A TOOLKIT
for Soft Skills Development for Young People

TIME AND ENERGY MANAGEMENT

TIME AND ENERGY MANAGEMENT

What it is and why it's important

- Do you ever feel like you never have enough time to do everything?
- Are you constantly running late, missing deadlines, or feeling tired and stressed?

If your answer to these questions is 'yes', then this section is most definitely for you. However, the opposite can also be true. Many of us go through periods of having too much time, with too little to focus on and nothing to energise us. Feeling like there's too much to do can make us feel tired and irritable; not having enough to do can make us feel tired and demotivated. In both cases, our energy can become depleted.

Striking the right balance is important for our own wellbeing, and for how other people see us. Whilst we can't control every single demand placed on us, how we spend our time, and how we manage our energy levels, is ultimately up to us.

How to use this toolkit

You can either use the sections of the toolkit on your own or as part of a group. Your tutor/mentor/ support worker will help decide which approach is better suited to meet your individual needs.

If you have not done so already, then read the 'Introduction and Guidance' section which gives an overview of how to get the best out of your use of the UMJ toolkit.

If you need more space to write down your thoughts or actions then use additional sheets of paper.

TIME AND ENERGY MANAGEMENT

Learning Outcomes

In this section, you will:

- Reflect on how you currently manage your time and energy.
- Think about some strategies to manage your time and energy effectively, and which of these could be applied in a range of scenarios.
- Plot out your own skills and abilities in time and energy management, and decide how you might need to improve these skills.
- Identify a situation or task you are involved in, and plan to apply some time and energy management techniques whilst involved in this.
- Evaluate how your skills have developed as a result of this activity, and how you plan to keep on developing your adaptability skills.

Remember! Your skills won't develop overnight. You will need to give some time to work through these activities. Go away and try out your skills, then come back and see how much your skills have improved.

If you need help, ask someone to work through this section with you. This could be a teacher, youth worker, coach, mentor or employment advisor, or someone in a similar role who knows you well.

You're on a journey, and in this stage of the journey, you'll develop some time and energy management skills in some situations you might find yourself in. But first, let's see where you're at before you start this stage of the journey. It's time to take a skills check.

You may find this chart helps you to plan and track your progress through your journey:

Aspect	Date started	Date finished	Your notes
Initial skills check			
Development activities			
Action planning			
Developmental activities			
Reflection, evaluation and 2nd skills check			
Moving on			

BEFORE THE JOURNEY – SKILLS CHECK

Look at the following pictures.

When do you feel most awake and able to concentrate?

Which time of year suits you best?

What's your favourite day of the week?

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

Which picture best describes how you feel now?

Or sketch your own picture:

Now, complete the Skills Check.

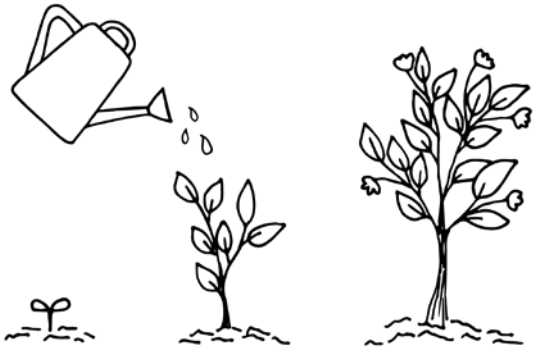
Step 1:

Indicate the places on the chart which best represents where your skills are at.
You can shade or colour in the grid, or mark with a X and then draw a line to plot out your skills.
You can do this by yourself if you want to. If you're not sure how to complete this, ask for help.

		Emerging		Consolidating	Established	
		Never – I struggle with this	Hardly ever	Sometimes	Usually, but not always	Always – no problem!
	Example: *I am always on time for things and rarely miss deadlines*	1	2	3	4	5
1	I am always on time for things and rarely miss deadlines	1	2	3	4	5
2	I am aware of the limits to my time and energy and don't over commit myself	1	2	3	4	5
3	I stay calm and focused even when I have lots of things to do	1	2	3	4	5
4	When I feel tired, I know what to do to help myself feel calm and rejuvenated	1	2	3	4	5
5	I regularly write 'to do' lists and tick off things when they're done	1	2	3	4	5
6	I don't try to do everything all at once, and am happy to leave less urgent tasks for another day	1	2	3	4	5
7	I understand how long it takes to get certain tasks done, and leave myself enough time to complete them	1	2	3	4	5
8	I think of time and energy as 'units' and understand how to spend these wisely	1	2	3	4	5
9	When I start doing something, I like to try and finish it without getting distracted	1	2	3	4	5
10	I don't procrastinate or put things off until later if I can do them now	1	2	3	4	5

Shade in the box which indicates your overall time and energy management skills level.

