The guide to
LIFE TOOLS
PROGRAMME 2019–2020

Increase your knowledge, enhance your life
Acquire. Assimilate. Apply
LIFE TOOLS PROGRAMME

How the Life Tools programme benefits you

Our Life Tools programme is designed by experts to facilitate your transition into university and enhance your student experience. It also allows you to take control of your personal development and strengthen your skills to achieve your academic potential and prepare for life beyond university.

In today’s demanding job market, employers are looking for applicants with specific skills, abilities and personal strengths to work in their organisations. They are seeking candidates with behaviours and competencies which complement their academic achievements, and who can work independently while being good team players.

Learn skills that will enable you to make a difference in the workplace.

Our Life Tools programme won the RUSU staff–student partnership excellence award in 2018–19

Manage academic demands effectively
Improve resilience when life becomes challenging
Enhance your personal wellbeing
Every talk is about developing tools to use in daily life, and consists of a 45 minute presentation followed by an opportunity to discuss, ask questions and give feedback.

The topics covered are categorised under the following headings:

- creativity,
- knowledge,
- wellness, and
- global awareness.

Each talk is colour coded by the category it most relates to, although most of them have a crossover with other categories.

You can expand your experience by attending the monthly group discussion exploring topics covered by the talks in more detail, and hear how others are applying the strategies in day-to-day life.

For more details refer to the timetable at the end of this brochure.

Enroll on the Life Tools Blackboard course

Popular talks will be repeated so if you missed a talk, or cannot attend because of other commitments, you can keep up to date by enrolling on the Life Tools Blackboard course. It also contains resources and links to the Life Tools blog, which you can access at any time. Once enrolled, you will receive a weekly email with information about upcoming talks, and group sessions, as well as general information on all the topics.

Visit reading.ac.uk/life-tools

- to enrol on the Life Tools Blackboard course,
- access the Life Tools blog,
- find out what students have been saying about the programme.

The Life Tools programme is free and open to all students – there’s no need to book.
Prep for success
Useful tips to improve concentration, prevent procrastination, and be productive in your first few weeks at university. Learn about the Life Tools certificate, Blackboard course and blog. Find out how you can maximise your potential and do well academically.

Wed 25 Sep
11:00–12:00
Palmer, G10

Living in the UK
Useful information on how to adjust to a new environment and to a different cultural and educational system.

Wed 25 Sep
13:00–14:00
Palmer, G10

Maximise your university experience
Find out about how to manage the transition to university, enhance your study skills and increase your knowledge.

Thu 26 Sep
11:00–12:00
Palmer, 104
and
13:00–14:00
Palmer, 103
A good night’s sleep

Sleep is essential for our health and wellbeing. It is also key to learning and remembering. Find out about what influences your sleep pattern and tips to help you sleep better.

Wed 16 Oct  15:00–16:00
Thu 28 Nov  16:00–17:00
Mon 13 Jan  13:00–14:00
Wed 12 Feb  14:00–15:00
Wed 6 May   15:00–16:00
Thu 14 May  14:00–15:00

🌟 OUR TOP TIP:
Plan technology free time before bedtime.

YOUR TIP:

Ace presentations and collaborations

Developing working relationships with others is an essential skill for academic collaboration. A good presentation can help you to engage with others and get your message across. Find out how to work better with others, polish your presentation skills and manage group projects effectively.

Wed 30 Oct  15:00–16:00
Mon 3 Feb   13:00–14:00

🌟 OUR TOP TIP:
Simple is clearer, consult with each other.

YOUR TIP:

Beyond university

Prepare yourself for the end of your time as a student, to saying goodbye to friends, as well as looking ahead at life beyond university.

Wed 22 Apr  15:00–16:00
Wed 27 May  13:00–14:00

🌟 OUR TOP TIP:
Keep in contact and follow up with friends. Maintain hope for the next stage.

YOUR TIP:
Bouncing back from setbacks

Life at university can present many challenges, and sometimes things do not work out as hoped. Dealing with setbacks is a key skill to learn from these situations. Learn ways in which you can prepare to deal with obstacles and unexpected events with confidence.

