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It can be tough coming back to university after the winter break. Christmas and the party season are still fresh in your mind and sitting down to course reading, lab work or law essays can be the last thing you want to do. Making a few solid New Year's resolutions can be a great way to get back into the academic swing of things and ease into the new term with success. But resolutions are no good at all unless you stick to them, so tape them up in big letters on your wall and don't let yourself wriggle out of them!

One important resolution that will help in all areas of academic life is to cut down on procrastination. Every student knows the agony of staying up all night to finish an essay because it was left too late or desperately skimming through books in the last moments before a class. Leaving your work until the last minute inevitably results in lower quality essays and academic performance, not to mention unnecessary panic! Pledge to start every essay the week before it is due and aim to finish all work by the day before you actually need to hand it in. That way you leave yourself a safety margin for last-minute alterations and printing disasters!

Resolving to be more organised is another great New Year's decision for students. Keep a diary with notes of all your lectures, classes and assignments to help you stay on top of your workload and avoid missing important teaching sessions. Make notes in every lecture and write them up into neat records that evening, instead of waiting until the end of term when you might not remember what happened! Using a wall calendar or pin board can help you to remember important deadlines and events.

Writing better essays is an obvious resolution, but many students find it difficult to know how to improve. Try asking your lecturers for tips on how you could do better, or swap essays with a friend and try to advise one another on how to make your writing clearer. You can also log on to the web and use a company like Oxbridge Essays for expert Oxbridge essays advice. Their blog provides top-class, up-to-date tips on how to write fantastic, well-structured essays and dissertations.

Another great way to improve your essay writing is to look at examples of top-quality work, which you can use to inspire your own assignments. You can even buy dissertations to use as a great example of how to approach a topic in an intelligent and coherent manner. Examine the structure, content, style and format of these examples and try to implement the same techniques in your own essays. Note their use of technical details such as subtitles and footnotes. Finally, remember that just making a New Year's resolution is the first important step: it proves that you are serious about working hard and improving your academic performance this January!

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