Overall, my time and energy management skills are:	Emerging	Consolidating	Established



Emerging = your skills are starting to develop.

Consolidating = you're practicing and developing your skills, but you're not quite there yet.

Established = your skills are well developed, and have become part of how you naturally do things.

Step 2:

Ask someone who knows you well to shade or mark the spaces which best represents where you're at. This could be a teacher, youth worker, mentor or employment advisor, or someone in a similar role. They must not look at your answers!

Peer reflection carried out by:		Emerging		Consolidating		Established
Relationship:		Never – I struggle with this	Hardly ever	Sometimes	Usually, but not always	Always – no problem!
	Example: *Is always on time for things and rarely misses deadlines*	1	2	3	4	5
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5	Regularly writes 'to do' lists and ticks off things when they're done	1	2	3	4	5
6	Doesn't try to do everything all at once, and is happy to leave less urgent tasks for another day	1	2	3	4	5
7	Understands how long it takes to get certain tasks done, and leaves themselves enough time to complete them	1	2	3	4	5
8	Thinks of time and energy as 'units' and understands how to spend these wisely	1	2	3	4	5
9	When they start doing something, they like to try and finish it without getting distracted	1	2	3	4	5
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Shade in the box which indicates their overall time and energy management skills level.

Overall, their time and energy management skills are:	Emerging	Consolidating	Established

Emerging = your skills are starting to develop.

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Established = your skills are well developed, and have become part of how you naturally do things.

Step 3:

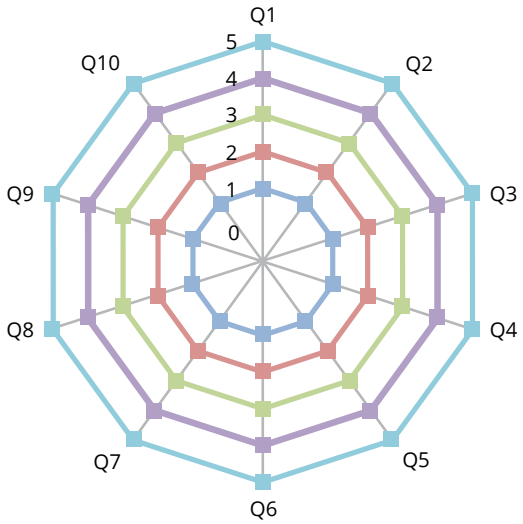
Next, plot your answers on the spider web diagrams below.

Q1 - Q10 represents the questions. On each question, if you answered 5, circle the blue cross. If you answered 4, circle the purple cross. If you answered 3, circle green; 2 circle red; 1 circle dark blue.

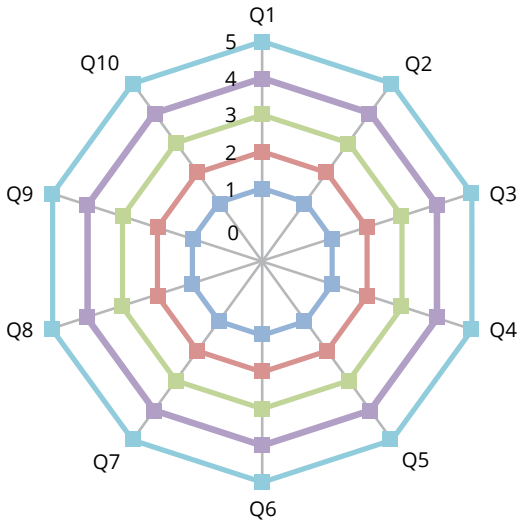
When you have circled all the crosses, right around the web, you should join each cross with a black line. The final diagram should look something like a spider's web and can be lots of different shapes depending on your answers.