Wed 10 Oct 17:30–18:30
Mon 25 Nov 13:00–14:00
Wed 29 Jan 12:00–13:00
Thu 23 Apr 14:00–15:00
Thu 6 May 13:00–14:00

OUR TOP TIP:
Listen to yourself, maintain energy levels.

YOUR TIP:

Confidence: “I can” and “I will”

Do you find that although you know what to do, you doubt yourself? Do you wonder how to achieve your goals? Are you concerned about making mistakes? Learn strategies to develop a confident mindset, challenge negative thinking and develop strategies to maintain your health and wellbeing.

Wed 13 Nov 14:00–15:00
Wed 5 Feb 15:00–16:00

OUR TOP TIP:
Change from “I can’t” to “I can”. Focus on possibilities.

YOUR TIP:

Creating connections: settling in, getting to know others

Whenever we go to a new place, what interests us most is getting to know people, and establishing relationships that have the potential to last a long time. Find out how you can manage the transition into a new environment, settle in, and communicate with others when all is new and different, and make friends over time.

Wed 3 Oct 13:00–14:00
Thu 31 Oct 13:00–14:00
Thu 23 Jan 16:00–17:00

OUR TOP TIP:
Know yourself, reach out and talk with others.

YOUR TIP:
Emotional Intelligence

People who know themselves well and can manage their emotions effectively do well both at work and in life. Find out ways in which you can boost your capacity to understand yourself, your reactions and behaviour. Learn strategies to communicate with others effectively at university, work and in daily life.

Mon 9 Dec  16:00–17:00
Thu 5 Mar  13:00–14:00

🌟 OUR TOP TIP:
Self-awareness is key. Notice your thoughts and feelings. Give yourself time.

YOUR TIP:

Feedback: food for thought

Managing sensitive feedback is key to make progress with your studies. Find out ways in which you can make the most of the information and advice so that you can develop your knowledge and skills which you can then take into the workplace.

Mon 2 Dec  13:00–14:00
Wed 4 Mar  14:00–15:00

🌟 OUR TOP TIP:
It’s not personal, it’s to improve your work.

YOUR TIP:

Focusing or forgetting?

In the digital age we are constantly surrounded by stimuli that distract us. Do you notice that you read a lot, but find it hard to remember the material? Find out how to manage distractions, focus better, remember what you are learning and make progress in your studies.

Mon 30 Sep  13:00–14:00
Thu 21 Nov  16:00–17:00
Mon 10 Feb  16:00–17:00
Mon 2 Mar  13:00–14:00
Mon 27 Apr  13:00–14:00
Mon 18 May  16:00–17:00

🌟 OUR TOP TIP:
Switch off distractions and create a calm, focused work environment.

YOUR TIP:
Ignite your motivation: keep learning

Learn about what influences your motivation and understand your preferred style of studying better. Identify your priorities and structure your time to complete tasks. Find out strategies to motivate yourself so that you can increase your knowledge and enjoy your learning.

Thu 17 Oct 13:00–14:00
Thu 16 Jan 16:00–17:00

🌟 OUR TOP TIP:
Identify your priorities, and structure your day.

YOUR TIP:

Imperfect perfectionism

Do you find that you want to continually improve your work? Does it feel frustrating when it is not just so? Do you find yourself going over your work many times without making progress?

Find out why good enough is good enough. Learn how to overcome challenges, deal with setbacks and manage expectations so that you make good progress and submit work you are proud of.

Wed 4 Dec 14:00–15:00
Mon 9 Mar 16:00–17:00

🌟 OUR TOP TIP:
Failure is part of life. We learn from it to make progress going forward.

YOUR TIP:

Jump-starting your brain

Difficult to get started? Can’t get finished? Often, not feeling like doing work is more about not being sure about how to make progress, or fear of making a mistake. This creates unnecessary pressure to meet unrealistic standards. Find out what you can do to overcome procrastination, make progress and hand in your work in on time.

Mon 14 Oct 13:00–14:00
Thu 14 Nov 13:00–14:00
Mon 20 Jan 16:00–17:00
Thu 13 Feb 16:00–17:00
Wed 11 Mar 14:00–15:00
Thu 7 May 13:00–14:00

🌟 OUR TOP TIP:
Break tasks down into small chunks.

