I. How to Manage Yourself to Study (task-wise)?

1 Defining the task, identifying precisely what you need: This means working out what you really need. Use assignment titles and the background information provided about the assignment in order to identify key words, dates and places that will help you focus your search. Be as clear and precise as possible in your own mind about the kind of information that you are looking for so that you can define your searches closely, saving time and effort.

2 Using material of suitable quality and content: This will help in recognising what you need when you see it. It involves:

- being able to identify material of good quality for academic purposes.

- identifying material that is directly relevant to the purpose, such as your assignment or research project.

- being able to tell quickly what to reject, so that you don't waste time on material you are not going to use.

3 Knowing where to look: This means knowing where to start searching for particular kinds of information. You can use library catalogues, Google Scholar, Shibboleth, bibliographic databases, gateway services, and digital repositories.

4 Using the right tools: This means knowing which tools are available to help you to conduct. It includes searches, storage, referencing, and sharing.

5 Using the most appropriate search methods: Knowing the search methods to use to:

- limit your search to find just what you need

- extend your search if you haven't found what you want

- make advanced searches, including use of Boolean operators.

6 Applying effective reading and note-making strategies:

- read at the right speed for the task

- read with awareness and focus

- adapt your reading strategy to the task

- make useful notes when reading, listening and using audiovisual material.

7 Organising and storing for quick and easy use:

This involves knowing how to:

- whittle down information to avoid overload

- store and tag it so you can find it again quickly if needed for assignments

- organise and back up files

- cite and reference appropriately/use reference management tools

8 Sharing information for group assignments: Knowing about tools and methods that can help you to study collaboratively with others online or in study groups. This requires taking care to avoid accidental copying or plagiarism as well as sharing bookmarks.

9 Applying information and attributing sources: This means knowing how to use the information in your assignments. It involves:

- selecting the best material for your purpose

- using information to stimulate your own ideas

- combining and synthesising material from many sources

- drawing on sources for evidence to support your reasoning

- giving due recognition to those whose work or information you use.

II. Understanding and defining the task

1 What is the assignment brief?

If your course provides an assignment brief, this is your starting place. It can cover:

- the topic – or the choices open to you
- the title, or a selection of titles from which to choose
- the word limit
- criteria used to grade your work
- useful source materials as starting places
- details of any methods, approaches, techniques, equipment or software you must use - guidelines on presenting your work
- deadlines for submitting your work.

2 Use the brief and marking criteria:

- Read these many times; underline key words.

- Summarise them in your own words.

- Highlight requirements you must meet.

- Highlight in a different colour the aspects over which you have some choice.

- Keep referring to the criteria. Display them where you can see them. Keep using them to check your work is on track.

III. The nature of the task

Successful students tend to spend more time at the start of an assignment, working out exactly what is required. Before launching into any piece of work, take time to clarify exactly what is required and plan your approach. Being clearly focused from the outset will save you time later.

1 Analyse the assignment brief. How many parts are there to the question? What is really being asked?

2 Consider the purpose of the task or assignment.
Why this particular topic? Why this particular wording? Is the assignment one that is always set on your course because it covers essential background? If so, what do you really need to know? Or is it topical, related to recent research or an issue in the news? If so, what is the issue?

3 Consider your end-point. What should your work look or sound like when it is finished?

4 Use marking/grading criteria. Display them where you can see them; use them to guide your work.

5 Plan and scale your research to fit your time and the word limits. Consider what is expected, given the length of the assignment. Be realistic in how much you plan to read, note and write.
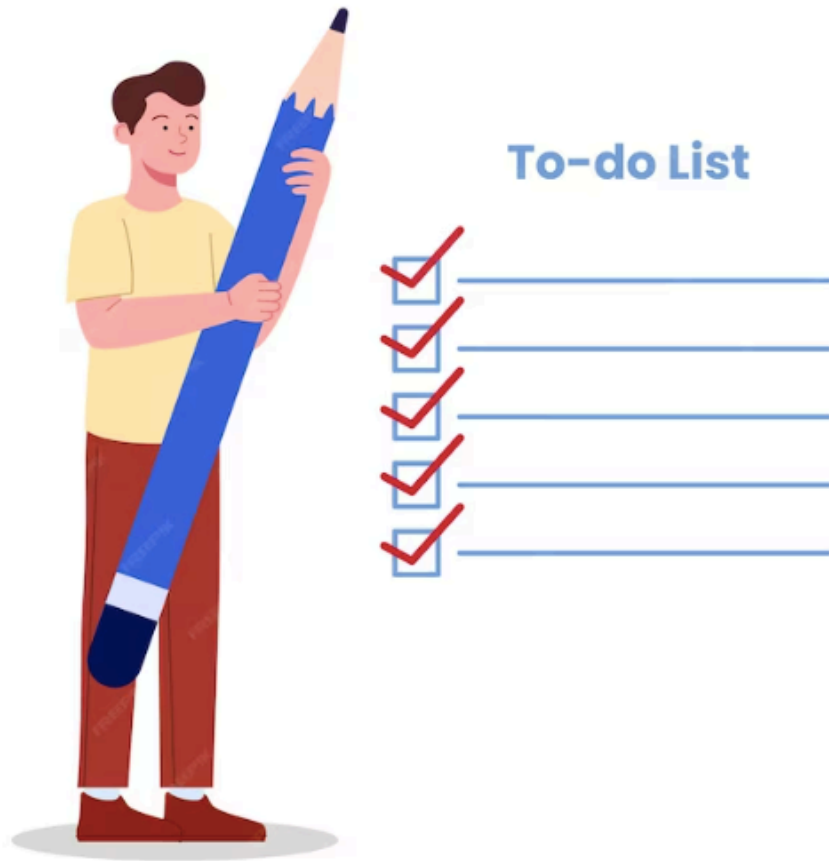
3) Why Is Task Management Important?

(a) Time is a Finite Resource:

- Time is a limited and non-renewable resource; once it's gone, you can't get it back.

- Effective task management helps you make the most of your time.

(b) Reduced Stress and Anxiety:

- Properly organized tasks reduce stress and anxiety.
- Knowing what to do and when to do it reduces the feeling of being overwhelmed.

To-do List

4) Task Management Strategies

(a)   -Do Lists:

- Create a to-do list for each day, week, or month.
- Include all your tasks, both big and small.

- Consider using digital apps or good old-fashioned pen and paper.

(b)   Time Blocking:

- Allocate specific time blocks for different types of tasks.
- Group similar tasks together to minimize context switching.
- Prioritize your most important tasks during your most productive times.

(c)   Set SMART Goals:

- Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound (SMART) goals help you focus on what matters most.

5) Prioritization Techniques

(a) Eisenhower Matrix:

- Categorize tasks into four quadrants: Important/Urgent, Important/Not Urgent, Not Important/Urgent, Not Important/Not Urgent.
- Focus on tasks in the Important quadrants first.

(b) ABCDE Method:

- Prioritize tasks by assigning them letters (A, B, C) and numbers (1, 2, 3) based on importance and deadlines.
- Focus on A tasks before moving on to B and C tasks.

(c) The 2-Minute Rule:

- If a task can be completed in 2 minutes or less, do it immediately.
- Prevents small tasks from piling up.

Main references:

Cottrell, S. (2013). The study skills handbook. Macmillan International Higher Education.
Moore, S., Neville, C., & Murphy, M. (2010). The ultimate study skills handbook. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).
https://www.coursera.org/articles/task-management