

# EDUCATIONPLUS

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Meghaa Gupta

In 2023, when former journalist Amit Arora and Prof. Rakesh Basant, former Dean at IIM-Ahmedabad, organised India’s first History Literature Festival (HLF) at Ahmedabad University, they worried that the experiment might fall flat. But, to their astonishment, more than 1000 people turned up on the very first day, demolishing the old cliché about history being a dreary discipline restricted to the walls of classrooms.

Over the past few years, this is becoming somewhat of a norm, with several outside-the-classroom initiatives drawing an ever-expanding audience of students and history enthusiasts across age groups.

**Accessible storytelling** Eric Chopra who founded Itihāsology, a youth-led history platform in 2019, feels that, apart from the tedious narratives typically found in textbooks, a key reason people avoid engaging with history is the perception that it’s distant and not relevant to their lives. Basant agrees and adds that historical narratives tend to mainstream socio-political issues, frequently overlooking the large variety of topics. He also finds that the historical discourse is often devoid of diversity in views. Not surprisingly, then, a common feature running through most such initiatives is an emphasis on captivating and accessible storytelling that explores a wide spectrum of topics from a variety of viewpoints.



How outside-the-classroom initiatives are redefining History education in India

The Itihāsology page on Instagram showcases an eye-catching selection of art contextualising bits of history built around it. Chopra and his co-founder Kudrat B Singh also host a history podcast For Old Times’ Sake. Karwaan: The Heritage Exploration Initiative, a student-led history collective founded by Eshan Sharma has created a rich archive of lectures, dialogues and panel discussions featuring eminent intellectuals on YouTube. Past HLF sessions, which can now be viewed on YouTube, include discussions on histories of music, science, technology, archaeology

and food among other things. Historian and author Anirudh Kaniseti has produced a diverse and vibrant body of historical content online, including Echoes of India, a hugely popular podcast on ancient India. In a country that currently has more than 800 million active Internet users, most of whom are between 16 to 39 years old, the meticulous use of social media helps such initiatives increase their reach and create an accessible archive of their work, without burning a hole in their limited budget.

**Responsible history** “There is a lot of conversation about the past in today’s political landscape, leading to questions, curiosity and concern,” says Chopra. While this has undoubtedly contributed to the subject’s growing popularity in an age of easy dissemination, it has also led to the rise of fake news and the ‘WhatsApp University’. Against this backdrop, most initiatives feel that they have an urgent responsibility to share well-researched factual history. As Sharma puts it, “A lot of our audience are new voters and they need to be able to question dominant narratives instead of believing everything they are told. For example, there is a popular story that the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan chopped off the hands of workers who built the Taj Mahal. Yet, there is no concrete evidence for this. Instead,

a vast settlement called Taj Ganj was created for the workers and many of their descendants continue to live there.” Apart from putting out social media posts, videos and podcasts, these initiatives also offer opportunities for deeper online and offline engagement. At Karwaan, participants can join online clubs to discuss books and films around different aspects of history. Itihāsology brings out an annual digital journal for which it invites submissions from school, undergraduate, and postgraduate students, which are reviewed by eminent scholars. Eventually, eight entries, which undergo an exhaustive editorial process, are accepted and published. Heritage walks through

monuments and museums are a popular of-fine activity. “Historian Sohail Hashmi had conducted our first walk at Delhi’s Tughlaqabad Fort in 2019,” recalls Sharma. Since then, Karwaan has organised walks in Delhi, Mumbai, Vadodara, Kanpur and Lucknow. At Itihāsology, these walks prompt the young and old to feel, imagine and relate what they see to aspects of their own lives.

History for Peace, a network of educators and civil society members, organises conferences, short talks and workshops through the year and publishes journals containing the lectures and discussions. It has a rich archive of freely available resource material on its website.

At the Institute of Development Studies, Kolkata, historians have been bringing out illustrated history books for children in Bengali, English and Assamese, under the History for Children initiative supported by the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung South Asia. These are freely available online, and the initiative organises workshops to review them and expand outreach.

Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard once said that, though life must be lived forwards, it can only be understood backwards. Going by the options, there are plenty of avenues available to those interested in understanding life by plunging into the past.

## SCHOLARSHIPS

### Sydney Scholars India Scholarship Programme

An opportunity offered by the University of Sydney. **Eligibility:** Open to Indian citizens classified as international students under the Higher Education Support Act 2003 and have applied to a UG or PG programme at the University of Sydney but haven’t yet commenced studies. **Rewards:** Up to \$40,000 annually **Application:** Online **Deadline:** June 2 [www.b4s.in/edge/SSIS4](http://www.b4s.in/edge/SSIS4)

### Aspire Leaders Programme

A fully-funded 14-week online leadership programme offered by the Aspire Institute. **Eligibility:** Open to students in the 18-29 age group who are first generation learners and have enrolled in or completed an UG

programme in the last three years. Intermediate level of proficiency in English is required. Annual family income should be less than ₹8 lakhs **Rewards:** Free access to training modules, live sessions by Harvard faculty. **Application:** Online **Deadline:** July 3 [www.b4s.in/edge/ALPSI](http://www.b4s.in/edge/ALPSI)

### Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) Internship Programme

An opportunity offered by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India, for student to understand Trade Remedies Investigations and Trade Defence Measures. **Eligibility:** Open for PG students or research scholars from recognised universities/institutions. **Rewards:** Certificate **Application:** Email or post the General Administration Section of DGTR. **Deadline:** Round the year [www.b4s.in/edge/DGCI](http://www.b4s.in/edge/DGCI)

Courtesy: buddy4study.com

## UGAT registrations open

The All-India Management Association (AIMA) has commenced registration for the Under Graduate Aptitude Test (UGAT) 2024. This standardised test, administered by AIMA

annually, screens candidates for various undergraduate programmes such as Integrated MBA (IMBA), BBA, BCA, BHM, B.Com, and so on. **Eligibility:** 10+2 in any stream **Deadline:** June 9 **Test Date:** June 16 Register at <https://apps.aima.in/UGAT2024> For more visit <https://t.ly/SXa-g>

## Showcase your skills

Uncertain about your career options? Low on self-confidence? This column may help



OFF THE EDGE  
Nandini Raman

I graduated in 2020 (B.Tech. Civil) and joined the IT sector as a Programme Analyst in 2022. But I don’t have any work experience because I was either in training or on the bench. I am now anxious about getting another job. I am interested in Data Analytics and Actuarial Science. Is there some way to gain knowledge and experience and improve my employability profile? Shikha

Dear Shikha, Start equipping yourself with certifications in Data Analytics and/or Actuarial Science. Join online courses on platforms like Coursera, edX, Udemy and so on to get a taste of what they are. If you like them enough, go deeper. Try and join professional associations, forums, and online communities and attend workshops, webinars, and conferences related to Data Analytics and Actuarial Science to network and engage with professionals, ask questions, seek professional advice and stay updated with current trends. You could find mentorship, internships, and/or job referrals. Work with online resources, textbooks, and tutorials to develop projects, participate in competitions and build a portfolio to showcase your skills. Look for freelance opportunities, as they will help you get hands-on experience and build relevant skills. Create a professional LinkedIn profile highlighting your skills,

coursework, and projects. Share articles, insights, and your projects on platforms like Medium or personal blogs and demonstrate your expertise and passion for the field. Contribute to open-source projects on platforms like GitHub.

I have completed my graduation and am preparing for the UPSC exams. As a backup option, I was considering Urban Planning. Is there any scope in this field? Sakhi

Dear Sakhi, Urban planners design and shape the development of cities and communities to ensure that they are sustainable, functional, and meet the needs of residents. It is a profession on the rise. Urban planners create vibrant, smart cities by integrating technology with urban planning processes and smart solutions. You can help address the complex challenges of managing urban growth with housing, transportation, infrastructure, and environmental sustainability. There is an ever-increasing need for sustainable designs and resilient planners to tackle climate change, natural disasters, and environmental degradation. You could also be a consultant at any consulting firm, real estate development companies, non-profit organisations, and research institutions. This is a powerful, transferable skill across borders, and there could be opportunities to work on international projects, collaborate with global organisations, and contribute to urban development efforts across different parts of the world.

I finished B. Com in 2022

and have been working for a year. I want to do my Master’s abroad. Is one year of work experience enough? Also, my financial situation is not very good. So how can I look at study abroad options? Lakshmi

Dear Lakshmi, Valid work experience and duration depends on the prerequisites and programme requirements. Some institutions prefer applicants with more work experience, while others may not require any at all. Check the admission criteria and then shortlist the programme. While researching this, also explore the costs involved and the various scholarships and financial aid that you may be eligible for. Many government, non-profit organisations, and private foundations provide scholarships to international students based on academic merit, financial need, and/or other specific criteria. Apply to as many as possible to increase your chances of securing funding. International students are allowed to work a certain number of hours per week, as this helps with expenses and reduces the financial burden. Explore the possibility of a student loan to finance yourself. Develop a realistic budget for your study abroad expenses, including tuition, accommodation, living expenses, travel, and other miscellaneous costs. Study the loan terms carefully and assess your ability to repay realistically. Some universities offer assistantship or internship opportunities to assist professors with research, teaching, or administrative tasks. Check what is available for course and the eligibility requirements. Finally, look for courses

and destinations that offer lower tuition fees and cost of living compared to others.

