? do something about? Which ones do you know you really should try below, describe the areas of time management that you think you most	Which and in	n do y mprov	ou mo e? In	st wa the s	nt to

SECTION 1 - 1D

# Core Time Management Skills

Let's examine the essential time management techniques.

There are some fundamental or core techniques for effective time management. Even if you have worked through the next four pages in a previous year, it is worthwhile reviewing them again before progressing to the section on new techniques in order to ensure you are still on track. If this is the first time you have used one of the ELES Time Management Techniques resources, you need to be comfortable with these techniques before progressing to the next section.

The true secret to Time Management is:



To improve the way you manage yourself, the following first 3 steps are essential:

For You To Do:

		SIEP	Often	Sometimes	Rarely
How often do you currently	1	Set your goals.			
do these steps? Put a tick in one of the boxes for	2	Prioritise.			
each of the steps.	3	Schedule your time.			

## STEP 1: SET YOUR GOALS

Why set goals? Unless you know what you are aiming for you can't hit it! Imagine a boat without any particular destination in mind. It would float aimlessly among the seas and if it made it to land it would be due to luck rather than any other factor. By creating a goal, you have created something you can work towards. Goal setting helps increase your efforts and motivate you by giving you a direction towards which you can work.

Many students are put off by the words 'goal setting'. They have read information before detailing setting long-term, medium-term and short-term goals and have found the whole process overwhelming and unworkable.

# "A GOAL IS JUST A LIST OF THINGS YOU EITHER HAVE TO DO OR WANT TO DO."

If you think of goals in this way, you'll find them much less daunting and more workable.

The most effective goals are WRITTEN DOWN and are 'SMART':

Specific	Make sure your goals explain exactly what you want to achieve.
Measurable	Make sure you are able to easily see when you have achieved your goals.
Action oriented	Put specific action steps into your goals rather than just 'airy-fairy' ideas. If you want to improve in a subject, decide on some specific steps you can do.
Realistic	Don't make unrealistic goals like 'I will read 28 chapters of my History textbook tonight'. All this will do is discourage you so make goals achievable.
Timebound	Put a timeframe on your goals - when do you want to achieve them by?

Examples of Effective Goals	Examples of Less Effective Goals
I will finish my History Assignment tonight.	I will keep up with my work.
I will do 15 minutes each day on French vocab.	I will improve in French.
I will beat my last exam result in Maths.	I will get better in Maths.

For You To Do: A good way to start your goal setting is to take a piece of paper and think of absolutely EVERYTHING you need to do. Make it a complete and total list of everything to be done and everything you'd like to do. It can seem daunting, but once you have listed everything in black and white then you can start to deal with it. Try this now.

# STEP 2: PRIORITISE

It is a fact of life that everything always takes longer than you think it will. And it is often an impossible task to achieve absolutely everything you want to achieve in the time available. Ideally you'd like to get everything done, but if you can't, look objectively at the things to do from your goal list and prioritise everything into the three categories below.

For You To Do: On a piece of paper, draw up and fill in the table below for your current workload using your list of work from Step 1.

You may not be able to get everything done but you can focus on what is really important. Many students prioritise in a way that is simply not efficient. Instead of doing the most important things first and the least important things next, they do the things they LIKE first regardless of whether there are things that are more important that they should be doing. Remember:

MOST IMPORTANT tasks <u>FIRST</u> (not the things you *like most* first) LEAST IMPORTANT tasks <u>LAST</u> (not things you *like least* last)

## STEP 3: SCHEDULE YOUR TIME

"Timetables? They don't work for me. I can't make a study timetable, I just don't stick to it."

Sound familiar? So many students just switch off when they see the words STUDY TIME-TABLE. Some of the reasons why timetables may not have worked for you in the past:

- O You made an unrealistic and unachievable timetable, so became discouraged when you couldn't achieve it.
- O You tried to schedule too far ahead and so when you had to readjust things it was too big a task to adjust the whole timetable.
- O You made a timetable of what you thought you SHOULD get done (even if you knew there was no way it would happen), not what you knew you could do.
- O You didn't play to your strengths, you didn't think about when you work best, how long you can work for and what was the best way for you to work.
- O You were not prepared to be flexible or experiment to find out what works best for you. For example, maybe you work best working on one thing solidly for a time, or maybe you work better if you break it up by working on a variety of things for shorter periods of time.
- O You were too rigid with your timetable and expected to be able to stick to it exactly and gave up when you couldn't.

