INFORMATION SKILLS	Bullet Journalling
University Library	

University often requires you to manage complex schedules, marshal vast amounts of information, and co-ordinate life, learning and reflection across several years.

There are many systems for helping you deal with this and you may have already developed good skills and habits in digital or physical formats. If not, you might want to try bullet journalling as it is very quick and easy to learn but very powerful in implementation. It also dovetails well with the *Getting Things Done* methodology of David Allen.

Bullet journalling is an analogue system rather than yet another electronic app or online solution. It encourages mindfulness and reflection and it can range from simple word based text to highly artistic and colourful creations. You can use any notebook although aficionados often like A5 dotted grid notebooks for their flexibility. One with preprinted page numbers is ideal.

A basic bullet journal consists of a contents page, future log, monthly log and daily log with perhaps a couple of 'collections' and some trackers. These are usually facing pairs of pages often called spreads.

The **contents** page is simply a list of what you've added to your notebook on which pages. You should assign at least a double page spread to this.

Future Log

September ○ 18th Term starts ☐ Register with GP i Library open 24/7	**December** □ Buy sister's present ○ 22nd Home for Christmas
October ☐ Lib search for Assignment 3 ☐ Lit Review for Assign. 3	**January** ○ 1st New Year Party ☐ Decide on resolutions
November ☐ 9th Hand in Assignment 3	**February** ○ 18th E's birthday party

Next create a **future log** which is a double page spread divided into six parts for the next six months. Events and tasks can be added to the appropriate month. See above for an example. You can use different symbols for events (e.g. ○), or tasks (e.g. ☐) and they can be filled in when completed (i.e. ● ■). Or you might use 'i' for information, or '–' (a hyphen) for a note, or invent your own symbols such as ◫ which could mark reading you need to do.

The **monthly log** lists each day on one line and provides an overview of the current month (see left, where the numbers/letters represent the day of the week and E= exercise, C= caffeine free day, G= German vocabulary practice). You can add trackers if you wish to this page as in the example. If you want to develop a good habit (such as learning a language, playing a musical instrument, or eating five fruit and veg a day), mark an X for every day you achieve that habit. The aim is to see what you're actually doing and to try and increase the number of days you can mark as successful. You can also track things you want to give up or decrease in this way – perhaps reducing caffeine intake as in the example to the left. You can also use the monthly log for tasks you want to complete in the month.

Monthly Log

	ECG
1 S	x x
2 S	x x
3 M	x
4 T	x x
5 W ● 8k run	x
…	

The **daily log** is simply a spread which has entries for each day as long or as short as required; sometimes called rapid logging. You might note what's coming up for the day over breakfast or scribble down what you've done at the end of the day. It's designed to be very quick and easy and not take a lot of time. But by using a blank notebook you can expand a day's entry if you want to write at greater length. You can also skip days without feeling guilty or that you have to 'catch up'.

At the end of each month, review all your outstanding tasks (listed on the monthly log or spread through the daily logs). If you still think they're important put a right arrow → through them and migrate them to the next month. If they're no longer important, simply cross them off and forget about them. If you want to keep track of them but not immediately put a left arrow ← through them and migrate them to the future log page in a month you think appropriate. Warning: if you migrate a task more than a couple of time, consider: is this really worth your time? Could it just be deleted?

Collections are a feature of bullet journals that are totally customizable. Set up a double page spread for anything you find helpful to see in one place – don't forget to add it to the contents page! Perhaps it's something that's cropping up a lot in your daily log and want to gather together (e.g. books/articles you need to read for your coursework); perhaps it's for a project you want to plan – creating a consolidated list or a mind map; or it might be a 'gratitude' collection where you note things that you're thankful for and use as part of your mindfulness. Note that your future/monthly/daily logs are actually just collections of a specific type.

Threading is a useful technique. Bullet journals don't assign set numbers of pages to anything but simply start a new spread when required. Next to the page numbers, add a link back to the previous instance of that type of log or collection to find it more easily. On the previous instance, add a reference to the next pages where that spread exists. Then you can follow through your notebook very easily. For example, you might have a collection of new words you've learned on pages 22-23, again on pages 46-47 and again on pages 128-129. Although you can find all those on the contents page, it's even easier to look at the bottom of page 23 and see a reference to page 46 as the next instance of your new word collection.

Tips:

- use your bullet journal for planning beforehand and reflection after to see what went well or to improve on things that weren't so good
- use your bullet journal to review what's important to you so you're not trying to maintain a focus on everything that comes your way
- experiment! Try out layouts and designs and if they don't work for you, move on. Don't feel you have to do it the way someone else does.
- don't get hung up on perfection; "embrace the chaos". If you make a mistake or something doesn't quite work out how you wanted, don't fret – your bullet journal is a part of you, quirks and all – turn over the page and start afresh
- make your bullet journal a habit – you'll get greater benefit from it

For *much* more detail check out *The Bullet Journal Method* by Ryder Carroll (there are two copies in the Library) or if you don't have time for that, his four minute video at https://bulletjournal.com/ covers the basics and shows you what's what. Bullet journals can be very minimalistic and perfectly effective with no illustration at all, but search Instagram if you want to see examples of beautiful designs and layouts which might inspire you to start your own.