Getting assignments done

Setting the scene

- Get your study space ready and comfortable, with everything you need at hand
- Make sure you have water and snacks nearby
- Get cushions, slippers, etc. ready so you feel physically comfortable

Managing the time and setting goals

- Set goals for yourself and review them after each study session – what is there left to do?
- Some people find routine helpful – if this is you, try fixing the same time each day for the same activities
- Do the least pleasant parts when you are less tired or when you naturally are better at concentrating
- A reward system might be motivating – plan treats for yourself when you’ve achieved something (some chocolate, flicking through a magazine, a walk round campus, a cuddle with the cat, a bit of comedy on TV, etc.)
- Take regular breaks and get outside for some air
- Don’t expect to be able to read everything on your reading lists
- An OK essay that is submitted is better than a perfect one that is not submitted
- If you feel overwhelmed, cut the mountain down into individual tasks; then you can see progress and tick each thing off as you go
- Remind yourself of how hard you’ve worked to get here – you deserve the time to get a good result

Staying focused

- Have questions in mind when you read so you know why you’re reading (e.g. what are the main criticisms of this theory?)
- Read in short chunks – perhaps a paragraph at a time. Make notes or review after each chunk
- If you are getting distracted, switch to a different type of task for a while
- Remove all temptation to access social media and put your phone on silent
Getting started

- Ask yourself “What is the main message I need to get across?” From here, you can work out what you need to do to communicate this message.
- Make a mind map or bullet-point list of ideas to start with. You can eliminate some of these if they turn out not to be relevant.
- Keep your plan somewhere visible.
- A plan doesn’t have to be 100% fixed - you can change it later if it’s not perfect.
- If you already have a structure in mind, but are unsure how to start, try making a list of tasks you need to do to achieve the overall task (e.g. review lecture notes, write a paragraph, read a chapter, make a plan, etc.).
- Now do one of the things on the list. It’s usually easier to keep going once you’ve taken the first step.
- Try to ‘teach’ a friend about your assignment. Explain your argument to him/her, or explain the essay question to him/her verbally.

Overcoming writer’s block

- Write as if you were writing for yourself – just put sentences down on paper. You can make it more formal / academic later.
- Start with the easier bits – you don’t have to write an essay from start to finish. If there’s a part where you know what you want to say, write that first.
- Try to write a little bit each day, whether you are inspired or not, and even if you can only manage a few hundred words.
- Even if you write for 10 minutes, it’s better than nothing and gets you over the first barrier of actually sitting down and starting.
- Try starting to write before doing anything else – force yourself to sit down and write at least a paragraph or two before doing other tasks.
- Each time you stop, try to finish at a point where you’ll know how to pick it up again the next day. At the end of a session of writing, write a note to yourself about where to pick up tomorrow.
- Go public – if pressure helps, try telling a friend that you’ll show him/her 500 words on Friday. This way, you force yourself to do it by Friday.
- Build up your writing ‘muscles’ – start with smaller chunks until you get used to it and build it up gradually.
- If you are struggling with complex material, write a straightforward summary of something you want to include.