For You To Do: Put a tick next to any of the above reasons that have applied to you in the past.

## So what can you do?

- 1. Look first at the big picture. What do you want to achieve over the next month?
- 2. Plan out the next week by first putting in all of your commitments and seeing how much time is available, then taking the things you want to get done that week and slotting them into the available time.

## RULES FOR DOING THIS:

- Don't make it so tight there is no spare time at all you will need extra time for rescheduling.
- Be realistic about how long things will take. You'll get better at this with practice.
- Ensure you schedule in the higher priorities first.
- 3. Once you have a plan for the week, take each day 'day-by-day' and really focus on what you need to do that day.
- 4. If you don't get everything done, and you probably won't, then don't stress or give up or see it as failure. Instead, reschedule it to another time in the week and when you get to that day, deal with it then.

EXAMPLE: Let's take an example. You wrote your list of things you wanted to get done, then put it into the priority table. This is something you could do every Friday night to look in general at the weeks ahead and to help you plan specifically for the coming week and what you need to do that weekend. It would only take a few minutes and would mean you have taken your first big step towards managing time by managing yourself. Try it!

Thinking of the weeks ahead, you came up with this list:

Thing	s I need to do urgently:	Other things to be done:	Th	ings that	can be postpo	ned:
- Scie	ence homework overdue	- History Assign. next week	-	Make	summaries	for
- Fre	nch vocab quiz Tues	- Maths test week after	Ge	ography (	(leave till holid	lays)

Your first overall plan or schedule might look like this, drawn up by hand on a bit of paper:

- First put the major dates for big pieces of work that are due or things you want to focus on.
- Also put in any time commitments or extra-curricular or social activities so you can see how much time you actually have available to you.

Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
				BASKETBALL		
				TRAINING		
BASKETBALL				BASKETBALL	History	
GAME				TRAINING	Assignment	
	MUM'S		Maths Test	BASKETBALL		
	BIRTHDAY			TRAINING		

Now think just about this week:

- Start with the things you need to do urgently and schedule time in for them.
- Look then at the other things to be done like the History Assignment and Maths Test and allocate some time in the week to doing something specific to start these tasks - many students just do immediate homework only. Scheduling time for these tasks is much better than just letting the time slip by and leaving the task till the last minute.

Ī	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
	get science l	nomework done	review	start		redo hard	brainstorm
	study French	vocab test	French	research	BASKETBALL	exercises in	ideas for
	find books	at library for	vocab	for History	TRAINING	Maths	History
	His	story	Vocab	701 1113101 7		chapter.	assignment

For You To Do: Follow the steps outlined above to schedule your prioritised work into the coming weeks.

## **SUMMARY**

- 1. Write down absolutely EVERYTHING you need to get done.
- 2. Take everything on the list and put it in one of three columns:
  - a) Things I need to do urgently
  - b) Other things to be done
  - c) Things that can be postponed
- 3. Look 3 or 4 weeks ahead to see what you need to do and how much free time you have.
- 4. Focus on the coming week and schedule in your work from the Priority Table.

# 'The C.U.L.L. System'

Type: Prioritising

## TIME MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUE 1

## Using this technique.....

- This system is one you can prioritise your workload and the tasks you need to do.
- It involves first making a list of everything you need to do then labelling each item as follows:

C - critical

U - urgent

L - later

L - lose it

- Critical tasks are ones that require your immediate focus. Today, right now, no more excuses as no more time is left.
- Urgent tasks are those that will require your attention in the next few days.

- Tasks that can be left for later are ones you need not focus on right now and hopefully you might even be able to 'lose' some of them. Tasks may now become redundant or no longer necessary relevant.
- have Once you your priorities, focus only on the C tasks till these are complete and then move to the U tasks.
- Once all C and U tasks are completed, go through and again re-rank your list and you will find you now have a new set of C and U tasks to work on.

