

Student Hub Live Bootcamp - day 1 - Tasking, Planning and Study Hacks

[MUSIC PLAYING]

KAREN FOLEY: Sharon Davis, thank you. Oh, you have fruit. Honestly, I'm the only one without any food here. It's so unfair and unreasonable. All right. Sharon, thank you for joining me. You can see there's been lots of silliness. And you're going to bring a sensible tone to the dealings we have in hand today.

We're going to talk about what to do first. And problems and judgments and decisions, and how to identify the various different parts of those.

While, Sophie and HJ are crack on eating their lunch. Now, we've got lots of different widgets here that we'd like you to fit in. So we're going to ask where you like to work. So let us know that.

OU students have very innovative study spaces. Often, very flexible study spaces. And it's important to bear in mind where you're studying and how you're studying and getting that right mindset within that space. Be it a kitchen table, a bed, a train, et cetera. So where do you like to study?

Are you an owl or a lark? Do you like to study in the morning or at night? And what study skills do you feel that you currently have? And what study skills do you need to spend time on?

Now, you'll see from our programme that we have a range of ones. This is really a getting setup for study session today. But from next week, we're cracking on with some very important things. And we're going to look at writing, and note-taking, and that whole essay-writing process as well as learning online and critical thinking. So we've got lots of study skills. So it would be very useful for us to have an idea about where you're at.

And if you don't have access to the watch and engage, you can always email us, studenthub@open.ac.uk. Or, you can put something on Twitter. The hashtag is #studenthublive16. Right.

So Sharon, what is this whole issue then around getting started? What do people do? We've seen that people are very excited, anxious, nervous, et cetera. How do they start?

SHARON DAVIS: I mean, one of the biggest things I find with students is that everything becomes quite stressful. They don't know whether or not it's, everything becomes a problem.

KAREN FOLEY: I know a problem. The students are demanding that a lunchbox is issued to every student now after our producers have given people lunch boxes here.

SHARON DAVIS: Well, they can make their cakes and put it in there so they've got brain food, haven't they?

KAREN FOLEY: Problem solving. Good.

SHARON DAVIS: Problem solving, OK. So that's fine. So that brings me onto, so let's have a consideration.

Because firstly, students often refer to things as a problem. I have this problem. It's stressing me out. I just can't do anything. So what is the problem? I'm going to set you a problem. And this is what I want you to come up with. And let HJ and Sophie know.

The problem is -

KAREN FOLEY: They've stopped eating now. They're very alert.

SHARON DAVIS: - A fox, a chicken, and a sack of grain. OK. So you have a fox, a chicken, a sack of grain. You must cross a river with only one of them at a time. If you leave the fox with the chicken, he will eat it. If you leave the chicken with the grain, he will eat it. How can you get the three across safely?

KAREN FOLEY: OK. Sharon, they're just eating.

SHARON DAVIS: For those of you out there who are still eating but can multitask, I want you to come up with some ideas. Or, how many moves you could do that in. Either the chicken hasn't eaten all the grain or the fox hasn't eaten the actual chicken. OK. So the three have to, that's a problem for you to solve. So that's one thing.

In my hands here, I have an apple and an orange. And I have to make a decision, do I want this or that? So usually, when I'm having a problem to solve, I have to think lots of steps. For making the decision, I usually have the information there. And I have to weigh up pros and cons. So I think I might have an apple because I don't want to be bothered to get my hands mucky with an orange.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. So this is typical when you bring a psychologist onto something like this. So we're looking then at the difference between what is a problem and what is a decision?

SHARON DAVIS: Yes.

KAREN FOLEY: And I guess what you're saying is, is that sometimes these feelings, which we've seen students have, they can be overwhelmed with a sense of anxiety about things, but not quite able to articulate or identify even what the exact problem is.

SHARON DAVIS: Exactly.

KAREN FOLEY: And then there's a decision, which is a choice, do I study or do I go and make a cake?

SHARON DAVIS: Exactly. And what will drive that decision was, how much time and what are my deadlines? And how do I fit that in with everything?

So one of the things that, if we look getting ready to study, where do we study? I don't know what's coming in on the feed, but some people sort of have a special space. Some people, it's wherever they sit with their laptop. Some people do it on the way to work on a train.

However they are able to do it, sometimes situation drives that decision. But it's a question of then knowing, how do I like to study? Do I need absolute quiet? Am I OK reading off a book or a PC?

KAREN FOLEY: Well, I'll show you, Sharon. Because we've got the top 10, I think, areas that people like to study. So we asked where you'd like to study. And we can see here there's desk, bed, library, sofa, living room, office and bed. Bedroom featuring quite highly. That is a pretty common one.

And the bedroom does, especially if you are on a bed, it presents a lot of challenges as well, because, well one thing I like about studying on a bed is I can lie everything out. And I guess everyone has different ways of doing things in terms of how one orders things.

But the point is, is that people aren't studying in a dedicated study space is what our students are saying right now. And some people may have the luxury of being able to do that. But a lot of the time, it's about being compact. So why does that matter in terms of where you're studying? Does it affect your mindset?

SHARON DAVIS: It can do. If you're trying to study something that you have to get in, you have to take it on board, then you actually need to have something fairly quiet. And you need to actually be comfortable.

