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
- RESEARCHSmarter 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.

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### Gantt Chart Example

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<th>Task</th>
<th>January</th>
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<th>March</th>
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