I finished B.com (Hons) in 2020 and M.A Political Science from IGNOU. I am preparing for the UPSC and my interests include politics, international relations and economics. In college, I didn’t participate in any extracurricular activities or win any competitions. Will I be able to get through the interview? Are there any competitive forums for those not enrolled in colleges? Parveen

Dear Parveen, While it is disappointing that you do not have any extracurricular activities and skills to showcase in your CV, your interview will assess your academic qualifications, understanding of current affairs, innate communication skills, critical thinking, analytical abilities, clarity of expression, and suitability for administrative roles. Your overall personality is scanned. So focus on presenting yourself effectively. Try and broaden your knowledge of and stay updated with current affairs, economic development reports, national and international events and government policies. You could join study groups or online communities and forums where you can uninhibitedly ask questions and exchange thoughts and ideas. Check out a few mock interview sessions as well and work on your confidence at a coaching centre, as they not only simulate the experience but also give valuable feedback and help identify areas of improvement. **Disclaimer: This column is merely a guiding voice and provides advice and suggestions on education and careers.** The writer is a practising counsellor and a trainer. Send your questions to [eduplus.thehindu@gmail.com](mailto:eduplus.thehindu@gmail.com) with the subject line Off the Edge

## Timeboxing is the answer

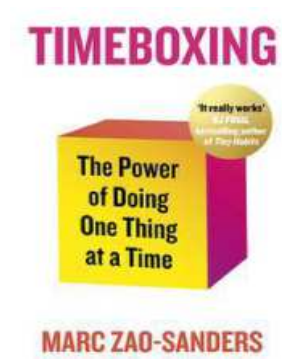
How to deal with short attention spans, making decisions and allocate your energy and live a mindful life

Marc Zao-Sanders

What is timeboxing? Timeboxing is often conflated and confused with similar-sounding approaches to time management: time-blocking, scheduling, daily planning, single-tasking, calendar management and timetabling ...

They are collectively and individually unsatisfactory. I propose that timeboxing is the method and mindset of: Selecting what to do, before the day’s distractions arise; specifying each task in a calendar, including when it will start and finish; focusing on one thing at a time; doing each to an acceptable (rather than perfect) standard.

This definition accommodates the most important elements of the practice: intentionality, focus, achievement, order, completion and the creation of the timebox itself. It also makes the important point that we should box the time when, and only when, we have the wherewithal to do so. All the rules we make (the law, coding conventions, household policies) as a civilized society are examples of making a set of decisions at the outset, in a moment of cerebral calm and consideration (often by a carefully appointed committee), to help make life smoother in the long run. Timeboxing applies that principle to a special and specific circumstance: you. Though not quite a definition, an alternative and also useful way of thinking about timeboxing is as a synthesis of your to-do list and your calendar. The to-



do list tells us what to do. The calendar tells us when to do it. The combination is much more readily actionable and useful than either on its own. It’s also worth distinguishing timeboxing from time-blocking. Time-blocking is the blocking off of time to do something. Timeboxing is time-blocking + committing to getting the task done in time, within the box. In other words, time-blocking is about exclusive focus; timeboxing is exclusive focus + specified outcome.

### Timeboxing basics

... Here are the very basics, beyond the definition, for you to familiarize yourself and experiment with, from tomorrow, or even today. You’ll need the right mindset. You’ll need a positive attitude and a belief that this may work ... As for the method, there are two activities that together constitute timeboxing – planning and doing. Here’s what you need to do for each. Plan (before the day). Set a period of time (15 or 30 minutes), before the busyness of the day clouds your mind and impairs your judgement, to decide what’s most important and needs to get done. Set a daily (ideally digital) calendar appointment



for this planning session, first thing in the morning (or last thing the night before). Make the appointment recur so you won’t ever miss it.

Review your to-do list. If you don’t keep one, start! To-do lists feed timeboxing; the better your to-do list, the better your timeboxing.

Select some of the most important and urgent items from that list and add them to your calendar. Make the best estimate you can about how long each task will take. Don’t worry, yet, about the ordering – just get them in.

Start, make mistakes and learn quickly. To begin with, you will frequently under- or overestimate how long tasks take – this is normal. **Do (during the day)** Start on time. Remove distractions, the most dangerous of which by far is your smartphone.

Stick to the plan. Don’t second-guess yourself and undermine your earlier decision. Barring an emergency, what you thought earlier in the planning process, when you were calm and clear, is better than what you think to do react-

tively in the maelstrom of the day. Finish on time. Get the job done. Do not permit the perfect to be the enemy of the good. Good is usually good enough. Aim to share what you’ve done as you finish each timebox. This brings a useful pressure to get it done and make it good enough to share. You’ll get distracted and derailed. Expect this. When it happens, practise coming back to the timebox (return to the calendar), to your original task. With experience, your distractions will become fewer and shorter-lived. Timeboxing, is unusually perfect for experimentation as you go. Every morning you wake and have a brand-new chance to try out what you’ve learnt, tweak it, experiment with it, question it, make it your own. Do not pass up this opportunity! To ease into it, you might like to try timeboxing every other day (Mondays – Wednesdays – Fridays or Tuesdays and Thursdays, say). This sort of arrangement will enable you to contrast a life with timeboxing against a life without. So, you should now be clear on what timeboxing is and the features it comes with, out of the box, as it were. And you have had multiple strong encouragements to timebox as you go. Excerpted from Timeboxing: The Power of Doing One Thing at a Time; Marc Zao-Sanders, Penguin, ₹799