So actually, if you're sitting on a bed and everybody's locked out, absolutely, happy days. Go for it.

But if you are sort of having to do it in the lounge because you can't lock yourself away, and the TV is on, then you have to sort of be considering doing tasks that don't require an awful lot of brainpower. Some people can block out sound a lot more than others and some people just can't.

If I'm studying something really that I have to concentrate on, I need quiet. So I have to take myself away.

KAREN FOLEY: So say this is a problem then for people. Say they're thinking, how am I going to get a study space? How am I going to get some head space? How could they then go about solving that problem in terms of where they can set themselves up for studying?

SHARON DAVIS: They have to work out what sort of studier are they. And do they need to be in that quiet space all the time? Or are there some things so they can choose the quality moments to go to that space.

KAREN FOLEY: And this is a good point. I wanted to ask you about this. Because we saw with Georgina that there are many different types of activities on the study plan.

SHARON DAVIS: Absolutely.

KAREN FOLEY: And sometimes, they're videos. They're activities. There's reading, et cetera. How do students then separate those out and decide how to allocate their head space to make the most of when they can do things?

When you're watching a video, when could you be doing that? I mean, I often will do something like that when I'm doing the ironing, or have something on in the background. And then I'll look at the transcript, maybe later if I want to pick up some points.

SHARON DAVIS: That's a really good point. Because sometimes if I'm needing to do something, I think, well I've got 10 minutes while I'm boiling the potatoes. I may just sort of put the laptop up and just sort of quickly look at something there. Because usually, people keep out of the kitchen when you're working in case you give them a job to do.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. Good tip.

SHARON DAVIS: So sometimes, you can sort of grab a bit of space. And sometimes, if it's things like, if you've got an appointment. And you go to the hospital for an appointment, you know that you're always going to be late. Very rarely is it on time. So you just sort of take on something you can do.

If you've got sort of a tablet or something, you could download some work on there and just read. So you just grab moments where you can.

But if you're actually having to do work for an assignment, then you probably need to find yourself in that dedicated quiet space. If you don't get it at home, then your problem is, where do you go? So you have to look at different options. What's available to you? Is the local library open, can I grab an hour or two there to just go and cut myself off? Or is there somebody's house that you can go to?

KAREN FOLEY: So I guess part of it is identifying what do I need in terms of, do I need quiet? Do I need access to resources? Do I need my materials? And how can I be flexible enough to do that?

And also, thinking about the locations and thinking about support and what people might need. I wonder how you guys feel about that side of things. I've heard from a lot of people they might have difficulty sort of asking for help, saying would you mind having the kids? Would you mind doing x? When you're watching your favourite TV programme, do you mind if I go into the office, et cetera? So I'd be interested to see how people manage those.

You asked HJ and Sophie a problem about this fox and chicken and grains, of which I think the fox is inedible. So I doubt they'll have eaten that.

How did you do with your answer, you two?

HJ: Well, we're not sure if they're edible by those hot dogs. Because you never know what's in them.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. I was going to say.

HJ: But we've got some answers coming through. So let me, I think she may have came in first. She says take chicken and grain, bring back chicken, take fox. Come back for chicken. And Julia says fox and grain first. Fox comes back. Chicken gets on raft. Chicken gets off and grain comes back. Fox gets on and grain go back. I'm getting very confused. This is very complicated.

SHARON DAVIS: There is some points there that you've got too many things in the boat. But also, at the same time, you've got times when you've got the chicken and the fox left together in the boat.

HJ: Oh, and we can't do that.

SHARON DAVIS: And you can't do that because one will eat the other.

HJ: I think Kerry may have come up with our definitive answer. Says the man and the chicken cross the river. And the fox and corn are safe together. He leaves the chicken on the other side and goes back to cross. The man then takes the fox across the river. And since he can't leave the fox and the chicken together, he brings the chicken back. Again, since the chicken and the corn can't be left together, he leaves the chicken and he takes the corn across and leaves it with the fox. He then returns to pick up the chicken and heads across the river one last time. Has she got it?

SHARON DAVIS: Sounds good to me. Actually, if you read all those answers, there will be several different ways of coming up with an answer. So there's not always, like the problems you feel you have with study or where to, there's probably several different solutions. And the thing is, is what works for you best.

And that's a problem. And usually, sometimes you may have to go elsewhere for help to actually sort of, so I think your tutor if it's academic-based. It could be your tutor if it's academic-based. Or it could be a student support team if it's about money or various bits and pieces along those lines.

And if it's about time and where you do, you sort of speak to members of the family that can give you a help. There will be lots of things. As long as you're thinking about whether, is it a problem or is it a decision I have to make? And sometimes, it creates a judgement call.

Because I know if you've got little ones, for example, and you take them to gymnastics, and swimming, and yoga, or whatever, sometimes you'll have an hour or two while they're doing their thing that you could perhaps get work out and just do a bit of that.

KAREN FOLEY: So it's about being flexible, but not thinking, gosh, I've got to cram this in. I'm never going to have a life. And I'm never going to be able to boil potatoes in peace again. It's about being flexible and thinking, when could I do these? How can I get through this all? And what can I do?

