


# How to get stuff done when you have a disability...

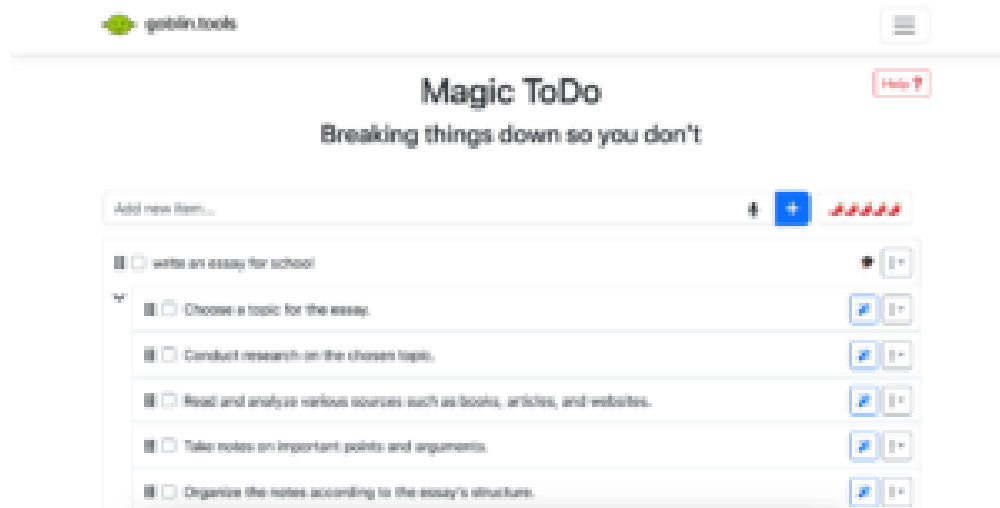
...by Kit / from Belgium / studying History (MA) / 3rd year All Posts

Being at university, there's always a time when we struggle to get work done. As a disabled student, this can be doubly true. Whether that's due to ADHD goblin brain or bad health days, the tips and tricks below can help you stay on track.

## Getting a schedule of adjustments

First things first. If you have a disability, get in touch with the Disability and Learning Support Service (DLSS) as soon as possible to talk about how they can support you. This could potentially be assistive software, proofreading services, a study skill tutor, additional time to complete assignments, etc. This is all individually based on your needs and the list above is just a few examples of what help I personally have gotten. 

## Break down tasks into smaller tasks

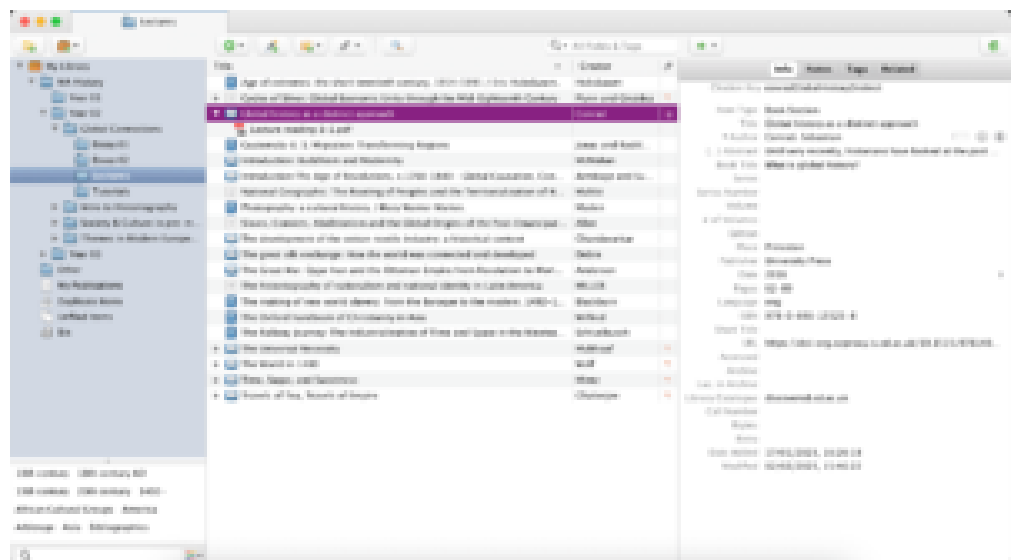


Seeing the list of assignments pile up at the beginning of each semester can be overwhelming. 'Write 2000 word essay' is a very vague

task and it'll be multiplied by however many assignments you have. Where do you even start? My advice? Break. It. Down. And be as precise as is useful for you. For example:

1. chose a topic/question
2. look for sources
3. read the sources (break it down by individual source)
4. take notes on sources
5. ...

