Supporting studies

Sometimes studies don’t progress at the way you think. In this guide you will find ways to solve your problems.

Challenges in remote studies? ................................................................. 2
Time management problems? ............................................................... 2
Lost your motivation? ........................................................................... 3
Procrastination? ...................................................................................... 3
Problems with thesis? ............................................................................ 4
Learning difficulty as an obstacle? ....................................................... 4
Returning to university after a break? .................................................... 5
Challenges in remote studies?

Independent studies can seem challenging at times. Someone may suffer from working alone and another may have difficulty to create routines. It’s also easier to procrastinate at home.

Tips for studying at home

- Plan what you will study and when. Calendar is a base to all good time management so learn how to make calendar and follow the plan.
- Stick on to daily routines. They create clarity in everyday life and help to focus on the essential things. Also, be sure to keep the circadian rhythm: get enough sleep, go to bed and wake up regular times and take care of your regular food rhythm while avoiding too long eating brakes.
- Rhythmize your studies. For example, work 35 min and then take a short break. Don’t assume that you’ll be able to work 8 hours all in once. So, remember to have breaks. You can example use Pomodoro technique.
- Calm down your study space. Arrange for yourself a calm and comfortable work environment where you will not be interrupted.
- In a distance learning it is even more likely to get lost on the phone because it provides work-related information. However, try to regulate the use of the phone and avoid unnecessary interruptions in a situation where you otherwise need to be able to concentrate.
- Familiarize yourself with different learning techniques and identify the way you learn best. Remember that motivation is created by doing. It is pointless to wait for motivation or a good feeling to start working, because these rarely precede work, but do develop during it.

Time management problems?

University studies are relatively independent, and it is very common that finding suitable goals, plans and schedules is sometimes problematic. However, you can develop your own study planning and time management skills, for example, with the help of the following tips.

- Before making plans, evaluate how much time you can set aside to study. As one of the starting points for planning, you can use the fact that one credit corresponds to 27 hours of work.
- Prioritize courses and start scheduling highlights; you can later compromise on less important ones if you find there is too much to do.
- Choose courses in your study schedule whose modes of study vary so that not all exams or assignments accumulate for the same weeks.
- Also plan and schedule independent work to your calendar.
- Break down longer works into as concrete sub-objectives as possible (for example: read from book x topic y, write a few preliminary ideas on topic x for the essay).
- Write your plans on a calendar and / or create to-do lists.
- Monitor your use of time before and / or after planning to make the plan as realistic as possible, and modify it based on experience.
Lost your motivation?

At different stages of studies, you need a variety of goals and motives. Sometimes you must go through subjects that doesn’t feel interesting. Remember that motivation is built by doing, not by waiting it to arrive. You can build your own motivation, for example, with the following questions:

- Think about why your field is worth studying. What other options could you have? What would it feel like to go on a new career?
- Build a diverse schedule from your syllabus. Always include there at least one course that interests you. If you are not interested in the content of the course, can you try, for example some new way of working.
- Talk to fellow students, motivate each other and work together.
- Excessive workload and stress are likely to gnaw interest and motivation. So, give yourself time to rest.
- Utilize university study and career guidance if needed.

Procrastination?

Are you postponing things? Are you doing everything in the last moment? The difficulty of getting started is called procrastination. At the behind of this behavior can be a wide range of actions and ways of thinking, beliefs and feelings that are related to a certain task or appear more generally in study and life. By avoiding a challenging task, it is possible to get rid of unpleasant feelings and thoughts for a moment; that is why it is so attractive. The problem, of course, is that work shifts or is not done at all, and avoidance can become a tedious habit.

Ways to reduce procrastination:

- Practice recognizing, tolerating, and accepting your unpleasant thoughts, feelings and ways of avoiding unpleasant situations.
- Make the task itself as attractive, realistic, clear and concrete as possible. You can also use SMART goals.
- Divide larger tasks into small concrete pieces and limit the time spent on the task using a Pomodoro technique (examples of Pomodoro timer applications: myTomatoes, TomatoTimer).

Stress and exhaustion take over the mind?

Stress is a natural feeling of not being able to cope with specific demands and situations. For example, the student workload can be caused by deadlines, exams and difficulties in relationships. Our minds are filled with thoughts like “there isn’t enough time”, “I won’t survive”, “this never ends”. With these thoughts, we start to drop out of things that we enjoy doing.
Ways to relieve study stress

- Stop for a while to think about your own values and goals: do you do things that are important to you?
- Take care of yourself, stick to hobbies and free time. Don’t study at the expense of your free time.
- Prioritization, to-do and not-to-do lists: what is important and topical right now, what can I do later, what not to do at all?
- Make schedules and plans that suit to you.

Try these:

- Stress scale
- Padlet about well-being
- Self-compassion

Problems with thesis?

The thesis are relatively large-scale projects in terms of time. They require planning, scheduling and discipline. Writing thesis can involve different thoughts and expectations about how the work should proceed or what the work should feel like – but they aren’t always very realistic. Writing doesn’t usually go straight-line; the work involves a lot of small choices and good text requires multiple writings. Therefore, there is often uncertainty associated with working. Asking for help from counselors can sometimes be high. Thesis are often also at the end of studies, which means that life can already be in mind after university studies. It’s not surprising, then, that the anxiety associated with doing thesis is common.

What could help?

- Don’t stay alone with your work: ask help and feedback from your instructor.
- Seek peer support from other students, share tips, provide feedback and work together.
- Find out what additional support you can get from your own training program.
- Read thesis guides

Learning difficulty as an obstacle?

Learning difficulties can be related to a wide range of problems, disorders, illnesses or injuries. For difficulties it is possible to receive support from individual study arrangements. Check out the guide on individual study arrangements if you feel you need special arrangements based on your learning disability, illness or disability.
Returning to university after a break?

If you are returning to study after a long break, you may feel that you are no longer able to study, that you don’t know anyone from the university or that you aren’t aware of study-related practices. Then it is natural and common for the threshold to return to rise.

How to get back to studies?

- Think about what you want from your studies
- Think about how much time and resources you have to study and make moderate plans
- Take time to find out about practical study issues. You can get started, for example, by contacting the Academic Affairs Service Team.
- Take the time to try out and find the right pace and ways to study
Sources:

https://studies.helsinki.fi/ohjeet/artikkeli/opiskelun-tueksi

https://www.oulu.fi/forstudents/studypsychologists

https://www.pexels.com/

Collected: Pauliina Junnikkala, Study Psychologist