I wanted to talk about the very sort of hard and soft problems. Because like all psychologists, we like hard and soft things.

And the other thing I wanted to pick up on as well is that whilst you're saying things like, are you an owl or a lark? And I'd like to see, bearing in mind that we're watching this today in the daytime, when we've had quite a few emails from students saying, why aren't we on in the evening? I'd like to see whether people are owls or larks.

Now, we've got the results in. 58% say they are owls. So nighttime. So very, very common.

Now, what I'm interested in here is this idea that people can say they're an owl or a lark because they are studying that way. But is that the most effective way of studying? And we have an app which you can find on the Resources page of the website, which is a game, actually, which Martin Thirkettle and colleagues designed in the psychology department, to see actually whether you are most effective in the daytime or evening. And then you can plan those more complicated study tasks around those.

Because sometimes, it is through necessity that we'll end up studying at a particular time of day. And actually, it's about thinking, is that my most effective? And when are those concerted efforts that I need to make?

So what would you say about that, Sharon?

SHARON DAVIS: Well, I just think it's really quite, when I was at university a long time ago doing my undergrad, I used my best study time for me was between midnight and about 4:00 in the morning. And I worked out in the end that it's not because that's when I study best. That's because when I was distracted the least. So I didn't used to get sort of invitations to go out down the pub and things like that.

Now, what I find is that I get, I'm the most productive first thing in the morning. So anytime from 6:00 to about 1:00 o'clock, if I want to do some really good thinking work, I timetable sort of that time.

If it's just stuff that needs to be done adminy or just sort of reading over some bits and pieces, I do that in the afternoon because it doesn't require my brain power. So sometimes, situation makes you an owl or a lark.

You know, if you have children or young children, again -

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. A lot of people are saying they study when their children are taking a nap. And somebody has actually got their child watching Minecraft at the moment while they're here, which is good. But there are a lot of things. And it is about this juggling act, isn't it? I guess is the take-home point here, which is about wriggling around things whilst having some flexibility and thinking about when you're most effective.

So what are some of these various hard features about where you're working and when you're working? What few pieces of advice can you give to people about rethinking some of those?

SHARON DAVIS: Over the next few weeks, before you actually get into your module, I think one of the really good things to do is to actually, each time you're doing something think, can I steal 5 minutes here or 10 minutes there? Or if I had my book with me, I could be reading something on this. Or, can I download some of my apps or have a look at some of the information I need to at this very moment in time?

So it's actually just a question about being smart with your time and working out when you may be able to do that for yourself.

KAREN FOLEY: Sophie says she's going to be doing some of her reading on the treadmill at the gym.

SHARON DAVIS: Good. As long as it's safe.

KAREN FOLEY: So now some of these things are - well, yeah. You mustn't run too fast.

SHARON DAVIS: Bike's better.

KAREN FOLEY: But in all honesty, how, there's this idea, I think. And I'm just wondering whether there's some anxiety going on about trying to cram it in. Because there is a lot to cram in. And also, not all of it is essential. So you need to look at the assessment. And this is something we're going to pick up on later about identifying your priority tasks because you don't have to complete everything within that study planner. And you certainly don't have to do it week in, week out. And we'll be coming back to that. So I don't want to stress everybody out thinking that they have to be doing their studying all the time.

SHARON DAVIS: Not every moment of the day.

KAREN FOLEY: But there are certain tasks that you can do on a treadmill. There are certain tasks that may require a bit of reading. What would your advice be as a tutor then in terms of that effective studying? Is it a good idea to do something half-heartedly? And again, we're looking at note-taking next week and reading. Because there are some things that are important to skim read and some things that are more complicated. So what would you say, Sharon?

SHARON DAVIS: When you sort of get your material, I think - for me, this is how I would do it - I would just skim as much as I could to sort keep up with the planner. I wouldn't have to go into it deeply.

But if I found something interesting, I would make a little note. I would also sort of look ahead to see what my assignments are going to be about possibly. And just sort of as I'm skimming through the readings, sort of make a note where I could find this information.

So sort of planning as I go, but not actually sort of stressing myself out as to, I've got to remember everything, got to learn everything. Because you haven't. You've just got to be familiar with the material, and then know when to use it to go back to it.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. Sophie and HJ, are you still talking about food?

HJ: We do love our food here. I don't think we're ever going to get away from that now, are we? That's the problem.

KAREN FOLEY: It's a life skill.

HJ: Yes.

KAREN FOLEY: And it is lunchtime.

SHARON DAVIS: It is lunchtime, yes. So when your blood sugar drops its all said.

HJ: We've got some great things from people saying where they like to study, which is really nice because we were talking about that.

KAREN FOLEY: What's the most unusual?

HJ: So Julie says she likes to study in her car while watching the ocean. And it's one of the benefits of living in Devon, which is really lovely. But Sylvia likes to study in the bedroom on top of her bed because she feels that's peace of quiet. And Catherine studies first thing in the morning when everyone's asleep. So there's lots of different study spaces.

SHARON DAVIS: The only right way is the right way for you.

HJ: Yeah.