If you need more help, look in the **Instructions and Guidance** section for how to do this.

My responses:



The other person's responses:



Discuss your different grids.

- Are your finished diagrams the same or different?
- Do other people see you the same way you see yourself?

Decide together what your strong and weak areas are, and make sure you both agree.
List your strengths and weaknesses below.

What are your three **weakest** areas?	What are your three **strongest** areas?
Area 1:	Area 1:
Area 2:	Area 2:
Area 3:	Area 3:

Your strongest areas might be the time and energy management skills you're good at, but you can always improve. Your weakest areas are definitely areas you should think about improving.

Remember that the levels are personal to you and reflect your habits, knowledge and experience and cannot be compared with other people who will have different backgrounds.

YOUR NOTES

CONTINUING THE JOURNEY – DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

You're already on a journey, because you're already involved in some kind of activity or project which means that you will have to plan and prioritise how you spend both your time and your energy.

Feeling overwhelmed? Prioritise!

When we have lots of things to do, it's easy to just try and do them all, without thinking which should be done first, and which left until later. Here is a way to help you to decide how to prioritise[1]:

1 Important and urgent – DO NOW These are important things which can have an immediate impact on other people, and which have consequences if they are not done. Do these first. *Crisis management* *Appointments and deadlines*	**2 Important but not urgent – PLAN & DO NEXT** Do these next, because these are the tasks which are important, but you have more time for. Plan to spend as much time as possible on these. *Work planning and preparation* *Relationship building*
3 Urgent but not important – DO LATER Some things might be urgent – especially for other people – but actually, they're not that important. Do them later, or ask someone else to do them. *Other people's issues or problems which are not important (e.g. interruptions or unimportant emails)*	**4 Not important and not urgent – ELIMINATE** These really are a waste of your time, and you should do them as little as possible. *Browsing on social media at work* *Gossiping with colleagues*

Think about all the things you have to do over the next few days, and decide which boxes they should go into. Try to include at least two tasks in each box.

Tasks for the next few days:	**1 Important and urgent**	**2 Important but not urgent**
	3 Urgent but not important	**4 Not important and not urgent**

1 See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Time_management#The_Eisenhower_Method

Time and energy management in context – 10 Actions for a Time-Effective Life

It can sometimes seem that the amount of energy we have, and our approach to time management, is fixed and can't be changed. However, we know that this isn't the case. Making some simple changes to your routine can really make a difference. Ironically, if you spend some time and effort in making these changes, you'll almost certainly find that you have more time, and more energy, to focus on what's important.

Action 1: Know your energy levels. Being busy doesn't necessarily mean that you're also going to be productive. The key to this is to schedule tasks around your own energy levels. Some people feel more energetic in the mornings, whilst others peak in the afternoons, and still others find concentrating at night time easier. It's not always possible to do your work when it suits you – that also depends on your working hours – but if you know when you're most productive, you can schedule some tasks around this.

Action 2: Plan to make the most of every day. Set aside 5 minutes at the end of each day to plan what you're going to do tomorrow. Think about how important each task is, and get the important and urgent tasks out of the way first. If you can make this part of your daily routine, you'll have more energy and focus, and over time, planning will become a habit.

Action 3: Limit your time. Have you ever found yourself really absorbed in doing something creative, and you lose all track of time? Whilst getting into the 'flow' is great for creativity, you also need to keep an eye on the time if you have lots to do. Set yourself a time limit to deal with tasks. You could use a stopwatch or countdown timer app on your phone.

Action 4: Deal with distractions. When we're in the middle of something, distractions can be annoying. It takes extra effort to refocus on what you're doing if you've been interrupted. If you need to concentrate, you could wear headphones for some tasks. Browsing on social media or the internet is the biggest distraction of all. Whilst you're concentrating, switch off your phone, pause your email inbox, or disconnect from wifi altogether. Plan short breaks to browse and surf when you choose to.

Action 5: Do it now! Instead of tackling the most urgent and important tasks now, we often put them off until later. One way of dealing with this is the '2 minute rule'. If it can be done in less than 2 minutes, do it now. If it takes more than 2 minutes, then start it, and only spend 2 minutes on it. For example, if you have a 1,000 word assignment to complete, just spend 2 minutes now writing 50 words. Getting started is sometimes the most difficult task of all. You'll break through the procrastination barrier.

