

# TIME MANAGEMENT



## Time Management

“Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time, for that is the stuff that life is made of.” – Benjamin Franklin

Everyone is allotted the same number of minutes each day. We do not get to choose *whether* we get to spend that time, but only *how*. We cannot manage time; we can only manage our own actions in the time we are given. Therefore time management is really self management. It is not only about doing more things, but also doing the right things.

Poor time management can lead to higher levels of stress and anxiety, cause you to forget important things, prevent you from starting or finishing projects, and keep you operating in crisis mode until you burn out.

Good time management can help you accomplish the tasks you want to complete and ultimately live a more relaxed, balanced, and satisfied life.

## Top 10 Tools for Good Time Management

- BE AWARE AND EVALUATE**—Take stock of what you are doing with your time. Consider recording your activities and then evaluating them using Steven Covey’s Time Management Matrix to differentiate between urgent and important tasks. Stop the glorification of “busy”.
- CRAFT ACCOUNTABILITY**—Identify sources of accountability and put them to use, such as a trusted colleague, a calendar reminder, a journal, or shorter deadlines.
- BE SPECIFIC**—Create a detailed action plan for the projects you want to accomplish with action verbs and time frames.
- PLAN BACKWARDS**—Set a project’s deadline and work backwards to outline necessary steps and consider all the elements involved.
- REMEMBER PARKINSON’S LAW**—“Work expands to fill the time available for its completion.” Be careful not to set a deadline that is too generous.
- PLAN FOR TOMORROW**—Outline your prioritized action list for the following day before you leave work.
- LEVERAGE TECHNOLOGY**—Use all that your favorite programs have to offer to help create task lists, set reminders, and prioritize activities. Consider using Outlook task lists, Google calendar, or organizational apps.
- FLOATING TASKS**—Create a list of activities that can be done anywhere at any time that will keep up your momentum, such as sending a quick email reply, reading a few pages of a book, or filing papers.
- CLUSTER SIMILAR TASKS**—Perform similar tasks at the same time to help increase productivity and eliminate wasted time switching from one type of task to another.
- KEEP A PROGRESS LOG AND REWARD YOURSELF**—Keep a running list of the things you accomplish to acknowledge the progress you are making. Feel encouraged as you watch the list grow and find ways to reward yourself for your good work.

	URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	<p>Quadrant #1 <b>“NECESSITY”</b></p> <p>Your Key Action: <b>“MANAGE”</b></p> <p><b>Common Activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Crises</li> <li>- Deadline-driven activities</li> <li>- Medical emergencies</li> <li>- Other “true” emergencies</li> <li>- Pressing problems.</li> <li>- Last minute preparations</li> </ul>	<p>Quadrant #2 <b>“QUALITY &amp; PERSONAL LEADERSHIP”</b></p> <p>Your Key Action: <b>“FOCUS”</b></p> <p><b>Common Activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Preparation and planning</li> <li>- Values clarification</li> <li>- Empowerment</li> <li>- Relationship-building</li> <li>- True recreation</li> </ul>
NOT IMPORTANT	<p>Quadrant #3 <b>“DECEPTION”</b></p> <p>Your Key Action: <b>“USE CAUTION or AVOID”</b></p> <p><b>Common Activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meeting other people’s priorities and expectations</li> <li>- Frequent interruptions:</li> <li>- Most emails, some calls</li> <li>- Urgency masquerading as importance</li> </ul>	<p>Quadrant #4 <b>“WASTE”</b></p> <p>Your Key Action: <b>“AVOID”</b></p> <p><b>Common Activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Escapist activities</li> <li>- Mindless tv-watching</li> <li>- Busywork</li> <li>- Junk mail</li> <li>- Some emails</li> <li>- Some calls</li> </ul>

Adapted from Stephen Covey’s “First Things First” - Covey Leadership Center, Inc. © 2003

# TIME MANAGEMENT OBSTACLES



## Procrastination

Procrastination is delaying what you know you need to do. It wastes time, heightens stress, inhibits effectiveness, and may result in mediocre production. Here are three tools to help you get started on what is important:

1. **IDENTIFY THE DEEPER ISSUE**—Procrastination is often the symptom of a deeper problem, such as fear of failure, lack of perspective, or resentment. Address the real issue in order to proceed with the task.
2. **COMPLETE THE HARDEST TASK FIRST**—Identify your biggest, least pleasant, but critical assignment and finish it before anything else. This will boost your confidence, grant you relief, and generate momentum that will help you conquer other projects.
3. **30 MINUTE CHALLENGE**—Instead of further delaying the start of a major project, commit to working on it for only 30 minutes. This initiates the process and moves you closer to completion in manageable increments.

## Perfectionism

Perfectionism is holding yourself to an unrealistic standard. This can cause frustration, guilt, depression, and anxiety, and may hinder your work product. Here are three ways to turn the crippling fear of not measuring up into confident action:

1. **REALITY CHECK** – Lower the stakes of your tasks by asking questions such as: *Is this extra work going to make a noticeable difference? If I make a mistake, will it matter in five years? Is the standard to which I am holding myself realistic?*
2. **CREATE TRIGGER RITUALS** – Choose a song, a poem, or a quote to calm down your anxiety and help you boldly tackle the task.
3. **SHOULD** – Be aware of and eliminate thoughts involving the word “should” such as, “*I should never make mistakes*” or “*I should always be able to...*” Replace these thoughts with ones that can be realistically achieved.

## Distraction

We live in a world of never-ending updates and constant information overload that can distract us from what is important. Here are three steps you can take to improve your focus when it matters most:

1. **CUT OUT THE NOISE**— Consider appropriate times to let your phone go to voicemail, close Outlook, disable your email notifications, or close your door.
2. **MANAGE TIME ROBBERS**—Have a plan in place for when you need to deal with unexpected visitors or long-winded meetings. Set a time limit from the beginning to keep you on track.
3. **USE PARKING LOT LISTS**— Use a note-taking device to jot down off-task thoughts as they come and return to those thoughts after you have completed the task at hand.

## Overcommitment

It is easy to take on more than you can handle, but much harder to do everything well once you have committed. Here are three ways to prevent getting overwhelmed with too much:

1. **BE INTENTIONAL WITH YOUR YES** – Only say yes to activities or projects that line up with your values and that you can fully commit to both with your time and your energy.
2. **COME TO TERMS WITH NO** – Understand that using your time and energy well may require you to say no. Practice saying no in a kind way. Acknowledge the person’s request, explain why you do not have the time or energy and offer to contribute in a way that is more manageable and will not take up too much time.
3. **PRIORITIZE** – If “no” is not an option, sit down with your supervisor and determine which commitments are most important. Use Covey’s Matrix to create an action plan based on the levels of importance and urgency of each task.