SHARON DAVIS: And that's what you have to do, so it isn't important that you're stuck in a study isolated as if you're in a naughty room. Because if I'm in my office and everybody else is downstairs, I feel as if I've been sat on the naughty step. And it's important that you actually enjoy and learn your study. But also, know when you need to take yourself away. And give yourself permission to actually say, I've got to focus on this because this bit is important.

KAREN FOLEY: There's one thing I wanted to pick up on. I remember when I first started my OU study. And I wouldn't go anywhere without all my highlighters and my stuff. And I thought, if I start highlighting this, and I do it wrong, I need to highlight everything. But I used to have this anxiety that if I did something wrong, if I read something and I couldn't remember it, then that would be the wrong thing to do.

And I remember feeling those anxieties about studying. Now, I don't know whether that's normal or not. But what would you say to students who might be feeling under pressure with getting it right?

SHARON DAVIS: What is right? Who knows what is right? If you are sort of following the, if you don't get it, you just go back and read it again. If you don't get it, you go on Facebook and chat with the people on there. The warning is with Facebook is if you're coming up to assignments, if you're still unsure and they're telling you something different to you or something, you go back and ask your tutor. But they're a good forum for sorting out.

And you know what? I can read something several times before I get it. Sometimes, they're written in a way that doesn't actually work the way my head works. And my head works quite differently sometimes.

And I'm reading stuff and thinking, really? What are they telling me?

KAREN FOLEY: I'm so glad you mentioned that because this is something I think a lot of students struggle with. Is they think, like, oh, I don't like reading. Or, I didn't get that. Or they like watching videos. So everyone's got their preferences. And everyone learns in different ways. And just because something is written down doesn't mean it's the right way of communicating.

So it's important to recognise that it might not be that you're stupid. It might be that it's not explained in a way that you understand it.

SHARON DAVIS: Absolutely. On the study skills pages, there's your learning style. And so that would be really good for you to visit. And just say, well, actually, I've never thought about this. I always thought it was my fault if I don't get something I've read or somebody's telling me. But actually, what you need to say is actually that they've not written that in the way my head interprets it. So I need to find out how I can deal with that. Because you can't change the textbooks, but you can actually sort of say, OK, it's not me that's wrong. It's just that there's a mismatch with the way that the person who writes that book and the way my brain works. And so I have to work out how I'm going to make these two -

KAREN FOLEY: And then you can read around the subject, have a little look on the internet, a look at the library, and figure a way out around that.

So turning then to this idea of subject-specific things. You've provided a really helpful resource, which we're going to put on the website. So that will be, if it isn't already, on the website. So you can tick through and think about the various aspects that Sharon has been talking about, about where you're studying and how you're studying, et cetera.

But in terms of actually the subject area and what to do first, we've seen that some students are getting their module materials right now. Hopefully, there's more still coming through the post as this session is going. But for some students, they're going to get access to their module website on Saturday.

So what do they do first in terms of how they're starting to navigate that side of things?

SHARON DAVIS: The first, I think, is just play with the website. You know, Helen sort of was talking about just going, you're not going to break it. So did Georgina. You just go in there and explore and play. Have a look at the study planner, open up your books, and just get your head around how it's organised. You know, what they're talking about.

Because the acronyms in the OU are just like, really? It's numbers and letters for everything. And you just sort of think, whoa. What does this mean?

So the other thing is looking at a glossary of terms. Because often, you would have studied some of these subjects at school. But most of these subjects come with a whole language.

So if you understand what the language is, and if you studied it before, there will be new bits in there. Because research is carried on. So have a look at the glossary, make yourself familiar with some of the language. And don't forget that when things come at you, especially in some of the science subjects, you think, oh my goodness me. I can't get this.

If you take out all the nouns, which are different words, and you get to know what they are, then what they're saying about it is really more straightforward than you think. So don't beat yourself up. It's all new. So it takes quite a few weeks to get the hang of it, really.

KAREN FOLEY: I'll tell you who is beating herself up is Siobhan who says, did anybody else plan to spend the whole summer getting ahead - I know, this is really familiar - and failed dismally?

SHARON DAVIS: Hasn't failed. She just needs to re-plan her time, that's all.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah, revisit your expectations, I think.

SHARON DAVIS: Revisit, yes. It's not failing.

KAREN FOLEY: But there is. I mean, I've commonly had people say, what can I do right now? What can I read around? And Georgina told us that you only need to focus on the module materials, especially if you're in levels 1 and 2. And certainly, in the early days of level 3 even and you only do research when you're instructed to.

But some students can think, I want to get ahead. And what can I do? And we've seen some of the resources that they could take a look at. But what would you say in terms of that feeling of anxiety?

SHARON DAVIS: The knowledge around the website and the materials will make you feel calmer. But also, some of the anxieties come across in terms of, I'm not good at sums or maths. I'm not good at, so just go and have a look at all the resources on there. And have a play with some of the maths activities and essay writing. And just have a look at those skills.

There's a whole set of little booklets on there about learning to study or using IT and things. And I think they're on the resources guides. Just go and have a look at those.

And what you'll find is that you may have done essays at school. But if you're doing a degree, it is quite different, some of the writing that you have to do. And the OU is quite good in training you to do - sort of take you along with the skills. So it's a progression.