"Make sure important tasks aren't swallowed up by a mass of trivia. The only thing that should determine what you work on is how important and urgent it is: not whether you want to do it, not whether you like or dislike doing it. Strip away the emotion from your prioritising and look at the situation coldly and rationally."



# For You To Do:

Think about how you currently make decisions about what to work on first. Tick any of the factors that have been influencing you in the past:

- □ whether you like that particular subject or teacher
- ☐ the level of difficulty of the task
- $\Box$  the severity of the consequences for not completing the task
- □ how soon the task is due
- □ what you 'feel' like working on

There are many different versions of this technique. You can rank tasks numerically, then start with task number 1 and work your way down the list. Another way is to simplify things into two simple categories: Urgent and Not Urgent. You can make a list of everything you would ideally like to accomplish in order of importance, then look at the list again to decide what realistically you could accomplish in the time available. All variations of this technique work on the assumption that there is not enough time to do absolutely everything at that moment in time. By working out priorities, we can make smart choices about the use of our time.

## **TOOLS:**

Questions to ask yourself when determining priorities.



- I. How much time do I have available to me?
- 2. Realistically, how long will the tasks I need to do take?
- 3. Which tasks are worrying me the most?
- 4. Which tasks are absolutely critical for me to do well in the subject?
- 5. Which tasks will I learn the most from?
- 6. Which tasks can be postponed to another day without consequences?
- 7. Which tasks have I been putting off because they are unpleasant?



Another variation on this technique is to create a 'radial pile' around your desk at home. You take each piece of work or something that represents the work (like the textbook where the questions are that you have to do) and place it on the floor so there is a visual reminder of everything that needs to be done. You then look through the piles and determine the order in which you will tackle the work. Arrange the piles in order in a semicircle on the floor around your desk and start working on them!



CB

## For You To Do:

In the space below, write down the work you currently have outstanding. Label each item  $\mathcal{C}$  (critical),  $\mathcal{U}$  (urgent),  $\mathcal{L}$  (later or lose it). Start working through each of the critical tasks then move to the urgent tasks.

# 'Using Deadlines'

Type: Scheduling

## TIME MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUE 2

## Using this technique.....

- You can use the motivating power of deadlines to help you complete work in a timely manner.
- move your real First deadline a few days earlier. This gives you a bit of time up your sleeve in case things take longer than you think they will. For example, if your work is due in three weeks on a Friday, decide you will complete it by the Wednesday.
- Now set mini-deadlines for each week between now and when the task is due. For our example above you would establish a minideadline for each Wednesday for the next 3 weeks.

- Break the task into pieces - 3 pieces if you have 3 weeks, 4 pieces if you have 4 weeks etc. Think of these as Stage 1, Stage 2, etc.
- Take into account your other work/leisure commitments when deciding how much of the task you can complete each
- In your diary on the first deadline day write in Stage 1 Due. Do the same for the rest of the stages and also jot down in your diary exactly what completing this stage consists of.
- Don't worry about the project anymore, iust concentrate on completing the stage you are working on.

"The two most important things about getting somewhere are starting right where we are and having a clear destination in mind. Establish these two things and all else will naturally follow."



Think about a time where you didn't meet a deadline or it was a real last minute rush. Tick any of the factors that might have been reasons as to why you found it difficult to work on the task:

□ you found the task difficult and so kept putting it off

□ you didn't find the task very enjoyable and so were not motivated to do it

□ you found the task overwhelming and were not sure where to start

There are many different versions of this technique too. Another way is to break the task into naturally occurring chunks, determine how long each will take, and decide on a deadline for each particular piece of work. You can also brainstorm a list of everything that is involved in completing the task: from working out what to do, to research, to organising your material through to writing drafts. Once you have completed this, work backwards from the deadline to decide when each step needs to be completed in order to finish by the due date. It is really important to write these goals into your diary so that you have a focus for your energies.

## **TOOLS:**

Questions to ask yourself when planning for deadlines.