Action 6: Don't multi-task. Many people take pride in the amount of tasks they can juggle all at once, but most of the evidence suggests that the more tasks you try to do at the same time, the less well they'll get done. If you can, plan to do one thing at a time, do it well, and then move on to the next thing. You'll be more productive and develop a much greater sense of achievement.

Action 8: Say no, and mean it. If other people ask you to do something and it interrupts what you're focusing on, it's fine to tell them 'no' (unless it's a real crisis). Good communication skills are important here. If people know that you'll drop everything to respond to their priorities, they'll expect it, and you'll never get your own work done! At the end of the day, people will respect you more if you're clear on what you can do, and what you can't. Don't be afraid to ask for help or to revise deadlines if they're proving to be unrealistic. With good communication, a solution can usually be found.

Action 7: Break down tasks into smaller tasks. If a task seems so big and complex that you don't know where to start, you'll be more tempted to procrastinate and it'll never get done. The way to deal with this is to implement the '2 minute rule'. You could also treat the task as a problem to solve, and implement some of the planning, problem solving and analytical thinking skills you've learnt. Break it down into smaller tasks so that it becomes more manageable, and estimate how

long you'll need for each small task. Another tendency to avoid is perfectionism. As you're working on the task, don't aim for it to be 'perfect'. Get it done, and improve it later. If you can't, let it go and move on to the next thing.

Action 9: Make lists. You've already thought about this with your daily planning. Once you have a plan, you can take your 'to do' list, and then as you do things, make a 'done' list. It feels good when we tick things off and can see the 'done' list growing. You could also think about making a 'to don't' list. For example, resolve that for the next week, you won't check your phone for 20 minutes over breakfast. Decide which habits you want to break and focus on breaking them.

Action 10: Rest and recharge. Last but not least, we all need regular time to rest and recharge our batteries. There's no point managing your time well and being productive if you're not enjoying life. Make sure you plan to do things which you enjoy, which relax you, and which excite you. Whilst alcohol or recreational drugs can be fun at first, they actually make your mind and body more tired, so minimise these activities, or stop them altogether. Plan to eat well, get enough sleep, take regular exercise, and make time for friends and family.

Read '10 Actions for a Time-Effective Life' and do the exercise below.

The easiest action to implement:

The most difficult action to implement:

The action which will have the biggest impact on me:

The action which will have the biggest impact on me:

YOUR NOTES

ACTION PLANNING

The amount of time we spend on tasks is often very different to the amount of time we think we spend! Estimate how much time you spend on different tasks and activities. Then go and time yourself!

Task	I estimate this takes...	This actually takes...
1. Brushing my teeth		
2. Going to work/school/college		
3. Preparing & eating breakfast		
4.		
5.		
6.		

Small amounts of time spent on little things can mount up, especially your screen time. Record your use over one day in the table below.

You could also download an app to track your screen time, such as Social Fever, Moment or RealizD.

	Using social media			Checking emails			Surfing the internet		
	From	To	Total	From	To	Total	From	To	Total
1	*08:30*	*08:43*	*13 mins*						
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
8									
9									
10									
Total	Add up the 'total' column:			Add up the 'total' column:			Add up the 'total' column:		

Making sure you get enough sleep is absolutely crucial for managing your time and energy. Too little sleep, or too much sleep, can make you feel tired and irritable. Choose one week and keep a sleep diary.

	Time getting up	Time going to bed	Total hours sleep	Did I get enough sleep?
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

- Were you accurate in estimating how long basic tasks take?
- How much time do you spend on your phone on an average day?
- How much of this time is wasted? How much is useful?
- How many hours of sleep do you get on average?
- Do you think you get enough sleep?
- Do you struggle to fall asleep at night, or do you find it a problem to wake up in the morning?

Think about some key tasks or activities you're going to take part in.

Once you've identified this, think of one day when you know you're likely to be busy. Cut out or copy this diary and take it with you throughout your day. Try and write down everything you do for the whole day. Don't worry if you forget to write something down, just carry on and write down the next thing.