So do not worry. Your tutor will help you through with those. So it's a question of don't put the pressure on yourself yet because you've not started in order to have that pressure. And just enjoy it, really. Really, just enjoy it.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. No, absolutely. I'd like to pick up on that point again about some of the skills. And we asked people earlier, what study skills did they feel that they might need to brush up on? And see what they had to say about that in a minute. Because of course, that's the whole thing now is that anxiety about not only the subject, but also the study skills. So let's take a look at what people said.

There's a fairly nice split here with reading and note-taking taking the lead narrowly by 26%. This is why I never got a job commenting on those horses. But anyway, 26% are saying reading and note-taking is a key thing. Followed closely by editing and referencing. So important parts of the process that we will turn on specifically next week to look at in a lot of detail.

But it's partly I guess what you're saying is it's important to recognise which skills you might need to be mindful of. And bearing in mind there is a lot of stuff you can do, but it is a work in progress.

SHARON DAVIS: Absolutely. I mean, even now, I don't know how many essays I've written in my life, I hate doing them, I have to admit. And so I always look for a structure that suits. They're always a work in progress. It doesn't matter how many years you've been writing them or doing them. This is why you write in teams of people who edit for one another.

So if you expect your essay or any piece of written work to go in and be perfect, well, it won't be because we're human beings. It needs to do what you're being asked to do and no more.

If you get commented on in terms of look at your paragraphing or how many, the sort of points that you're making in your paragraphs, that is something you'll learn on the job with your tutor that, that's their job is to guide you through that particular process. So we wouldn't expect you day 1 to sort of produce this undergraduate academic essay that sings and dances. Because you know, it's a skill that you learn.

And unless you've done a degree already, you probably won't have actually honed those skills.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. No, absolutely. And I'd be really interested, I don't know whether we can pull that widget up where we were looking at what level everyone is in in the chat room to see whether there are a lot of new students here. I hope there are. So let's see if we can pick that up in a couple of minutes.

There's a lot of love in the chat room for HJ's miracle mask game. So I'm certainly going to Google that later when I'm not procrastinating.

But I guess, Sharon, just returning briefly to that point you're making about this whole journey. The OU does structure these things so that your study skills are often built-in to things. So you're not all of a sudden going to go and do note-taking, et cetera. You will start to learn those.

And in those introductory modules, they are very carefully planned out so you've got the skills and the content. And we've got 70% of people here who are studying at level 1 from our feedback. So that's fantastic. 16% at level 2, level 3. And of course, there are lots of tutors here and lots of academic staff as well from the Open University. And thank you so much for you guys as well for joining us today.

So interesting. OK. So what would you say about this progressive journey then?

SHARON DAVIS: I think the thing is it's, look at for your tutor feedback.

Those of you who are just starting out as well, attend, if you can, the day schools or the face-to-face tutorials. Because that's when you can ask questions and tips are given.

And also, OU Live. Don't be afraid of using the technology. Because everybody goes in, they say, well, I really don't like talking online and things like that. But once you've done it a few times, you forget what's happening there. And we have sort of a good laugh in a community that comes on. And you get to know other people. But you will actually pick up hints and tips, not just from the tutors but from other students. So it's something that's been set so that you're assessed, basically, as you go along.

The expectation with a level 1 essay will be slightly different from that at a level 3 because you will be so much better at level 3. And the amount of referencing you do at level 1 - the first few essays you do - there won't be an expectation for you to put referencing in, for example. But they will guide you through and the activities will match those on your module

website. So they tie this academic skills in with the module content and subject-specific. So they chug along together, really.

KAREN FOLEY: I can get why people are anxious about note-taking. Because again, it's like, what are those, no. I have to still commit to note-taking on the back of paper that I've written on because I don't feel quite at a level where it can be on nice, clean paper. So we all have our little foibles about things like that.

But referencing, which is something that is taught, why do students get so anxious about that?

Because actually, it is a skill. It is a skill that you learn. Even now, sometimes I get it wrong myself. Especially, it's more complicated, I think, for students on some levels these days. Because you've got all sorts of internet things and downloaded papers and reference books and things, which once upon a time you just had books or papers.

KAREN FOLEY: Sorry, there's a noise in the studio. Sorry, Sharon.

SHARON DAVIS: OK. Yeah, I wondered what that was.

KAREN FOLEY: Anyway.

SHARON DAVIS: The OU tends to use Harvard, which is a specific style.

[DING]

And there's all sorts of - I hope that's for me.

KAREN FOLEY: Popcorn's ready.

HJ: Well, we just thought since we had the microwave there.

KAREN FOLEY: Sophie, what is going on?

SOPHIE: Well, I wanted dessert.

KAREN FOLEY: You come here, with a microwave.

SOPHIE: Grapes just weren't doing it, I'm afraid. I wanted some sweet corn. It's to share.

SHARON DAVIS: Oh, there you go.

KAREN FOLEY: Oh. We're all wanting hot dogs. And now everyone wants popcorn. Honestly, we're going to have a lot to answer for.

SHARON DAVIS: Popcorn is something, often I will have a bowl by the side when I'm studying sometimes because, yeah.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. No, popcorn is really good actually.

SHARON DAVIS: Really good.