- I. What parts of this task will I find difficult or boring?
- 2. Can I break up the hard parts so I don't have to do them all at once?
- 3. How much realistically can I complete in a week?
- 4. What do I need to do to meet the deadlines I have set?
- 5. What resources will I need to meet these goals?
- 6. How much time will I require to complete each section?
- 7. If I don't have enough time, where can I cut corners if necessary?



There is a fine balance between being flexible in your planning and allowing yourself to reschedule work if you fall behind, and having the discipline to force yourself to get up a bit earlier or work a bit harder in order to meet the mini-deadline you have set for yourself. Of course unforeseen events occur that may force you to reschedule and change your plan. It is important to be flexible with your deadlines but not to the extent where you fall too far behind.



CB

## For You To Do:

In the space below, take an assignment, a long term piece of homework or a test you need to prepare for and break the work into a number of stages. The number of stages should equal the amount of weeks you have available to complete the task. In your diary, fill in the mini-deadlines.

Deadline for this stage:

STAGE 1-

STAGE 2 -

STAGE 3 -

STAGE 4 -

# 'The 3 P's'

Type: Breaking down tasks

## TIME MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUE 3

## Using this technique.....

- This technique follows on from the previous. In the last technique we looked at setting mini-goals. This technique explores how we can effectively break the task down into pieces.
- When chunking the task down there are 3 main things to consider:

**Payoff** 

**Pieces** 

**Pebbles** 

- Payoff: If you find it difficult to get motivated about the task, take the time to think about what the payoff will be for this task. What are the good outcomes for completing the task on time and what are the consequences if you don't.
- <u>Pieces</u>: List every piece or step involved in this task.
   Clearly visualise yourself completing the first step then think about what would have to be done next.
- <u>Pebbles</u>: Look back over your list of tasks. Think about them as rocks – can any of them be smashed down into pebbles?

"Question:

How do you eat an elephant?

Answer:

One bite at a time..

This is a great analogy for attacking a piece of work.

The message is, don't try and swallow the task whole, you'll choke on it! Instead, work on it piece by piece and it will become much more palatable."

# For You To Do:

Which of the following reasons might be why you sometimes feel reluctant to actually break a task down and list it into its components:

- □ It might feel too overwhelming to see so many steps written down.
- □ Actually starting it means admitting to myself that I have to do it.
- $\ \square$  I might realise that I don't really know exactly what I have to do.
- □ I might become worried about my ability to do the task if I see it in black and white.
- ☐ Thinking about what I need to do makes me feel stressed so I'd rather not think!

There is no greater fear than fear itself.' Have you ever been dreading having to do something, like go to the dentist or have a needle and yet when the inevitable happens you find it isn't nearly as bad as you thought? All of the reasons listed above are based on fear. Fear of the unknown, fear of failure, fear of being inadequate. Give this technique a chance – face your fear and list out the steps that need to be done. It is much better to have a realistic view of what you need to do and the steps in front of you so you can make a plan to complete them. Otherwise you are just letting your fears hold you back and force you to procrastinate and worry about the task instead.

## **TOOLS:**

Questions to ask yourself when breaking tasks down further.



- I. Is this a task I could complete in one sitting?
- 2. Are there distinct or separate steps to be taken for this task?
- 3. If I had to do this step over 2 days, how would I split it?
- 4. What is involved in actually working on this step?
- 5. How might other people approach this task?
- 6. Who can I ask for help if I am unsure about what steps are needed?
- 7. Can I break down any of the large chunks into smaller ones?



The 5 P's are another time management slogan. You may have heard this statement before: "Perfect Practice Produces Practice Perfect". This means that in order to do things properly, you need to make sure that when you are learning and practising you are doing things properly. If you practise something over and over, but you are actually doing it wrong, that won't help you! Make sure your practice is perfect in order to develop a perfect way of doing something (practice).

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CB

# For You To Do:

In the space below, write down the four main steps in a large piece of work you have owing. Then take each step and break it down into smaller and more specific steps.

STEP 1:	STEP 2:	STEP 3:	STEP 4:

# This resource continues for another 22 pages