YOUR TIP:
Living well on a student budget

Do you find it hard to balance important cover expenses with socialising and treating yourself? Understand what influences your relationship with money. Knowing your budget, and how to make it work for you will allow you to have enough for what you need and prevent the stress of getting into debt.

Wed 23 Oct  14:00–15:00
Thu 5 Dec   16:00–17:00
Wed 15 Jan  15:00–16:00
Mon 2 Mar   13:00–14:00

Our top tip:
Log expenses. Keep a running total, know how much you have available.

Your tip:

Men and the university experience

This talk will be about understanding men and relationships, concepts of masculinity, male mental health and wellbeing.

Is there a crisis in masculinity as the media would have us believe? Is there really any difference between the male and female experience? Is there a battle of the sexes and how does it play out at uni? Are men less good at relationship talk and if so why? Why are men so much more likely to become addicts and take their own lives?

Everybody (men and women) are invited to come and explore these important themes, and to learn more about themselves, their friends and partners.

Thu 24 Oct  16:00–17:00
Thu 6 Feb   16:00–17:00

Our top tip:
Be yourself, discussing things with others improves wellbeing.

Your tip:
## Mindfulness: a brief introduction

### Part 1: Getting started

In a busy world we need to create space to pause. This enables us to manage our thoughts, reduce the impact from the demands of everyday life and derive a sense of wellbeing. Find out what Mindfulness is about, and the benefits for health and learning.

**Mon 28 Oct 13:00–14:00**  
**Mon 27 Jan 12:00–13:00**

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## Mindfulness: a brief introduction

### Part 2: Keep going

Learn some mindful activities and find out how to make it part of your everyday life. It is not necessary to have been to part 1 to attend this talk.

**Wed 27 Nov 14:00–15:00**  
**Wed 26 Feb 14:00–15:00**

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## Mindfulness for exam prep

Tips to reduce tension and maintain your balance during revision.

**Wed 22 Apr 13:00–14:00**

⭐ **OUR TOP TIP:**  
*Take a moment to breathe, pay attention to your environment.*

**YOUR TIP:**
Preparing for exams

Do you feel you have a lot to revise in a short period of time? Does your mind sometimes go blank when you look at an exam paper? Are you worried about your results, or what to do if an exam doesn’t go well? If so, you are not alone. Find out how to do well and keep well while under pressure. Learn how to regulate emotions to increase concentration and memory, boost motivation, and reduce procrastination to manage your revision and exams effectively.

Thu 12 Dec 13:00–14:00
Wed 18 Mar 14:00–15:00
Mon 23 Mar 16:00–17:00
Mon 20 Apr 13:00–14:00
Wed 29 Apr 13:00–14:00
Mon 11 May 13:00–14:00
Wed 20 May 13:00–14:00

★ OUR TOP TIP:
Maintain healthy habits, manage your energy levels.
YOUR TIP:

Romantic relationships

Romantic relationships can be very rewarding provided they involve mutual trust and respect. At times feelings change, turning the world upside down and leading to break ups and feelings of sadness and loss. Find out ways to manage these challenges, keep safe, understand feelings, and restore your stability and hope for the future.

Mon 25 Nov 16:00–17:00
Thu 27 Feb 13:00–14:00

★ OUR TOP TIP:
If it feels wrong, it IS wrong.
YOUR TIP:
Socialising and substances: When is it too much?

Socialising with peers often includes having a drink as a way of relaxing and having fun. But how do we know when to stop? Find out what works for you, how to prevent the negative impacts of substances on your body and health and enjoy socialising safely.

Wed 20 Nov 13:00–14:00
Thu 30 Jan 15:00–16:00

🌟 OUR TOP TIP:
All in moderation, know your body and what is important to you.

YOUR TIP:

Stressed? Learn ways to maintain your health

Life at university can be very busy and at times it may become stressful. Managing symptoms at an early stage is key to preventing them from having a negative impact on your health, wellbeing, and ability to study. Find out strategies to help reduce the impact of stress and maintain your health to study productively. Learn about the benefits of exercise and nutrition for learning and feeling well.