KAREN FOLEY: I liked salted popcorn. Anyway, back to referencing.

SHARON DAVIS: Referencing.

KAREN FOLEY: Referencing, referencing. Why is this a problem?

SHARON DAVIS: Why is sort of the actual skill a -

KAREN FOLEY: Why are people nervous about it?

SHARON DAVIS: Because where else do you do it other than in academic study? And you're actually training in academic skills. However, it's an incredibly important skill you pick up. Because otherwise, if you quote somebody else's work without sort of recognising all those years of research they've done, it's like cheating. It's called plagiarism. And that's a sort of academic heinous crime, really. So it's something that you really do need to get to grips with.

However, your tutor will take you through it in the activities. So again, like your essay writing, report writing, your data-analyzing skills, all these sorts of things will sort of come in as you go along. So they'll be part of the process.

So yes, make yourself familiar with them. And then, just sort of take it onboard at the pace at which the module sets you, really.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. And as a tutor then, how heavily do you penalise people who put the comma in the wrong place?

SHARON DAVIS: Good question. I do like grammar. I do like correct punctuation.

I think one of the problems is that if you don't put a comma in the right place, it completely changes the meaning of a sentence sometimes. And if I'm marking work and I have to read it six or seven times to think, what is it they're saying?

KAREN FOLEY: Oh, yeah. Obviously, that would be terrible. But I mean, in referencing. I would never dream of it in a sentence. But in terms of referencing, it does, people aren't expected to do it right the first time, are they?

SHARON DAVIS: No. Absolutely not.

KAREN FOLEY: And do you know who's brilliant at helping with referencing is the library. They run really, really good sessions. And in fact, next week we're going to be having someone from the library take us through referencing. But it is an anxiety, and one that is there nonetheless. Let's see how everyone's feeling, Sharon, right now.

SHARON DAVIS: Probably stressing out more.

KAREN FOLEY: And Sophie, no more microwaving. Excited, calm, lunchbox, cake, relaxed, eager, ready for study.

SHARON DAVIS: Not stressed. Oh, that's good.

KAREN FOLEY: More confident. Oh, that's lovely. Still hungry, though, Sharon.

SHARON DAVIS: I know. I think yes. It's all the brain food. It's all the brain food.

KAREN FOLEY: Oh. We can do this. I love it. Can't wait to go. It's absolutely brilliant. And so nice to see all that enthusiasm.

You know, I hope that you guys remember this enthusiasm at the start and you never let it go. Because times do get tricky as you're going through. And as you may be not able to do things in the way you want to.

OU students, I know from my years tutoring, are very, very exceptional people. The way that they actually manage to problem solve and find ways around things is truly innovative.

SHARON DAVIS: They're resilient.

KAREN FOLEY: With complex and brilliant lives they've got going on.

SHARON DAVIS: Incredibly resilient, incredibly flexible, and actually far more able than they allow themselves to think they are. So the confidence will build. And it's just a bucket of confidence. You start off with one bite.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah.

SHARON DAVIS: You know, so the confidence will build. And it's just a bucket of confidence. You start off with one bite. Talking of bites, where's our popcorn? Sorry, the food is in the kitchen. And actually, when you do study, because, as Susan was saying, your brain uses an awful lot of, about 30% of your energy goes to feed your brain.

So if you don't have enough food, this is why you crave chocolate when you're studying.

KAREN FOLEY: Well, obviously, everyone is learning now, which is why they're all ravenous.

SHARON DAVIS: Absolutely. Yeah. So they're starving.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. OK. How are we doing with all the pictures coming in? Have you managed to exchange any of your goods for anymore selfies that we can send in the last 10 minutes? And I want to also focus on some study hacks. So things that you can suggest that work for you or that you're going to try, that you think that other students might like to know about. So what are some of the study hacks?

And Sharon and I are going to talk about - well, Sharon is because I haven't got any myself prepared. But we're going to talk about some of the ideas that we think could be useful for students. But we'd like to know what you think about study hacks, things that make your studying easier, or better, or more efficient for you, and things that you'd like to share with other people.

And also, send us in pictures of you. And next week if you come along, you can see those put up on the board. And it would be really nice. Because what we're trying to do is build a community here.

So if you can come along next week to look at note-taking and essay writing and learning online, we'll be covering that topic in a lot more detail. And it will be great to have you here. And hopefully, this has taken the edge off that anxiety and you've met some familiar faces.

Sophie and HJ, what have you got going on?

SOPHIE: Quite a bit, actually. Yes. Although, I did distract everyone with my popcorn. I'm sorry. It was lovely though.

HJ: And Sophie was sharing.

SOPHIE: Yes. It wasn't just for me.

HJ: There's some points there.

SOPHIE: I was sharing something I used to do, actually, when I was studying. Because I used to have a commute. So I'd have about an hour each way.

And I had CDs. So I'd get podcasts, or the ones that they give you. And you can do that on your way to and from work. So it's a good way of using that time.

KAREN FOLEY: Absolutely. Yeah.

SOPHIE: People are getting ready for lunch, actually, now. And the most I see at the moment is getting ready for lunch.

HJ: I think Elizabeth's getting the popcorn maker out, isn't she?

SOPHIE: Yes. I inspired them.