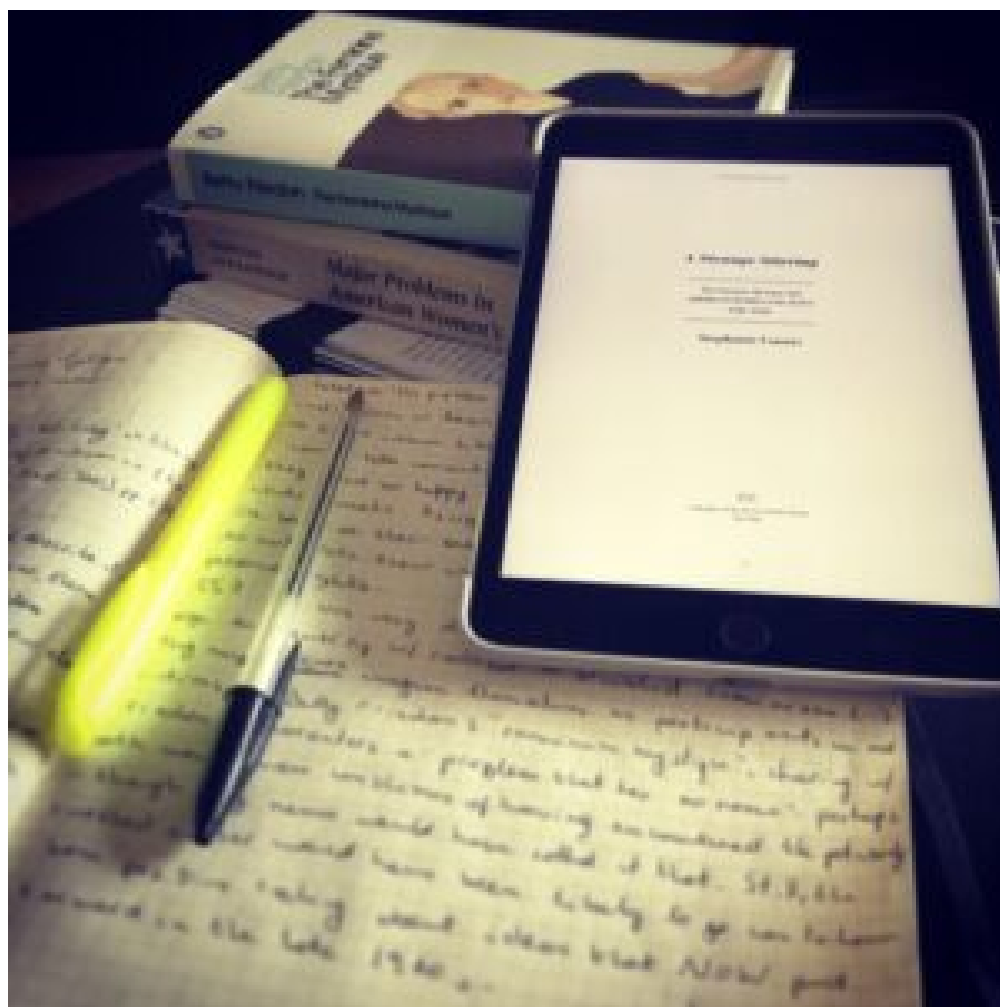
I recently discovered a free online tool that does that for you and you can even choose how in detail it'll break the tasks down and even break down subtasks afterwards. It's called goblin.tools and is an absolute life saver, especially when you're just starting out and are not sure what steps you need to complete your tasks.



## Use all the tools at your disposal to make your life easier

When you tend to get easily distracted or only have that much energy to spare in a day or have to account for bad days where you can't do anything, it means you need to use your time wisely and as such any tool that saves you time will be welcome.

At uni, you'll spend the majority of your time reading sources and referencing back to them. A great time saver is Zotero. It's a free research tool that helps you organise your sources. To get the most out of it, combine it with its browser extension and Word plugin. With these, it'll let you automatically add a source to your Zotero database directly for any library catalogue or archive and then cite them back in the proper format in your Word document, saving you a great amount of time on doing this manually. You can also add PDFs of your sources directly into Zotero and use its great annotation function and potentially link it to note taking apps like Obsidian.md or Notion.io to collate your notes when it's time to write that essay.



