

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

## TIME MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUE 1

Type: Prioritising

### *Using this technique.....*

- This system is one you can use to 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 have become redundant or no longer necessary or relevant.
- Once you have 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
- 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.*



1. 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!

**For You To Do:**

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



# 'Using Deadlines'

## TIME MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUE 2

Type: Scheduling

### *Using this technique.....*

- You can use the motivating power of deadlines to help you complete work in a timely manner.
- First move your real 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 mini-deadline 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 week.
- 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, just 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.”*



### **For You To Do:**

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 had too much other work competing for your attention
- 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

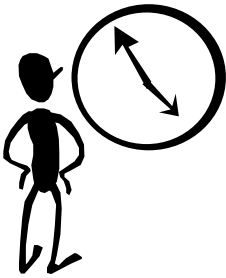
There are many different versions of this technique too. Another way is to break the task into naturally occurring chunks, determine how long each will take, and decide on a deadline for each particular piece of work. You can also brainstorm a list of everything that is involved in completing the task: 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.



1. 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.

**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 -