



Time Management Tips for Essay Assignments

College students like you are often stressed and busy outside of class, dealing with the other parts of your life:

- Personal
- Professional
- Co-curricular

Being so busy makes it difficult to keep track of your assignments, especially multi-step assignments like essays. Planning earlier in the semester may alleviate stress and help you to meet end-of-semester deadlines.

These Six Time Management Tips Can Help

1. Know Yourself
2. Work Backwards
3. Break It Up
4. Give Yourself Margin
5. Time Yourself
6. Use Available Resources

1. Know Yourself

Plan in a way that makes sense to you. You already plan when you write, so you can extend that skill into planning your assignments as well.

- If you brainstorm on paper, a paper planner allows you to organize your schedule by hand.
- If you use voice notes to record ideas during your commute, a digital planner lets you plan on the go.

Ask yourself:

- How do I like to plan?
- Do I prefer to see one day, one week, or one month at a time?
- Would I like my planner to be paper, digital, or hybrid?

2. Work Backwards

Identify the endpoint, then work backwards. You can then recognize what needs to be done and how to distribute the work.

- Remember the informal writing process steps that your instructor assumes you will complete on your own, such as:
 - Prewriting
 - Researching
 - Outlining
 - Editing
 - Proofreading
- Add these informal “non-assignments” to your calendar as you would formal assignments.

Ask yourself:

- What is the final draft deadline?
- What smaller assignments must I complete before my final draft?
- What “non-assignments” must I also complete? (What work needs to be completed but not turned in to my instructor?)

3. Break It Up

Break larger assignments into smaller tasks so they feel less overwhelming.

- Reviewing your assignment carefully allows you to divide it into smaller, more manageable tasks.
- For example, “Reference 3 peer-reviewed sources” could be broken into the following tasks:

- Brainstorm relevant search terms.
- Search the KCC library databases.
- Read and annotate sources.
- Smaller tasks are often easier to start.

Ask yourself:

- What steps are required to complete this activity?
- How far do I need to break down this activity until it starts to feel manageable?
- Would I prefer to start with the easiest task to gain momentum, or would I rather “eat the frog” and do the least pleasant task first to get it out of the way?

4. Give Yourself Margin

Some steps of the writing process may take longer than expected.

- If you anticipate that a task will take one day to complete, schedule 2-3 days instead.
- If you are unlikely to work on assignments for two different classes on the same day, add another day to your estimate.
- If your boss sometimes asks you to work an extra shift over the weekend, add yet another day.

Ask yourself:

- How long do I think this task will take? Is this realistic?
- What assignments must I do for my other classes?
- What responsibilities outside of school might get in the way?

5. Time Yourself

Assessing the time for a task is difficult, so it might be worth experimenting. For a small task, like revising a short paper, try the **Pomodoro Technique**:

1. Set a timer for 25 minutes.
2. Work.
3. Break for 5 minutes.
4. After every four cycles, or “pomodoros,” break for 15-30 minutes.
5. Note how much time this task takes so you can schedule extra “pomodoros” next time.

Ask yourself:

- How many “pomodoros” will it take me to complete this task?
- How many “pomodoros” should I schedule the next time I complete this task? (See “*Give Yourself Margin*” above.)

6. Use Available Resources

Resources are available to aid in your success, but you must know what they are and how to use them. *Ask yourself:*

- What campus resources are available?
- Can you access these resources in person or online?
- What personal support resources can you utilize?

Many people in your life would be happy to help. Try brainstorming with your sister, exchanging papers with a classmate, or outlining with your instructor. If it is difficult to meet in person, determine which of these activities could be done online instead.

For example, the Kingsborough Learning Center (KLC) offers both in-person and online tutoring.

Ask yourself:

- Who can I ask for help?
- How can I access this help (in person or online)?
- Do I need to schedule this help in advance?

Practice (Plan an Essay Assignment)

Below are tasks a college student might complete to write a research paper. Set a final draft deadline, then work backwards to schedule these tasks on the calendar. This will help you estimate how much time to allow for research paper writing.

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| • Read and annotate class texts | • Write a working thesis | • Meet with a tutor |
| • Brainstorm topics | • Submit quotations | • Write a rough draft |
| • Write research questions | • Write an outline | • Meet with your instructor |
| • Locate 3 sources | | • Revise rough into final draft |

Practice (Plan an Essay Assignment)

July 2026						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

Now, choose an essay assignment for one of your classes and schedule it in your own planner.