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Mon 21 Oct 16:00–17:00
Wed 18 Nov 14:00–15:00
Thu 16 Jan 13:00–14:00
Mon 24 Feb 13:00–14:00
Thu 12 Mar 17:30–18:30
Wed 13 May 13:00–14:00
Thu 21 May 13:00–14:00

🌟 OUR TOP TIP:
Eat well, sleep well, go for a walk.

YOUR TIP:
Support your mates

This is a 3-hour interactive workshop developed by Student Minds for students who may be supporting a friend experiencing mental health difficulties or would like to know more about mental health, the support available, and maintaining wellbeing while at university. The workshop covers:

- understanding the student experience at university,
- spotting the signs that your friend/peer may be struggling,
- starting a conversation with that individual,
- basic listening and motivating skills,
- signposting and information about what professional and further support is available,
- looking after your own wellbeing.

It includes presentations, group discussion and individual activities delivered by trained Student Services staff. To book a place email talks@reading.ac.uk

Wed 20 Nov 14:00–17:00
Thu 30 Jan 14:00–17:00

OUR TOP TIP:
Support by maintaining boundaries and encouraging others to contact services.

YOUR TIP:

Thinking ahead: the workplace and you

Discover your strengths, identify what motivates you and prepare your mindset to manage the challenges of the changing work environment. Find out ways to build your confidence to communicate what you can contribute at work.

Wed 11 Dec 14:00–15:00
Mon 16 Mar 15:00–16:00

OUR TOP TIP:
Start early, contact the Careers team.

YOUR TIP:
Under pressure?

Preparing for a degree requires in-depth work, while juggling multiple deadlines and managing expectations to achieve the academic standards required. Build your strategies to manage pressure, maintain your strength, and learn better while keeping well.

Thu 3 Oct 16:00–17:00
Mon 11 Nov 13:00–14:00
Wed 22 Jan 14:00–15:00
Thu 19 Mar 13:00–14:00
Thu 30 Apr 13:00–14:00

OUR TOP TIP:
Set realistic goals and be your best friend.

YOUR TIP:
STUDENT FEEDBACK

The Talks

“They really helped give practical advice on how to be more organized, motivated, and to do well, not just at uni, but at just getting things done, and feeling more productive. They helped me to always feel like I was working on improving myself, not just improving academically.”

(Talk: Under pressure?)

“It is a great way to help with problems, getting work done, and changes your way of thinking about procrastination. I know now what to do, I have positive thoughts about getting work done.”

(Talk: Jump-starting your brain)

Blackboard emails (during exams)

“Being able to receive emails with practical advice and encouragement over the revision period was useful and made me feel like I was being supported despite not being on campus. Also, it was nice to have a continuing link with University, as it is easy to feel forgotten when studying a lot.”
## LIFE TOOLS
### TALKS PROGRAMME 2019–2020

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Other services

Study Advice
0118 378 4242 studyadvice@reading.ac.uk reading.ac.uk/study

RUSU activities
0118 378 4100 enquiries@rusu.co.uk rusu.co.uk/student-activities

Student Finance
0118 378 5555 studentfunding@reading.ac.uk reading.ac.uk/studentfinance

Blackbullion (online financial resource)
reading.ac.uk/blackbullion

International Student Advice
int.adv@reading.ac.uk reading.ac.uk/international

Accommodation hotline
0118 378 7777 reading.ac.uk/accommodation

Sportspark
0118 378 8799 sport@reading.ac.uk sport.reading.ac.uk

Careers
0118 378 8359 careers@reading.ac.uk reading.ac.uk/careers

Student Welfare Team
0118 378 4777 studentwelfare@reading.ac.uk reading.ac.uk/welfare-team

Counselling and Wellbeing
0118 378 4216 counselling@reading.ac.uk reading.ac.uk/support

Big White Wall (24hrs online counselling resource)
reading.ac.uk/big-white-wall

LIFE TOOLS

For more information, you can email: talks@reading.ac.uk
reading.ac.uk/life-tools