HJ: But we've had loads of great stuff through Twitter and through email. But unfortunately, we've had some technical difficulties. But we'll get those up on our board. And I think we're going to put a video on our Twitter showing all the lovely ones we'll have. And we'll get back to you with a message you asking you for your details if you sent us stuff in. Because we've got loads of, I've been looking at this stuff. And we've got some really cool stuff to send to you guys.

You guys said you liked the tiger poster. We've made a note of that.

SOPHIE: Yes.

HJ: Yeah, there are so many cool things that we've got to send you guys. And we've really loved you sending us all your pets, and where you're studying from. And someone actually sent us on Twitter a really nice, how they do their study planner on Excel so they can move things around if they need to and make it flexible, which I thought was fantastic. So we're going to send you stuff as well.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant.

HJ: Yes, we will get back to you on that stuff.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. Well, thank you for sending all of that in. Sharon, there's a lot of love for you out there. People would like to know what you're teaching.

SHARON DAVIS: Psychology.

KAREN FOLEY: And you might have Sharon as a tutor. So wouldn't you be lucky? Stacy would like a whole boot camp on referencing. We can't have that, Stacy, but we will be covering it next week as part of the essay-writing process.

SHARON DAVIS: If she's one of my students, I might give her a boot camp. She would want it.

KAREN FOLEY: And Edward says he's going to be joining next week with a lunchbox. Well, so am I because I'm starving.

SHARON DAVIS: He's going to have to send us a picture, what's in it.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah, send us a picture. And we'll send you one of the BBC Open University co-production pieces of information in the post, which will be nice. OK.

So study hacks. This really is, I think as you put it, a snazzy way -

SHARON DAVIS: Of saying study tips.

KAREN FOLEY: Of saying tips.

SHARON DAVIS: Are you going to give them a task?

KAREN FOLEY: No.

SHARON DAVIS: All right then. That was it. A very definitive answer.

KAREN FOLEY: Should I be giving them a task?

SHARON DAVIS: Well, the term "study hack," study tips, what's that? I was hoping that somebody in the OU would come up with a better term.

KAREN FOLEY: Oh, yes. I remember this now.

SHARON DAVIS: A competition. I don't know what the prize, probably popcorn. But sort of a term that can be used by the OU instead of study hacks. What can we sort of have it for ourselves?

KAREN FOLEY: OK, that's a very good one. I remember this now. Yeah. No, that's a really good idea. Let us know if you can think of a better OU term. Because when you are start studying with the OU, you learn that normal things like assignments all of a sudden become

things like TMAs, et cetera. And there's a whole load of jargon out there which amuses and delights us. So let us know if you can think of something more sensible than study hacks. Let us know. But also let us know what they are.

We've only got a few minutes. And we've been talking this whole session about flexibility being key. And about individuals learning things that work for them. And really, adjusting around that. But what would you say, Sharon, is the most important study hack that you can think of?

SHARON DAVIS: Apart from time management, organisation, and making themselves familiar, I think it's a personal skill. And that's sort of being kind to yourself. So actually, sort of having a plan. And if it's not working, changing. But sort of also making sure that if it doesn't work to plan, you change it.

I know it's flexibility. But one of the biggest things that we do a studying, it's like the sword of Damocles hanging over our head all the time if we haven't got something done. So I'm going to suggest that you get yourself organised. But if things aren't working, you just change that. And as Sophie was saying, she used to sort of study on the commute. So be flexible in how and when and where you study.

I mean, I could give you things about sort of every hour take a break. Or, sort of pace yourself. But actually, make sure you know when your TMAs are coming up as well, so that you haven't got last-minute panics.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. So find out what the deadlines are, what you need to do before you need to do it, is your advice.

SHARON DAVIS: Absolutely. I think a big wall planner with them on.

KAREN FOLEY: OK, brilliant. HJ and Sophie, what are your study hacks? What have people been saying?

SOPHIE: Yeah. We had a good, an email in from Lee. And he deliberately leaves his work when he goes for breaks. So halfway through a sentence or somewhere that's not natural. Because then what he'll do is he wants to get back to that thought rather than leave it at a point where he could not come back to it. He wants to carry on that work, which seems like a really good idea.

HJ: We've also got some words instead of study hacks. I like some of these. These are really good. Lorella says study fireworks, which is quite cool. Elizabeth says study catalysts. Adrian says study steps. And Kerry says study tricks. So you've got all these different words. So maybe the OU adopt some of them. But we have had some great study hacks come in.

I think Nathan's come up with a really lovely one, I think. He said, he has a board of photos and goals of what I want to achieve above my desk, which helps keep me motivated when I lose my enthusiasm. I think that's a really nice one. I might try that.

But I also saw another great study hack that is getting into sort of a little ritual before you start studying, which I thought was a really good idea. Some people put on a certain pair of glasses or drink a certain tea. I like to wear my hat as well before I'm studying.

KAREN FOLEY: His study hat.

HJ: Did you bring your hat?

SOPHIE: Oh, no. No, I can't - my hair's too - I can't have hat hair today, unfortunately.

HJ: I thought we discussed this. You were going to bring your hat. No?

SOPHIE: Have you got one for me?

HJ: Oh, yes.