Time	Activity
06:45	*Alarm clock went off*
07:10	*Got out of bed and went to the shower*

- When did you have the most energy?
- When could you concentrate the best?
- When did you feel the most stressed?
- When did you feel the most tired?
- When did you feel the most relaxed?
- Did you waste any time? Why? How much time did you waste?
- What was the most important thing you achieved?
- What would you change about the day?

Think of three actions you're going to experiment with. Cut them out and carry them with you. You could put them in your wallet or purse, or stick them to a diary or folder.

Time & Energy Action:	Time & Energy Action:	Time & Energy Action:

Make a plan for a task you need to carry out. This could be something fairly big, or it could be quite small. Whatever it is, write down how you're going to use the 3 actions you've identified above.

What task are you going to carry out?		
Is the task... (✓ tick)	Important & urgent? Not important but urgent?	Important but not urgent? Not important and not urgent?
How long should the task take?	How are you going to start?	How are you going to finish?
Action:	*I will implement this action by...*	
Action:	*I will implement this action by...*	
Action:	*I will implement this action by...*	
As you do the task, make notes about how you manage your time and energy:		

REFLECTING AND EVALUATING

How did it go? Here's your chance to reflect on how you've improved your time and energy management skills. Fill in each arrow below with your results and thoughts.

What task/activity did you complete?

Did you follow your own advice on time and energy management? How?

Can you now manage your time and energy better? How?

What new skills in time and energy management will you take with you and develop further in the future?

AFTER THE JOURNEY – SKILLS CHECK

You've almost completed this stage of your soft skills journey. You've used this part of the journey to think about your time and energy management skills. Now it's time to see how much distance you have travelled in your time and energy management skills journey. Indicate in the spaces which best represents your skills now.

		Emerging		Consolidating	Established	
		Never – I struggle with this	Hardly ever	Sometimes	Usually, but not always	Always – no problem!
	Example: *I am always on time for things and rarely miss deadlines*	1	2	3	4	5
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Shade in the box which indicates your overall time and energy management skills level.

Overall, my time and energy management skills are:	Emerging	Consolidating	Established

Emerging = your skills are starting to develop.

Consolidating = you're practicing and developing your skills, but you're not quite there yet.

Established = your skills are well developed, and have become part of how you naturally do things.

Again, ask the same person who knows you well to indicate on the chart the spaces which best represent where you're at now. They must not look at your answers!

Peer reflection carried out by: Relationship:		Emerging		Consolidating		Established
		Never – I struggle with this	Hardly ever	Sometimes	Usually, but not always	Always – no problem!
	Example: *Is always on time for things and rarely misses deadlines*	1	2	3	4	5
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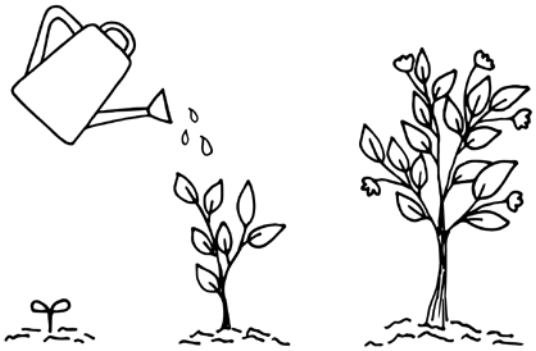
10	Doesn't procrastinate or put things off until later if they can do them now	1	2	3	4	5

Shade in the box which indicates their overall time and energy management skills level.

Overall, their time and energy management skills are:	Emerging	Consolidating	Established



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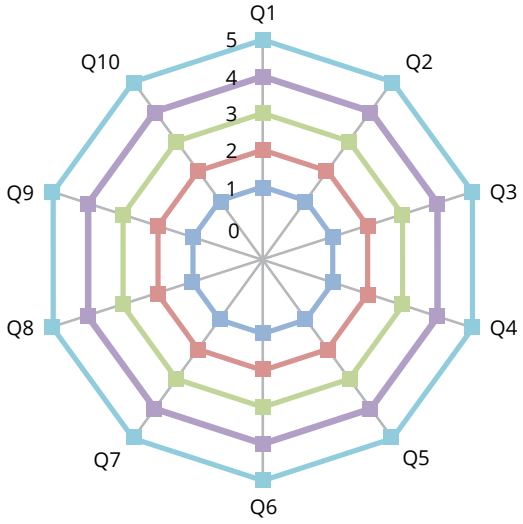
Next, plot your answers on the spider web diagrams below.