**Read with purpose**

Similarly to the above, to use your time wisely you need to read with a specific purpose. You'll be tempted to read all of it and read it in depth. Don't. Generally, for tutorials and

seminars you'll have guided questions. Use those to first skim the readings and find relevant passage to answer those questions, look for key words you think you add to those, and if you already know your essay question look for anything that might stand out as useful. For essay readings or anythings where you'll need to do more reading and/or more in depth start by reading the introduction & conclusion of the book/chapter/article. If it doesn't mention things that are relevant then discard it. If it does, then continue by reading the first and last paragraph and so forth. It's a great way to weed out irrelevant sources and to only read in depth what you'll actually use/find useful, thus saving you a lot of time.

## **Don't forget self-care and to manage your expectations**

Finally, it's really important that you don't forget to look after yourself. It can be tempting to do as much as you can when you can, but if you over do it, it'll just potentially push you back and leave you less time to do the work at a manageable pace. Do your best, within your capabilities and ask for help when you need it. Your Student Adviser and the DLSS are there to help and will point you in the correct direction if they aren't the ones that can help in your particular case.

## **Want to find out more?**

Chat with Kit

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# **Tips for disabled students at the University of Edinburgh – Part 2**

**In their previous post, Seth gave some advice on what to do before you start university, so this next blog will touch on what to do AFTER you start your studies, and help you get the most out of them.**

**When meeting your Cohort Lead talk about your disability and how it might impact your studies (if you are comfortable doing so)**

Your Cohort Lead will be your point of contact for any questions you have that is not related to a specific course, as such it would be a good idea to let them know about your disability or health condition so that they can help you to the best of their abilities.

**After matriculation, set a meeting with the Student Disability Service ASAP to activate your schedule of adjustments**

The Student Disability Service (SDS) needs you to be fully matriculated to be able to make your schedule of adjustments live and share it with the appropriate staff. The beginning of the year is always busy, so be prepared to not be able to have an appointment for at least a couple of weeks, so the earlier you are able to book an appointment, the better.

## **If you aren't provided one from the get-go, ask your PT to put you in touch with someone from your School's Student Support Office**

Your School's Student Support Office (SSO) is there to help as the intermediary between you and others if you need anything specifically linked to the school. For example, room access or adjustments that are only approved at the discretion of a course organiser.

## **Fill a 'Group Change Request Form' with the Timetabling team as soon as possible if your assigned tutorial isn't going to work for you**

The form is the only way to request a change in tutorial groups for all students. If the time you were assigned doesn't fit for any reason due to your disability or health condition, you should make sure to request a change ASAP.

## **If the rooms assigned to your lectures and or tutorials aren't fully accessible for you, get in touch with your School's SSO**

Your contact within the School's SSO will be able to contact the Timetabling team with your accessibility requirements to have your tutorial group or lecture slot changed to a more accessible room. Make sure to be clear about what your needs are. You can find more information on accessible areas within the University on the AccessAble website.

## **Make sure you have a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan set up as soon as possible if you have a physical disability that might affect your ability to use the usual emergency plan**

Once your rooms are set, get in touch with your School's SSO to get a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) set up. It makes sure that in case of emergencies you can be evacuated

quickly and securely. This should be done at the start of each semester.

## **If your circumstances change, let your PT, SSO and the SDS know ASAP**

Though we always hope they don't, sometimes our conditions worsen or something else comes up. If this happens let everyone know as soon as possible, especially if you need new adjustments set up.

## **Your course tutors are the people you'll have the most contact with – talk to them**

You don't have to mention your disability or health condition if you don't want to, but it might be a good idea to at least make them aware, especially if it affects your ability to come to tutorials or need a bit more support from them.

## **Don't let FOMO push you to the point of exhaustion**

You don't have to make lots of friends, become a member of five societies or go out every other night. Being limited due to a disability or health condition is never fun, but you shouldn't push yourself to the detriment of your health just because you want to be like any other student.

I hope you find this and my previous blog useful and that it will encourage you to give University a go with confidence.

