

PLANNING A RESEARCH PROJECT

Creating timelines:

A research project can be one year, two years, three years or more. You should always plan out these periods to ensure you have a timely completion.

There are varying levels of tasks that must be considered in any timeline:

- **big** (analyse data, write chapter...)
- **medium** (read article, edit referencing...)
- **small** (check emails, format table...)

TIP

Discuss your timeline with your supervisor to ensure your estimated timeframe is realistic and all the information is included.

There are 2 types of timelines:

- **Timeline 1** – This is for your research proposal and your supervisor so they can track what stage you are at. It is simpler with clearer big goals. You may update this every 6 months or as requested by your supervisor.
- **Timeline 2** – This is for **YOU!** It should have extra details breaking down the medium tasks in between the big tasks. This should be updated weekly or fortnightly.

You could also use a **daily planner** to schedule in other commitments – family, friends, exercise, employment etc. and to include the smaller tasks.

How to make a timeline:

- 1) Make a list of tasks
- 2) Put tasks in chronological order
- 3) Categories level of tasks by colour
- 4) Choose a timeline design
- 5) Fill the timeline with the big tasks
- 6) Copy over timeline 1 and create timeline 2 with the medium tasks included

TIP

Save your timelines as pdfs when sharing them with your supervisor/reviewers, to maintain its format. Also use a key so it is easily understood.

Tasks/deadlines you may include in timeline 1:

- Coursework major deadlines
- Write research proposal
- Write literature review
- Planning methods
- Collect data
- Fieldwork
- Analyse data
- Write draft
- Present research
- Rewrite and edit
- Final proof read
- Final draft due
- Conferences
- Publication due dates
- Deadlines

Timeline 2 may contain:

- Coursework medium tasks
- RESEARCHSmart Workshops
- Reading schedule
- Meetings with supervisors
- Smaller goals that help achieve tasks in timeline 1 (e.g. write section three of literature review)

Designing your timeline:

- Research various designs and find one that suits you.
- Colour code based on themes.
- Make sure it is easy to edit.
- Have clear hierarchy of information.
- Leave room for a self-extension — editing at the end always takes longer than we realise.

Common timeline designs include:

- **Gantt Chart** — this is displayed as bars reflecting the period of time it will take to complete each task listed.
- **PERT Chart** — this is a good way of showing how one task must be completed before another is created. However, it can be harder to edit.
- **Work Breakdown Structure (WBS)** — this is a diagram that flows down and shows how a particular task can be broken into smaller sections.
- **Traditional Timeline** — a linear model showing the chronological order that a project will take place. This works well for milestone deadlines.

TIP

Depending on the length of your research project, your timeline should show weekly or monthly goals. Yearly would not be specific enough.

What else should you be doing?

While a timeline can help to plan your research project, you should also:

- meet with your supervisor regularly,
- update your timeline frequently,
- attend *STUDYSmarter* workshops and *WRITESmart* drop-ins for feedback on your progress,
- speak with peers to share ideas,
- edit after you have written a large amount (do not edit constantly, as it can interrupt your writing flow),
- break down tasks to make it more achievable, and
- balance your study life with social life, exercising and relaxing.

GANTT CHART Example													
TASK	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	
Writing research proposal													
Literature review- reading and writing													
Planning methods and write methods chapter													
Data collection													
Fieldwork													
Conferences													
Data analysis													
Write results chapters													
Write analysis chapter and refine methods chapter													
Write discussion chapter													
Write introduction and conclusion													
Major editing													
Final proof reading													
Submit													

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