If you need more help, look in the **Instructions and Guidance** section for how to do this.

My responses:



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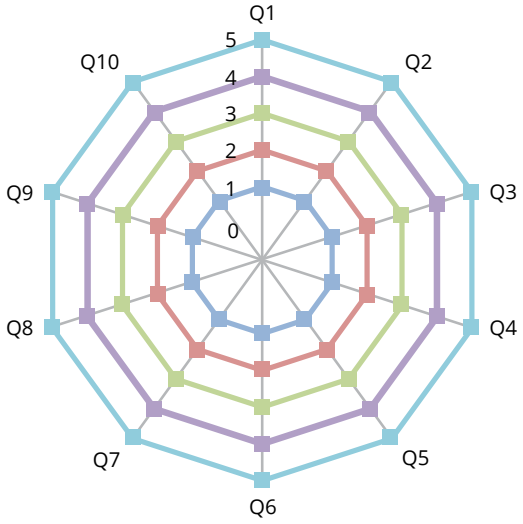
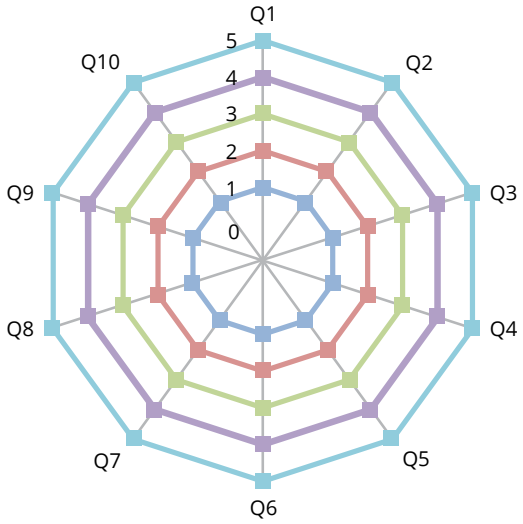


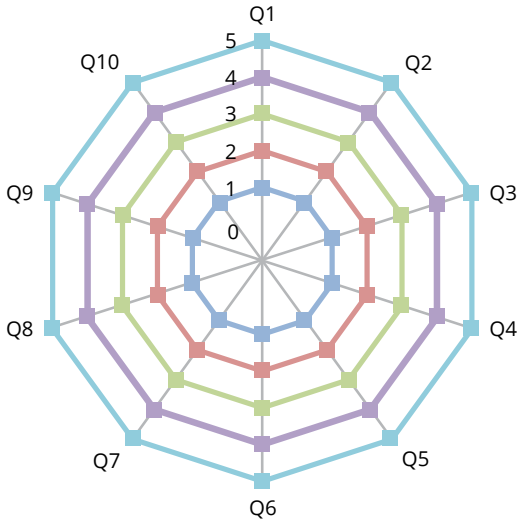
If your spider's webs look the same, that's fine. Go to the next stage.
If they're different, work together to produce a single spider's web you can both agree on.

Plot out two diagrams – your skills before, and your skills now.

My skills before:



My skills now:



Are your 'before' and 'after' diagrams different? How much progress have you made?
If they're the same, don't be disheartened. Sometimes we slip backwards, or we need more time to develop our skills. This is part of the journey!

Remember that the levels are personal to you and reflect your habits, knowledge and experience and cannot be compared with other people who will have different backgrounds.

MOVING ON

This part of the journey is almost over. It's time to prepare for the next stage.

1. How are you going to continue developing your time and energy management skills?

I am going to continue developing my time and energy management skills by:

2. You've applied for a job or training course, and they want to know what experience you have in managing your time and energy effectively.

What examples can you now give in your written application?

3. They liked your application, and they want to invite you for an interview.

What further examples of good time and energy management skills should you mention in your interview?

You are now ready to move on to your next skill.

YOUR NOTES