

STUDYING SUCCESSFULLY

How do you draw up a study plan?

In these times where the pressure on students to study quickly and successfully has increased, a good study plan is essential. If you have never drawn up a study plan or you think that you could improve your planning skills, you could probably use some tips and pointers

The best thing you can do is to make an overview of everything you need to do. Which tasks and which period are we talking about actually?

Every day, you spend time on tasks that are related to your study, but also on tasks that are outside of that, such as work, household chores, social activities and sleep. Take all these tasks into account; you must though determine how much time you can make available for tasks related to your study. The norm in the case of a full-time study is that you spend 40 hours per week in order to obtain 60 ECTS in an academic year. If you know beforehand that you have less time available it will be difficult to graduate within the official time period with no delays.

Planning your study means executing and organising the (study) activities based on priority.

In order to find out how you have spent your time during your study, it is useful to keep a schedule during a week. This allows you to see how many hours you spent on various tasks. It also gives insight into which tasks you want to spend less or more time on in the future. The schedule can be found in the list with tip sheets: *hoe besteed ik mijn tijd* (how do I spend my time). There are only a limited number of hours in a day. If you get new tasks, other tasks will have to disappear from your lists of tasks. To determine which tasks are important and/or which take priority you can use [The Eisenhower Method](#).

Keep a schedule for a week. This will enable you to discover how much time you spend on what.

Try to work on quadrant 2 as much as possible. And if you have activities in quadrant 3 and 4, then you can be

The Eisenhower Method

	URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	Do immediately 1	Schedule 2
NOT IMPORTANT	Keep an eye on priority and delegate 3	Forget it! 4

Getting to work on planning

You can plan a day, a week, a block or semester, but you can also make an annual planning. The 8-8-4 system, which most study programmes use, gives clear units of 4 or 8 weeks, within which you must finish a course. The correct planning goes hand in hand with the objective that you envisage and the accompanying tasks.

Imagine you want to make a planning for a block. You can begin then by noting down the exam dates. Take the number of days that you need to study for this and then go from backwards moving forward in time planning what you need to do for this and when. Have your timetable at hand, what you need to do for this course each week and work from forwards back in time. Subsequently look what you still need to do for other course and what other activities you have apart from those.

As a result of doing this, an overview will arise of everything you need to do in order to succeed in the exam. Check if this is realistic, or if you may need to make some choices.

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mind mapping classes

FOCUS perseverance

LECTURES AMBITION

TIME MANAGEMENT peer coaching

self-knowledge CHALLENGE

STUDYING SUCCESSFULLY

self-discipline persistence context

remembering INDEPENDENCE CRITICAL THINKING

flexible thinking EFFECTIVENESS

learning styles repetitions

making connections exams

It is useful to have a detailed short-term study plan (for the week) and a rough long-term study plan (for the remaining weeks). Draw up a detailed study plan on Friday, for example, for the coming week. When you start on Monday, you will then know exactly what you are doing for that week.

The study plan will contain your courses, lectures and self-study time. In short, it will include everything you need to do. However, be aware that you should also plan in your periods of relaxation.

You should also try to keep some gaps in your diary. Unexpected things always happen or activities end up taking longer than you thought.

Students often begin with a study plan, but discard this after some time in disappointment. Their study plan turned out to be unfeasible. This occurs because most students are too optimistic with their study plan. You should, therefore, take some extra time for everything in your study plan.

1,5 = 2 hours

If you think, for example, that reading a chapter will take you one hour, then make that 1.5 or 2 hours instead. To summarise, you should multiply the amount of time you think each activity will take by 1.5 or maybe even 2. Try to learn also from your own time management. In the long term, you will be able to plan in an increasingly realistic manner. However, be aware that you must, therefore, start in time. You should also have a look at the tip sheet '*How can you study in a concentrated way?*' in which you will find tips to help you with your study plan.

Study plan

You can also find a weekly study plan in the overview of the tip sheets. Fill this in and set your weekly and daily priorities. It is very handy to keep a second weekly study plan during the week, which records what you actually spent your time on. Compare the two and draw the necessary conclusions. What can be done differently?

What should you do if your planning is not yet successful?

If your planning is not successful or you are not sticking to your planning, that can be down to various reasons. Your motivation for the study may not be strong enough, you may be taking on too much or you may be choosing the wrong moments and ways to carry out your work activities. Your study plan may also be too ambitious or you may want to change too much at once.

Should you, however, discover that you do not have the right motivation for the study programme or for studying in general, see if you can discuss that with a study adviser. If it turns out that you are not working efficiently, look at the way in which you are studying. If you are not feeling good, it is often difficult to stick to your study plan. In that case, you should drop by the study adviser, or maybe even the student psychologist.

Most important points

Planning your study means that the activities should arise from the study objectives that you yourself set, organise and execute on the basis of priorities.

- Make a realistic schedule.
- If your planning is not successful, try to determine the cause of this.
- If necessary, make an appointment with a study adviser or register for a workshop.

Verder lezen

Jan Willem van den Brandhof, *Gebruik je hersenen* (Use your brain, Dutch only) (1998)
 Mark Tigchelaar – *Studievitaminen.nl* (e-book, Dutch only)
 Clare Evans– *Time management for Dummies* (2008)
 T. Van Essen, H.C. Schouwenburg & H.C. Schouwenburg - *Doe Het Vandaag!* (Do It Today!, Dutch only) (2004)

Training courses/workshops

Plan je studie (Study strategies) | E-coaching | Peer coaches | Brain-Training voor studenten (Brain training for students) - Mark Tigchelaar

Questions?

Do you have any questions or comments? Please email the student counsellor Marjan Kuiper, j.m.kuiper@uva.nl.

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