

Time Management



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Introduction

Time management is all about organising yourself and your work to make the most out of the time you have.

If you never have enough time to finish your tasks, better time management will help you regain control of your day.

Good time management doesn't mean you do more work, it means you focus on the tasks that matter and will make a difference. These tasks could be studying, working or socialising. Learning how to manage your time effectively will help you feel more relaxed, focused and in control.

How well do you manage your time?

Take a moment to think about how you currently manage your time - ask yourself the following questions:

1. Do you set yourself long, medium and short term goals to help plan how you use your time?
2. Do you have a realistic idea of how long activities will take?
3. Do you know exactly how much time you need to spend studying each week?
4. Do you write a daily 'to-do' list?
5. Are the tasks you work on during the day the ones with the highest priority?
6. Do you have a diary that you regularly use to keep track of your activities?
7. Do you set specific goals for each study period?
8. Do you complete your studying during your most productive hours each day?

If you answered 'no' to any of the questions above, then you will benefit from some of the tips below!

Planning and Prioritising

Planning and prioritising your tasks and activities is simple – all you need to do is remember these three key elements:

Set your goals

Firstly, you need to work out what your long, medium and short term goals are. What do you want to achieve this year? What about this semester, this month and this week? Having a clear idea about your goals will help you plan what you need to do. It's often worth writing your goals down and sticking them somewhere visible to remind you what they are!

Having something to focus on can make a huge difference in how you manage your time.

Prioritise and Plan your tasks

To-do Lists

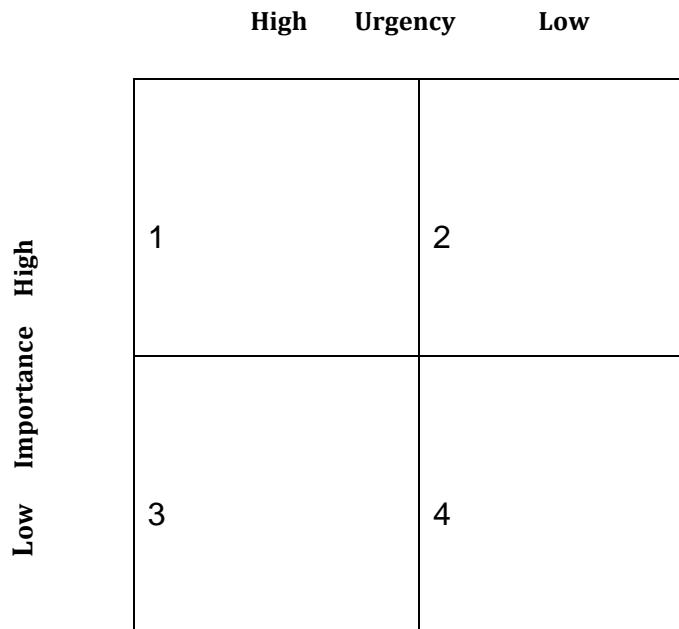
To-Do lists are a great way of planning the tasks you need to do!

However, to get the most out of your list, you should **prioritise** and **schedule** your tasks.

Prioritising your tasks

Once you have your To-Do list, think about what are the most urgent and important tasks. What can be left for another time?

There are many tools to help you plan and prioritise.
One of the most effective is shown below:



Decide what sits in each quadrant

- Quadrant 1 - Do these first and do these well.
- Quadrant 2 - Plan these carefully and do next.
- Quadrant 3 - Try to delegate, then turn full attention to 2.
- Quadrant 4 - Bin these!

Schedule your time!

Once you have prioritised your tasks, schedule blocks of time to do them.

The table below can be used to help schedule your tasks over a week – take 5 blocks of time you have in the week and schedule the five most important/urgent tasks you need to do.

Block of time	Kind of activity
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6. All other time	All other activities

This technique works particularly well when you identify the key blocks of time you work most effectively. When you do this it means that you are

using your best times of the day to do your most important work!

This may be eight in the morning for some people and seven at night for others, but whenever your key block of time is, this is when you should be doing your key tasks and not checking email or browsing on the internet!

Try taking the keys tasks identified in your To-Do list and schedule these in for the week ahead in prime time blocks – for example when you are most energetic/creative. The rest of what needs to be done should be placed in the other times – which can be called poor time when routine, dull or unchallenging tasks can be completed.

This technique might not be for everybody, but it should provide a starting point for managing your time – you need to find a method that suits you.

The Importance of Diaries and Calendars

In order to plan and prioritise effectively, it is essential to have a diary or time sheet of some kind. You may find using an electronic calendar, such as those found in Google mail or Outlook useful. You may also have a calendar on your mobile phone or iPhone that you use.

Whichever method, make sure that you use your diary to put appointments, deadlines and other important things in. You might also find it useful to block time out in your diary to do important tasks such as reading, writing essays and attending lectures.

Time stealers!

What are your time stealers?

Many people find they have things that steal their time. The most common are:

1. Procrastination
2. Email
3. Internet
4. Mobile phones
5. Other people

How can you beat these time stealers?

Procrastination

Procrastination is where you put something off because you find it overwhelming or unpleasant. In order to beat procrastination, you need to recognise that you're doing it first and then work out some strategies to beat it!

Possible strategies for beating procrastination are:

1. Reward yourself for doing the work.
2. Ask someone to check whether you've done the work.
3. Think about the bad things that will happen if you don't do the work – like failing.

4. Break the work into small tasks and do the easiest first.
5. Do the hardest or most unpleasant bit first.

Emails and messages

Email or online messaging is a big time stealer for many people – the ‘ping’ of something new in your inbox is very inviting when you’re doing something difficult. Set yourself set times for checking messages during the day and turn your notifications off in between. This will remove the temptation to read everything that comes into your inbox.

Internet

The internet is a massive time stealer. You start doing some internet research, twenty minutes later, you're checking your Facebook, two hours later, and you haven't actually done any work.

How do you beat the internet?

1. Turn off the internet.
2. Disconnect your Wi-Fi.
3. Take yourself somewhere where you can't access the internet.
4. Use the internet as a reward!

Mobile phones

Again, mobiles can be very distracting. Some simple tips to help:

1. Turn your phone off/switch to airplane mode
2. Put it in a drawer/keep in bag.

Finally...Top tips for success!

1. Set realistic goals – long and short term.
2. Work on key tasks every day – focus on importance rather than urgency.
3. Break tasks down.
4. Start with important tasks that you don't want to do.
5. Group similar activities together.
6. Allow for the unexpected – don't fill every minute.
7. Schedule planning time.
8. Write a daily 'do to' list and prioritise (and stick to it!)
9. Estimate time\per task (and add to it).
10. Set up effective systems for managing people and emails.
11. Use your prime time.
12. Don't procrastinate – start elsewhere.

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