

Introduction

Studying from home can often create the tendency to relax or give in to distractions around the home. This temptation to relax rather than get to work is sometimes the result of the remote nature of study activities and the flexibility and independence in deciding when to do certain tasks. To study effectively from home, therefore, one needs to self-manage and impose some structure on study activities. Planning goal-oriented study sessions is one effective way of imposing such structure.

What is a study session?

A study session refers to the chunk of time or a period set aside for doing planned or scheduled study. For a study session to be effective, it is important to set clear goals and to work towards achieving those goals or outcomes during the planned study time. It is also important to be mentally and physically proactive when planning and implementing study sessions.

Practical steps to take in planning your study sessions

1. Familiarise yourself with the work you need to attend to by going through your learner guides.
2. Decide on a weekly or a daily study schedule depending on what works for you – It might be more practicable to work with both. You can draw the daily plan from the weekly one and adjust as necessary.
3. Plan your study sessions before the time – decide on how much time you want to spend studying (an hour, an hour and a half, or two). The amount of time you choose for a study session should depend on your concentration span and the goals you want to achieve in that time. The plan should also include the module and topic or assignment you want to work on.
4. Set clear goals for what you want to achieve during the study session – Example: ` In this study time, I want to read the chapter on SWOT analysis, do a summary and do the self-test/practice exercise at the end of the chapter.
5. Divide the time between activities – Example: for a 1h: 30min study time, you could use the first 30 to 45 mins (max) to read new materials, with 5min to 10min for review. Build in 15 mins break in-between the two halves of the allocated time – for the second half; you could use 30 mins for reading and making notes. Then use the last 15 mins for review and practice or self-test.

Benefits of planning and implementing study sessions

Planning study sessions helps you to stay on top of things, It will help to reduce stress, as you will feel in control of your academic work. Planning with your goals in view will help to motivate you to work to achieve success. Study time is used effectively when it is planned and allocated for the achievement of specific outcomes.

You will be able to monitor your progress and growth, since you will always be able to evaluate the study outcomes – to see if goals for the sessions are being achieved. You may evaluate the outcomes after using your study plan, and re-adjust the plan on a daily basis.

Additional Resources

Covey, S. (2004): *The 7 habits of highly effective People: Powerful lessons in Personal Change*. London: Simon & Schuster.

Van Heerdan, E. (2005): *Life Skills My Journey, My destiny*: Pretoria. Van Schaik Publishers.

Locke, E.A. & Latham, G.P. (2002): *Building a Practically Useful theory of Goal setting and Task Motivation*. American Psychologist, Vol 57,9. Toronto. American Psychological Association.

Summary

In this section, we looked at how to create goal-oriented study sessions in a home-study context. In doing that, we considered some practical steps to take in order to plan and implement effective study sessions with positive outcomes. Some of the benefits of having such study plans have been highlighted. We encourage you to try out these strategies in your own study-from-home journey to see how you might benefit from using them.