SOPHIE: Oh.

HJ: I did bring you a hat.

SOPHIE: Oh, it's beautiful.

HJ: It's a really cool hat. I think you'd appreciate that.

KAREN FOLEY: Sophie, it doesn't suit you.

SOPHIE: Yeah?

KAREN FOLEY: No.

[LAUGHING]

SOPHIE: I think I can do this as a study hat.

HJ: I like your study -

SOPHIE: Yes?

HJ: I'm glad I brought this as my backup.

I always have a fez on hand. I walk around with it.

KAREN FOLEY: You two sit down and do your studying with hats on, is it?

HJ: Oh, yeah. That's our ritual now. We're going to try this.

SOPHIE: Give it a go.

HJ: The tea and the hat. We're going to do this.

SHARON DAVIS: It also tells other people, don't mess with me. I'm studying. If you guys have a study ritual, we'd like to know as well. We're talking about they like drinking earl grey tea earlier. I'd agree with that one. So let us know your study ritual, too.

KAREN FOLEY: Well, I'm afraid this has all descended into a very farcical -

SHARON DAVIS: If there's one thing I could say, the last thing I'd like to say in terms of study hack is we live in a world where if we're not physically doing something and busy, we actually don't think we're working.

One of the things I say to my students a lot, think. It's OK to give your time, you can think wherever. You think about your studies. What do I understand by things? And we do not give ourselves enough time to go out and find out what we think and understand. So you don't have to be writing, and typing, and reading. Sometimes, you do need to take yourself away to get your brain working. OK, this is what I understand by this.

KAREN FOLEY: Sharon Davis, thank you so much. I know that that's been very, very useful. And a lot of people are really hoping that they've got you as their tutor. Not everybody will, but fingers crossed. You just might. OK, let's see how you're all feeling right now.

We started today with a bit of anxiety and a lot of excitement. So let's see how everyone is doing.

I hope you found today useful. And that it's made you a lot more reassured about your study with the OU. And most importantly, that you're part of the OU community, having met some of the academics, some of the tutors, some of the students, and also each other. So let's see what you had to say.

You say you were feeling a lot more relaxed, excited, chilled, starving. Yeah, I'm sorry about all the food. A lot less stressed. I want my books.

Well, hopefully some of you have got those books since you put that up. Engaged, confused, worried I'll fail. OK, so there's lots and lots of stuff going on here. And all of this is really brilliant. All of this is really normal. And there will be highs and lows with it.

And next week, we're going to be talking about starting to study. So we're going to look at the online learning environment. How to actually learn online. So we've been talking about a lot of flexibility. But we'll show you some of the advice from some of the OU people who specialise in online learning. And we'll also be taking a look at note-taking and essay writing and the ever-popular referencing. But I would also like to thank my guests who've been on today.

We've had the module chair, Georgina Blakeley of DD102. We've had Helen Clough from the library. We've had Susanne Schwenzer from the science department talking about time management. And Sharon Davis, a tutor, talking about task planning and what to do next.

There's loads of resources on the website. We're keeping the chat open for another half an hour. So if you've got any links you'd like to share, we will gather those and we will put them on the website.

There are also some forums there. So this is a chance to say anything. We'll be monitoring those in the week. Put things up there, tell us how you get on with some of those resources. Some of them are absolutely brilliant. And they can be a really nice way of actually sitting down and thinking, OK, I really want to get on with something. What am I going to look at?

So see what suits you. And maybe have a go at those. And let us know what you thought of that by putting a comment on the forum.

You can also select the Count Me In button on the website. And we'll add you to our mailing list and we'll let you know about future events. Although, the next one I can tell you very reliably is at 12:00 noon on Monday. And we will all be bringing our lunchboxes. And I'd be interested to know what you have in yours.

We will also have collated all the selfies that you've sent us. And if you haven't managed to do that, check it on a phone, email it to us, studenthub@open.ac.uk, and we will have our social media board populated with all of those wonderful selfies. And looking forward to seeing that next week.

Anything immediate from you two?

HJ: I think a lot of people are -

KAREN FOLEY: Any more trouble you want to cause?

HJ: Are we done? Are we finished?

SOPHIE: I'll be on my best behavior next time.

HJ: Maybe not. Yeah.

KAREN FOLEY: Right. HJ and Sophie will be back. Or actually, it will probably be somebody different on our hot desk, which is our rotating bank of people feeding in all of your chat, et cetera. So thank you two very much, in all seriousness. Despite the microwave and the hats and the hot dogs.

HJ: The chat's been fantastic, though.

KAREN FOLEY: You have done a sterling job. And thank you all for chatting so willingly with each other, for filling all those widgets. It really has been an enjoyable session. I hope you found it useful.

There's a Feedback button on the website, so that'll just take a couple of minutes to tell us what you thought. I'd really appreciate it if you do that.

And if you've got any ideas about what you'd like to bring up in the future events, or ways in which we can improve, do let us know. And you can also drop us an email, which is studenthub@open.ac.uk.

I've been Karen Foley. Thank you so much for joining us. We'll be back next week. I'm really looking forward to it. I hope you've enjoyed it today, and we will see you next week. Bye for now.

[MUSIC PLAYING]