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# **Tips for disabled students at the University of Edinburgh – Part 1**

Starting university is usually cause for anxiety in and of itself. It can be even more so when you have a disability, health condition or learning difference to consider. Student Ambassador Seth offers some advice on what to do before you start your studies which will, hopefully, make the process less stressful for you.

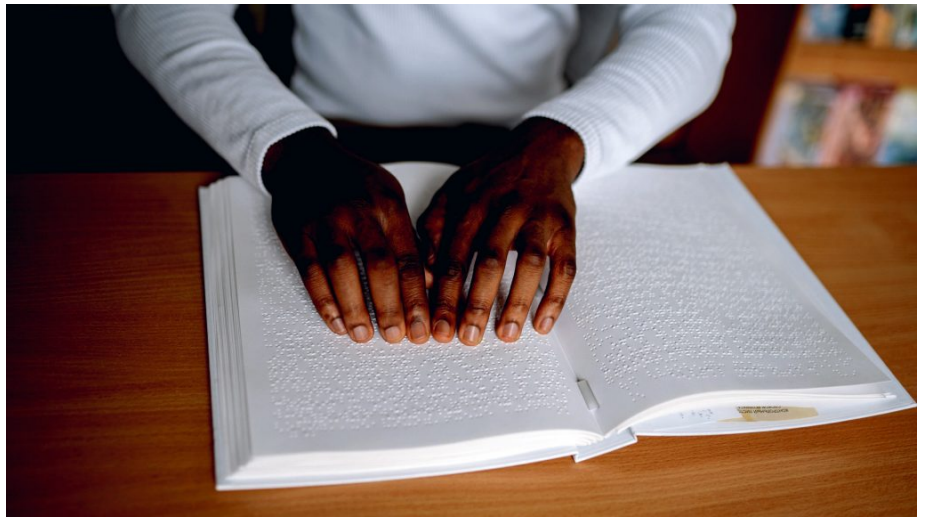
## **Get in touch with the university's Student Disability Service (SDS) ASAP**

It should come as no surprise that this is my first tip. Whether or not you've mentioned your disability in your UCAS application, get in touch with the SDS once you've accepted your offer. Don't wait until the start of the semester, as that is always a busy time and there might not be available appointments until the end of October when classes have already started. The sooner you contact them, the sooner they can work with you to create a schedule of adjustment, get a Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) form filled and sent if you need financial support for some of it. It also means that the appointment you'll need to have once you've matriculated will be only to double check that nothing was forgotten or has changed before the schedule agreed on earlier can be 'activated'.

University of Edinburgh Student Disability Service

**Get in touch with them even if you haven't been formally diagnosed yet**





They will be able to let you know what can be done and possibly offer screening appointments or advice on how to get a diagnosis once you've arrived if that's needed. They'll also let you know what type of documents are needed as proof for them to be able to provide adequate support.

## **Provide your supporting documents as soon as possible**

The SDS website has a page explaining what type of documents are needed depending on what the issue is, read it carefully and when in doubt ask them. Usually, it might be a letter from your doctor confirming diagnosis or the completion of a form by your doctor explaining how the disability or health condition impacts your day-to-day life and as such your studies. This means it might take some time for your doctor to get back to you with these documents, so take that into consideration. The sooner you get the documents back to the SDS, the sooner they can put help in place for you.

## **When offered help, even if you think you might not use it, take it**

It's easier to have help in place, just in case, and not having to use it, instead of having to wait for it to be put in place later when you need it. And if you think something might help, but it wasn't mentioned, say so. They might not be

able to put it in place straight away or at all, but they will do their best to at least find a work around to make it work for you.

## **If using university accommodations, get in touch with them ASAP**

If you are going to be in student accommodations and have specific needs due to your disability or health condition, say so as soon as possible. I don't have personal experience with this as I live in a privately rented accommodation, but the university's accommodation team should be able to help.

More from the accommodation service

## **If from outside Scotland, be prepared for some 'transition' hiccups**

What I mean by that is that even if you come from the rest of the UK, things might not be as streamlined as we'd want them to be regarding continuing your current medical treatments, etc. Have letters from your GP and/or specialist explaining your condition and any treatment you need to give to your term-time GP. And if you take medication, have a big enough supply that if there is a hiccup you don't find yourself short.

Hopefully the above tips will help make things go smoothly before you arrive to study in Edinburgh. Stay tuned for part 2 which will deal with tips and tricks for once you've started your studies.