
CENTRE FOR ACADEMIC PRACTICE

C*f*AP

06 MOTIVATIONAL SKILLS

M3 MAKING TIME TO LEARN

Making Time to Learn

Use this unit to help you to:

- ❖ decide how much time per week to spend on learning.
- ❖ make the most of the time available for learning.
- ❖ use short periods efficiently.

How much time do you have for learning?

Spend a few minutes thinking about how much learning you can do in a week. Are you very busy? Do you have a backlog of work or do you have time for learning?

Briefly note below how much time you should spend learning in a week.

Response

Whether you are busy or have plenty of time to learn, the main thing is to want to find time to learn. You also need to make sure that you use the time you have for learning effectively.

Where can you find time for learning?

There are three sorts of time in any day:

- essential work time
- essential living time (eating, sleeping, traveling, shopping and so on)
- flexible time (time when you can do other things)

Clearly you could set aside some of your flexible time for learning, and if your learning is work-based you may be able to do some learning at work. Consider how much flexible time you have in an ordinary working day and whether there any other times you could do some learning.

2

Use the diary below to analyse how you spend the next (fairly typical) 24 hours.

1. Note down the time you spend for things like working, eating, traveling - your essential work time and essential living time.
2. With a different-coloured pen mark in your flexible time.
3. Now look critically at your filled in diary. When can you fit in some learning?

For example, can you:

- fit in the odd half-hour between other things?
- get up a bit earlier or go to bed later to fit in some time for learning?
- do some learning while you are traveling.

Diary

midnight - 1 am		midday - 1 pm	
1 am - 2 am		1 pm - 2 pm	
2 am - 3 am		2 pm - 3 pm	
3 am - 4 am		3 pm - 4 pm	
4 am - 5 am		4 pm - 5 pm	
5 am - 6 am		5 pm - 6 pm	
6 am - 7 am		6 pm - 7 pm	
7 am - 8 am		7 pm - 8 pm	
8 am - 9 am		8 pm - 9 pm	
9 am - 10 am		9 pm - 10 pm	
10 am - 11 am		10 pm - 11 pm	
11 am - midday		11 pm – midnight	

Response

Of course, you looked at only one day in a week: you may have more or less time on other days. Like many people you may need to fit most of your learning into a busy schedule.

When can you get the most out of learning?

Some people work well early in the morning, feel drowsy by about 4 pm and recharge after dinner. Other people work best late at night and are slow in the morning. Others feel they work on an even keel and don't feel they work better at any particular time.

3

Can you identify any times in the day when you feel?

- most productive? _____

- least productive? _____

Response

Try to plan your learning so that you do the most difficult tasks when you are at your most productive. You can then plan to do less demanding jobs, like background reading, when you are less productive.

How long does it take to do some learning?

By now you are probably getting a feel for times when you can do some learning. How long you need to spend to be productive depends very much on your attitude towards time and effort.

4

What do you think is the best 'strategy' for a learning session?

- ❖ A solid two-hour spell without interruptions
- ❖ Half an hour, every now and then
- ❖ Something different: (write in) _____

Response

There is no ideal length of time for a study session. You should learn the way you prefer, when you have the time. You may like to experiment with different lengths of time for learning to find what you can do over a particular time and to work out what suits you best.

What can you learn in five minutes?

Look back to your diary: can you pick out the odd 5 minutes where you could do some learning? For example, while you're waiting for someone to get ready to go out. What sort of learning could you do in 5 minutes which would be useful and productive - and efficient?

5

Note down 3 different ways to spend 5 minutes, each of which would make positive contributions to your learning.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Response

Here are some ideas. You may have some better ideas.

In a 5-minute session you could learn by:

- taking stock: jotting down things that you already know about a topic
- writing questions: making a list of questions you want to investigate
- making a summary: perhaps of a lecture/seminar
- testing yourself (mentally) on something you learned last week
- having another quick look at what you have recently learned
- listing the main points of a recent practical demonstration.

Should you have 'fixed' times to learn?

Ask yourself whether you are doing enough learning. Are you on target with your learning?

If your answer is 'no', it may help if you map out in advance all the times when you'll fit in some learning. You may want to plan a learning schedule for next week.

If the answer is a definite 'yes', it doesn't really matter how you timetable your learning. But think of the advantages and disadvantages of planning specific times to study.

Advantages

- It helps to make sure that you find enough time
- It gives you the feeling of being in charge of your learning.
- You may learn better at certain times.
- If you stick to your plan you can build in leisure time and enjoy it without feeling guilty.

Disadvantages

- You may feel like a slave to your plans.
- Fixed plans may discourage you from doing spontaneous extra learning when spare time comes up unexpectedly.
- If you fail to carry out fixed plans. you may feel discouraged.

Action plan

From your work in this unit make a plan showing: .

- likely times for learning
- where you will find short 5-minute sessions
- what you can do in short sessions

You can make your plan as detailed as you like. but bear in mind that it should be flexible so that you can adapt to changing circumstances. and reasonable so that you are able to do what you set out to do.

Likely times for learning:

Extra 5-minute slots:

Things I can do in short bits of time: