

# *Time Management*

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*Training makes a difference...*

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# Time Management

Beat work overload. Increase your effectiveness. Achieve more.

This section of Mind Tools shows you how to use personal time management skills. These are the simple, practical techniques that have helped the leading people in business, sport and public service reach the pinnacles of their careers.

The skills we explain help you become highly effective by showing you how to identify and focus on the activities that give you the greatest returns. Investing in these time management activities will actually save you time, helping you work smarter, not harder.

This section finishes by explaining goal-setting, a vitally important skill for deciding what you want to achieve with your life.

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## Introduction to Time

### Management Beating Procrastination

- Manage your time. Get it all done.

**Activity Logs** - Knowing where you waste it

**Action Plans** - Starting to achieve, in a small way

### Prioritized To Do Lists

- Taking control of your time

**Scheduling Skills** - Bringing your workload under control

### Personal Goal Setting

- Planning to live your life your way

■ **Premium Member Tools:** (How to become a member)

- [Action Priority Matrix](#) - Making the most of your opportunities.
- [The Boston Matrix](#) - Focusing effort to get the greatest returns.
- [Costing Your Time](#) - Understand the real value of your time.
- [Critical Success Factors](#) - Identifying the things that really matter for success.
- [Nominal Group Technique](#) - Prioritizing issues and projects to achieve consensus.
- [Pickle Jar Theory](#) - Make your schedule work. Leave time for fun!
- [Prioritization](#) - Making best use of your time and resources.
- [Treasure Mapping](#) - Visualizing your goal for greater achievement
- [The Urgent/Important Matrix](#) - Using time effectively, not just efficiently

The first article introduces you to the importance of time management skills. To read it, click “Next article”, below. And for other useful techniques, see the suggested links underneath.

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**Time Management Skills**  
**Work smarter. Improve time utilization.**

This section discusses personal time management skills. These are essential skills for effective people.

People who use these techniques routinely are the highest achievers in all walks of life, from business to sport to public service. If you use these

skills well, then you will be able to function effectively, even under intense pressure.

At the heart of time management is an important shift in focus:

*Concentrate on results, not on being busy*

Many people spend their days in a frenzy of activity, but achieve very little because they are not concentrating on the right things.

### **The 80:20 Rule**

This is neatly summed up in the Pareto Principle, or the '80:20 Rule'. This argues that typically 80% of unfocussed effort generates only 20% of results. *The remaining 80% of results are achieved with only 20% of the effort.* While the ratio is not always 80:20, this broad pattern of a small proportion of activity generating non-scalar returns recurs so frequently as to be the norm in many areas.

By applying the time management tips and skills in this section you can optimize your effort to ensure that you concentrate as much of your time and energy as possible on the high payoff tasks. This ensures that you achieve the greatest benefit possible with the limited amount of time available to you.

### **Time Management Tools**

The tools we will discuss are:

- Manage time. Get things done - Beating Procrastination
- Making sure you concentrate on the right things - Deciding Work Priorities
- Checking how you really spend your time - Activity Logs
- Planning to solve a problem - Action Plans
- Tackling the right tasks first - Prioritized To Do Lists
- Deciding what your personal priorities should be - Personal Goal Setting
- Planning to make the best use of your time - Effective Scheduling
- Time management products reviewed - Reviews

By the end of this section, you should have a much clearer understanding of how to use time to its greatest effect.

*These tools and many, many more are explained in Mind Tools' Make Time For Success! This contains more than 100 pages of time tested tips, techniques and secrets to improve your time management skills and get the most that life has to offer. You will learn how to set realistic goals, generate a life plan and leverage all of the opportunities that life has to offer. Many of the lessons include workbook exercises so that you really understand how to put these invaluable skills to work in your life. [Click here to learn more.](#)*

## **Beating Procrastination**

**Manage your time. Get it all done.**

If you've found yourself putting off important tasks over and over again, you're not alone. In fact, most people procrastinate to some degree - but some are so chronically affected by procrastination that it disrupts their careers and thwarts even their best efforts.

The key to controlling and ultimately combating this destructive habit is to understand how and why it happens (even to the best of us) and to take a few simple steps to better manage your time and outcomes.

### **Overcoming procrastination:**

In a nutshell, you procrastinate when you put off things that you should be focusing on right now, usually in favor of doing something that is more enjoyable or that you're more comfortable doing.

Sometimes this happens when someone does not understand the difference between urgency and importance. The prevailing belief here: We all have the same amount of time in every day and procrastinators spend this time fully, but do not invest it wisely.

Instead, procrastinators focus so much on urgent issues that they have little or no time left for the important tasks, despite the unpleasant outcomes this may bring about.

Other causes of procrastination can be as simple as waiting for the “right” mood or the “right” time to tackle the important task at hand; a fear of failure or success; underdeveloped decision-making skills; poor organizational skills; or perfectionism.

**How to combat procrastination:**

Whatever the reason behind procrastination, it must be recognized, dealt with and controlled before you miss opportunities or your career is derailed.

Part of the solution is to develop good organizational and personal effectiveness habits, such as those described in Mind Tools “Make Time for Success!” This helps you establish the right priorities, and manage your time in such a way that you make the most of the opportunities open to you.

The other part of the solution can be as simple as applying this rule of thumb: If you’re not working (directly or indirectly) to progress your top priority projects, you’re probably procrastinating.



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And, when you're doing something important, such as working on your top-priority project or task, and something urgent comes up, recognize that this will take time away from this important work.

To do this, it is imperative to understand the difference between urgency and importance.

On one hand, let's say that your boss comes to your office and says he or she has called a meeting and wants you to join other team members in the conference room now. This is clearly urgent.

Or, your sales manager calls in from the field and explains that your biggest customer just received the wrong shipment and is in dire need of the correct shipment. This will require tracking down the original shipment, working through the placed orders, even the salesman's paperwork, etc. Again, this is urgent.

However, while immediate action is needed here, these things only tangentially affect the truly important things in your life.

Important things are likely to be the actions that serve to broaden you, build your career, or achieve something of real human significance to you. These important actions are often easy to pinpoint, for they are the ones that help you achieve your goals (another of the major topics within "Make Time for Success".)

This is not to say that you do not have to take care of the urgent things. Instead, you will need to take care of these things as efficiently as possible, while also staying on top of the important demands/going-ons of the day. You'll need to minimize the time spent on these urgent tasks, while still ensuring that they are successfully and efficiently resolved.

With proper planning and some self-discipline, many urgent matters disappear altogether or, when they do surface, your planning and discipline makes them less urgent and easier to deal with. This means that you waste less of the valuable time that should be spent on the important things.

And, keep in mind that you probably do not have to handle every urgent matter yourself. Delegate as far as possible, so that you do not get caught up in remedying every urgent situation. To spend life “firefighting” is a misuse of your “important” time.

## **Deciding Your Work Priorities Finding Out What to Spend Your Time On**

### **How to Use Tool:**

An important part of focusing on results is working out what to focus on! Many people work very hard all day doing little jobs that do not actually affect the quality of their work.

This section concentrates on three areas - clarifying what you enjoy, understanding what your strengths and weaknesses are, and working out both what your job is and what constitutes excellent performance.

### **Doing what you enjoy**

It is important for your own quality of life that you enjoy your job. If you know broadly what you like and dislike, you will be more able to move your job towards doing things that you enjoy. This is important as you are much more likely to do your job effectively if you love it than if you loathe it.

Of course, almost every job has tedious or unpleasant elements to it - it is important that these parts are done properly. And it is up to you to minimize the time you spend doing tedious jobs.

### **Concentrating on your strengths**

It is also important to know what your talents and weaknesses are. A good way

of doing this is to carry out a SWOT analysis. This provides a formal approach to evaluating your strengths and weaknesses, and the opportunities and threats that you face. It makes a lot of sense to find a job that suits your strengths, and where your weaknesses do not matter.

### **Understanding how to be excellent at your job**

One excellent way of ensuring that you concentrate on the right things is to agree them with your employer!

You should ask the following questions:

- *What is the purpose of the job?*  
If possible, express this in a single sentence starting with the word 'To' - for example 'To ensure effective distribution in the South East...'
- *What are the measures of success?*  
Work out how your employer will decide whether you are good at your job or not. Find out what the key targets to be achieved are, and how achievement will be measured.
- *What is exceptional performance?*  
Find out what this is considered to be, and work out how to achieve it.
- *What are the priorities and deadlines?*  
You need to know this so that when you are overloaded with work, you know what to focus on.
- *What resources are available?*  
This ensures that you are using all the tools at your command.
- *What costs are acceptable?*  
This lets you know the boundaries within which you can move.
- *How does this relate to other people?*  
What is the broader picture within which you have to work?

If you have answers to these questions, you will know how to do your job in precisely the right way. If you know what exceptional performance is, you can plan to achieve it using all the resources you have available.

### **Key points:**

This section gives you three ways of deciding your work priorities:

- *Concentrating on what you enjoy*
- *Using a SWOT analysis to work out your strengths and weaknesses.* This helps you to play to your strengths, minimize weaknesses, and move in the right direction.
- Finally it explains how to *clarify your job* with your employer, and concentrate on doing well in the areas he or she considers to be most important.

By concentrating on the right priorities you will ensure that you are always working as effectively as possible.

If you're struggling to find direction in life or in your career so that you can set these priorities, click here to find out about "Design Your Life", our new life design and goal setting program.

## **Activity** **Logs** **Finding Out How You Really Spend Your Time**

### **How to Use Tool:**

Activity logs help you to analyze how you actually spend your time. The first time you use an activity log you may be shocked to see the amount of time that you waste! Memory is a very poor guide when it comes to this, as it can be too easy to forget time spent reading junk mail, talking to colleagues, making coffee, eating lunch, etc.

You may also be unaware that your energy levels may vary through the day. In fact, most people function at different levels of effectiveness at different times. Your effectiveness may vary depending on the amount of sugar in your blood, the length of time since you last took a break, routine distractions, stress, discomfort, or a range of other factors. There is also some good evidence that you have daily rhythms of alertness and energy.

### **Keeping an Activity Log**

Keeping an Activity Log for several days helps you to understand how you spend your time, and when you perform at your best. Without modifying your behavior any further than you have to, note down the things you do as you do them on

making coffee, gossiping with colleagues or whatever, note down the time of the change.

As well as recording activities, note how you feel, whether alert, flat, tired, energetic, etc. Do this periodically throughout the day. You may decide to integrate your activity log with a stress diary.

### **Learning from Your Log**

Once you have logged your time for a few days, analyze the log. You may be alarmed to see the length of time you spend doing low value jobs!

You may also see that you are energetic in some parts of the day, and flat in other parts. A lot of this can depend on the rest breaks you take, the times and amounts you eat, and quality of your nutrition. The activity log gives you some basis for experimenting with these variables.

### **Key points:**

Activity logs are useful tools for auditing the way that you use your time. They can also help you to track changes in your energy, alertness and effectiveness throughout the day.

By analyzing your activity log you will be able to identify and eliminate time-wasting or low-yield jobs. You will also know the times of day at which you are most effective, so that you can carry out your most important tasks during these times.

## **Action Plans - Small Scale Planning**

### **How to Use Tool:**

An Action Plan is a simple list of all of the tasks that you need to carry out to achieve an objective. It differs from a To Do List in that it focuses on the achievement of a single goal.

Wherever you want to achieve something significant, draw up an action plan. This helps you think about what you need to do to achieve that thing, so that you can get help where you need it and monitor your progress.

To draw up an Action Plan, simply list the tasks that you need to carry out to achieve your goal, in the order that you need to complete them. This is very simple, but is still very useful!

**Tip:**

Action Plans are great for small projects, where deadlines are not particularly important or strenuous, and where you don't need to co-ordinate other people.

As your projects grow, however, you'll need to develop project management skills. This is particularly the case if you need to schedule other people's time, or complete projects to tight deadlines. Visit the Mind Tools Project Planning section to learn these skills, and in particular, see our article on Gantt Charts.

**Key points:**

An Action Plan is a list of things that you need to do to achieve a goal. To use it, simply carry out each task in the list!

Many more tools like this are explained in *Make Time For Success!*, our downloadable personal effectiveness and time management e-book. [Click here](#) to learn more.

## To-Do

Your first step in beating work overload.

## Lists

### How to Use Tool:

Do you feel overwhelmed by the amount of work you have to do? Do you face a constant barrage of looming deadlines? And do you sometimes just forget to do something important, so that people have to chase you to get work done?

All of these are symptoms of not keeping a proper "To-Do List". To-Do Lists are prioritized lists of all the tasks that you need to carry out. They list everything that you have to do, with the most important tasks at the top of the list, and the least important tasks at the bottom. And starting to keep a To-Do List effectively is often the first personal productivity/time management breakthrough that people make as they start to make a success of their careers.

By keeping a To-Do List, you make sure that you capture all of the tasks you have to complete in one place. This is essential if you're not going to forget things. And by prioritizing work, you plan the order in which you'll do things, so you can tell what needs your immediate attention, and what you can quietly forget about until much, much later. This is essential if you're going to beat work overload. Without To-Do Lists, you'll seem dizzy, unfocused and unreliable to the people around you. With To-Do Lists, you'll be much better organized and much more reliable. This is very important!

Whilst To-Do Lists are very simple, they are also extremely powerful, both as a method of organizing yourself and as a way of reducing stress. Often problems may seem overwhelming or you may have a seemingly huge number of demands on your time. This may leave you feeling out of control, and overburdened with work.

### Preparing a To-Do List

The solution is often simple: Firstly, download our To Do list template (you'll need to have Adobe Reader installed - [click here to get it free](#)).

Start by writing down the tasks that face you, and if they are large, break them

down into their component elements. If these still seem large, break them down again. Do this until you have listed everything that you have to do, and until tasks are will take no more than 1 - 2 hours to complete.

Once you have done this, run through these jobs allocating priorities from A (very important) to F (unimportant). If too many tasks have a high priority, run through the list again and demote the less important ones. Once you have done this, rewrite the list in priority order.

You will then have a precise plan that you can use to eliminate the problems you face. You will be able to tackle these in order of importance. This allows you to separate important jobs from the many time-consuming trivial ones.

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**Using Your To-Do Lists**

Different people use To-Do Lists in different ways in different situations: if you are in a sales-type role, a good way of motivating yourself is to keep your list relatively short and aim to complete it every day.

In an operational role, or if tasks are large or dependent on too many other people, then it may be better to keep one list and 'chip away' at it.

It may be that you carry unimportant jobs from one To-Do List to the next. You may not be able to complete some very low priority jobs for several months. Only worry about this if you need to - if you are running up against a deadline for them, raise their priority.

If you have not used To-Do Lists before, try them now: They are one of the keys to being really productive and efficient.



## Key points:

Prioritized To-Do Lists are fundamentally important to efficient work. If you use To-Do Lists, you will ensure that:

- You remember to carry out all necessary tasks
- You tackle the most important jobs first, and do not waste time on trivial tasks.
- You do not get stressed by a large number of unimportant jobs.

To draw up a Prioritized To-Do List, download our template and use it to list all the tasks you must carry out. Mark the importance of the task next to it, with a priority from A (very important) to F (unimportant). Redraft the list into this order of importance.

Now carry out the jobs at the top of the list first. These are the most important, most beneficial tasks to complete.

**Personal Goal Setting**  
**Find direction. Live your life your way.**

### How to Use Tool:

Goal setting is a powerful process for personal planning.

The process of setting goals helps you choose where you want to go in life. By knowing precisely what you want to achieve, you know where you have to concentrate your efforts. You'll also quickly spot the distractions that would otherwise lure you from your course.

More than this, properly-set goals can be incredibly motivating, and as you get into the habit of setting and achieving goals, you'll find that your self-confidence builds fast.

### Achieving More With Focus

Goal setting techniques are used by top-level athletes, successful business-people and achievers in all fields. They give you long-term vision and short-

term motivation. They focus your acquisition of knowledge and help you to organize your time and your resources so that you can make the very most of your life.

By setting sharp, clearly defined goals, you can measure and take pride in the achievement of those goals. You can see forward progress in what might previously have seemed a long pointless grind. By setting goals, you will also raise your self-confidence, as you recognize your ability and competence in achieving the goals that you have set.

Goals are set on a number of different levels: First you decide what you want to do with your life and what large-scale goals you want to achieve. Second, you break these down into the smaller and smaller targets that you must hit so that you reach your lifetime goals. Finally, once you have your plan, you start working to achieve it.

### **Starting to Set Personal Goals**

This section explains a simple technique for setting personal goals. It starts with your lifetime goals, and then works through a series of lower level plans culminating in a daily to-do list. By setting up this structure of plans you can break even the biggest life goal down into a number of small tasks that you need to do each day to reach the lifetime goals.

(Don't forget: If you want to fast-track your goal setting and get the most from it, then either join our Design Your Life program or talk to one of our coaches.)

### **Your Lifetime Goals**

The first step in setting personal goals is to consider what you want to achieve in your lifetime, as setting Lifetime goals gives you the overall perspective that shapes all other aspects of your decision making.

To give a broad, balanced coverage of all important areas in your life, try to set

goals in some these categories (or in categories of your own, where these are important to you):

- *Artistic:*  
Do you want to achieve any artistic goals? If so, what?
- *Attitude:*  
Is any part of your mindset holding you back? Is there any part of the way that you behave that upsets you? If so, set a goal to improve your behavior or find a solution to the problem.
- *Career:*  
What level do you want to reach in your career?
- *Education:*  
Is there any knowledge you want to acquire in particular? What information and skills will you need to achieve other goals?
- *Family:*  
Do you want to be a parent? If so, how are you going to be a good parent? How do you want to be seen by a partner or by members of your extended family?
- *Financial:*  
How much do you want to earn by what stage?
- *Physical:*  
Are there any athletic goals you want to achieve, or do you want good health deep into old age? What steps are you going to take to achieve this?
- *Pleasure:*  
How do you want to enjoy yourself? - you should ensure that some of your life is for you!
- *Public* *Service:*  
Do you want to make the world a better place by your existence? If so, how?

Once you have decided your goals in these categories, assign a priority to them from A to F. Then review the goals and re-prioritize until you are satisfied that they reflect the shape of the life that you want to lead. Also ensure that the goals that you have set are the goals that you want to achieve, not what your parents, spouse, family, or employers want them to be.

## Starting to Achieve Your Lifetime Goals

Once you have set your lifetime goals, set a 25 year plan of smaller goals that you should complete if you are to reach your lifetime plan. Then set a 5 year plan, 1 year plan, 6 month plan, and 1 month plan of progressively smaller goals that you should reach to achieve your lifetime goals. Each of these should be based on the previous plan.



Then create a daily to-do list of things that you should do today to work towards your lifetime goals. At an early stage these goals may be to read books and gather information on the achievement of your goals. This will help you to improve the quality and realism of your goal setting.

Finally review your plans, and make sure that they fit the way in which you want to live your life.

## Staying on Course

Once you have decided your first set of plans, keep the process going by reviewing and updating your to-do list on a daily basis. Periodically review the longer term plans, and modify them to reflect your changing priorities and experience.

An easy way of doing this is to use the goal-setting software like GoalPro 6 on a daily basis - we review GoalPro on the left-hand sidebar, alternatively you can download GoalPro from Success Studios web site. GoalPro uses a similar set of categories to ones we recommend - either use theirs, or adapt the software to use ours.

## Goal Setting Tips

The following broad guidelines will help you to set effective goals:

- *State each goal as a positive statement:* Express your goals positively - 'Execute this technique well' is a much better goal than 'Don't make

this stupid mistake'

- *Be precise:* Set a precise goal, putting in dates, times and amounts so that you can measure achievement. If you do this, you will know exactly when you have achieved the goal, and can take complete satisfaction from having achieved it.
- *Set priorities:* When you have several goals, give each a priority. This helps you to avoid feeling overwhelmed by too many goals, and helps to direct your attention to the most important ones.
- *Write goals down:* this crystallizes them and gives them more force.
- *Keep operational goals small:* Keep the low-level goals you are working towards small and achievable. If a goal is too large, then it can seem that you are not making progress towards it. Keeping goals small and incremental gives more opportunities for reward. Derive today's goals from larger ones.
- *Set performance goals, not outcome goals:* You should take care to set goals over which you have as much control as possible. There is nothing more dispiriting than failing to achieve a personal goal for reasons beyond your control. These could be bad business environments, poor judging, bad weather, injury, or just plain bad luck. If you base your goals on personal performance, then you can keep control over the achievement of your goals and draw satisfaction from them.
- *Set realistic goals:* It is important to set goals that you can achieve. All sorts of people (parents, media, society) can set unrealistic goals for you. They will often do this in ignorance of your own desires and ambitions. Alternatively you may be naïve in setting very high goals. You might not appreciate either the obstacles in the way, or understand quite how much skill you need to develop to achieve a particular level of performance.
- *Do not set goals too low:* Just as it is important not to set goals unrealistically high, do not set them too low. People tend to do this where they are afraid of failure or where they are lazy! You should set goals so that they are slightly out of your immediate grasp, but not so far that there is no hope of achieving them. No one will put serious effort into achieving a goal that they believe is unrealistic. However, remember that your belief that a goal is unrealistic may be incorrect. If this could be the case, you can change this belief by using imagery effectively.

This is something we focus on in detail in our "Design Your Life" program, which not only helps you decide your goals, it then helps you set the vivid, compelling goals you need if you're to make the most of your goal setting.

**SMART****Goals:**

A useful way of making goals more powerful is to use the SMART mnemonic. While there are plenty of variants, SMART usually stands for:

- **S** Specific
- **M** Measurable
- **A** Attainable
- **R** Relevant
- **T** Time-bound

For example, instead of having “to sail around the world” as a goal, it is more powerful to say “To have completed my trip around the world by December 31, 2015.” Obviously, this will only be attainable if a lot of preparation has been completed beforehand!

### Achieving Goals

When you have achieved a goal, take the time to enjoy the satisfaction of having done so. Absorb the implications of the goal achievement, and observe the progress you have made towards other goals. If the goal was a significant one, reward yourself appropriately.

With the experience of having achieved this goal, review the rest of your goal plans:

- If you achieved the goal too easily, make your next goals harder
- If the goal took a dispiriting length of time to achieve, make the next goals a little easier
- If you learned something that would lead you to change other goals, do so
- If while achieving the goal you noticed a deficit in your skills, decide whether to set goals to fix this.

Failure to meet goals does not matter as long as you learn from it. Feed lessons learned back into your goal-setting program.

Remember too that your goals will change as you mature. Adjust them regularly to reflect this growth in your personality. If goals do not hold any attraction any longer, then let them go. Goal setting is your servant, not your master. It should bring you real pleasure, satisfaction and a sense of achievement.

### Example:

The best example of goal setting that you can have is to try setting your own goals. Set aside two hours to think through your lifetime goals in each of the categories. Then work back through the 25-year plan, 5-year plan, 1-year plan, 6-month plan, a 1-month plan. Finally draw up a To Do List of jobs to do tomorrow to move towards your goals.

Tomorrow, do those jobs, and start to use goal-setting routinely!

### Key points:

Goal setting is an important method of:

- Deciding what is important for you to achieve in your life
- Separating what is important from what is irrelevant
- Motivating yourself to achievement
- Building your self-confidence based on measured achievement of goals

When you achieve goals, allow yourself to enjoy this achievement of goals and reward yourself appropriately. Draw lessons where appropriate, and feed these back into future performance.

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**Effective Scheduling**  
Plan your time. Make time for yourself.

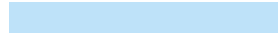
#### Introduction:

So far in this section of Mind Tools, we have looked at your priorities and your goals -

**Maximum Effectiveness**



these define what you aspire to do with your time. Scheduling is where these aspirations meet reality.



Scheduling is the process by which you look at the time available to you, and plan how you will use it to achieve the goals you have identified. By using a schedule properly, you can:

- Understand what you can realistically achieve with your time;
- Plan to make the best use of the time available;
- Leave enough time for things you absolutely must do;
- Preserve contingency time to handle 'the unexpected'; and
- Minimize stress by avoiding over-commitment to yourself and others.

A well thought-through schedule allows you to manage your commitments, while still leaving you time to do the things that are important to you. It is therefore your most important weapon for beating work overload.

#### **How to Use the Tool:**

Scheduling is best done on a regular basis, for example at the start of every week or month. Go through the following steps in preparing your schedule:

1. Start by identifying the time you want to make available for your work. This will depend on the design of your job and on your personal goals in life.
2. Next, block in the actions you absolutely must take to do a good job. These will often be the things you are assessed against.

For example, if you manage people, then you must make time available for dealing with issues that arise, coaching, and supervision. Similarly, you must allow time to communicate with your boss and key people around you. (While people may let you get away with 'neglecting them' in the short-term, your best time management efforts will surely be derailed if you do not set aside time for those who are important in your life.)

3. Review your To Do List, and schedule in the high-priority urgent activities, as well as the essential maintenance tasks that cannot be delegated and cannot be avoided.
4. Next, block in appropriate contingency time. You will learn how much of this you need by experience. Normally, the more unpredictable your job, the more contingency time you need. The reality of many people's work is of constant interruption: Studies show some managers getting an average of as little as six minutes uninterrupted work done at a time.



Obviously, you cannot tell when interruptions will occur. However, by leaving space in your schedule, you give yourself the flexibility to rearrange your schedule to react effectively to issues as they arise.

5. What you now have left is your “discretionary time”: the time available to deliver your priorities and achieve your goals. Review your Prioritized To Do List and personal goals, evaluate the time needed to achieve these actions, and schedule these in.

By the time you reach step 5, you may find that you have little or no discretionary time available. If this is the case, then revisit the assumptions you used in the first four steps. Question whether things are absolutely necessary, whether they can be delegated, or whether they can be done in an abbreviated way.

Remember that one of the most important ways people learn to achieve success is by maximizing the ‘leverage’ they can achieve with their time. They increase the amount of work they can manage by delegating work to other people, spending money outsourcing key tasks, or using technology to automate as much of their work as possible. This frees them up to achieve their goals.



Also, use this as an opportunity to review your To Do List and Personal Goals. Have you set goals that just aren’t achievable with the time you have available? Are you taking on too many additional duties? Or are you treating things as being more important than they really are?

If your discretionary time is still limited, then you may need to renegotiate your workload. With a well-thought through schedule as evidence, you may find this surprisingly easy.

### **Key points:**

Scheduling is the process by which you plan your use of time. By scheduling effectively, you can both reduce stress and maximize your effectiveness.

Before you can schedule efficiently, you need an effective scheduling system. This can be a diary, calendar, paper-based organizer, PDA or a software package like MS Outlook. The best solution depends entirely on your circumstances.

Scheduling is then a five-step process:

1. Identify the time you have available.
2. Block in the essential tasks you must carry out to succeed in your job.
3. Schedule in high priority urgent tasks and vital “house-keeping” activities.
4. Block in appropriate contingency time to handle unpredictable interruptions.
5. In the time that remains, schedule the activities that address your priorities and personal goals.

## **The Psychology of Winning**

After listening to Nightingale Conant’s “The Psychology of Winning,” by Dennis Waitley, it’s easy to see why the theories contained in this audio program are considered among the best. Waitley’s theories on human potential and his understanding of motivation, leadership and discipline shine through in every one of the six cassette tapes contained in the comprehensive program.

As seems to be consistent among the Nightingale Conant products, this program lives up to its reputation for creating a winning attitude and truly winning results! As one of the most acclaimed and popular audio programs, my expectations were high for “The Psychology of Winning.” Even so, my expectations were exceeded with top-notch information and steps that I have easily implemented into my life in my quest to be a true winner.

In fact, in “The Psychology of Winning,” Waitley details the “Ten Steps to Winning,” which are already used by Olympic athletes and top executives alike.

By applying positive self-expectancy, as Waitley recommends, it is easy to boost your own “winning average,” almost instantly. Much more than it’s hard-to-believe hype, “The Psychology of Winning” is real meat and potatoes, leaving the listener feeling full, yet wanting more.

The audio program is divided into two sets, Attitude Qualities and Action Qualities, each containing three two-sided audiotapes. In the first part of the program, Attitude Qualities, Waitley successfully defines and explains the importance of positive self-expectancy (my personal favorite), positive self-image, positive self-control, positive self-esteem and positive self-awareness. Clearly surpassing other similar programs, each of these tapes gives no-nonsense

attitude advice, further supported by information on making the attitude changes necessary to becoming a winner.

In the second part of the program, Action Qualities, Waitley discusses positive self-motivation, positive self-direction, positive self-discipline, positive self-dimension, and positive self-projection, leaving no rock unturned.

As with all Nightingale Conant programs I have reviewed, “The Psychology of Winning” is as successful as the users ability to adopt the techniques and changes. Honestly, I find this not to be a difficult task, focusing on long-term commitment to the program and making changes each and every day, all with the goal of being a winner.

Repeated listening is essential to the program’s success, but because the information is easy-to-understand and apply, I find listening to the tapes a rather easy task, with the results making the time I invest more than worthwhile. I look forward to listening to the tapes and have made scheduling time to do so a priority. For it doesn’t take long to review a single tape and since each tape is clearly labeled with the information it covers, I simply choose a tape I feel I will benefit most from and put it in.

In short, this program is a MUST for anyone looking to improve their attitude and their performance – working to become a winner in every way!

For more information on “The Psychology of Winning” or the other Nightingale products, click [here](#) for the CD version, and [here](#) for the tape version.

*Note from James: When I first listened to the Psychology of Winning 10 years ago, it made a major difference to my life. Whilst in some areas ideas have moved on since PoW was recorded, this does not in any way diminish the importance of its message.*

## Beating

## Procrastination

### Manage your time. Get it all done.

If you've found yourself putting off important tasks over and over again, you're not alone. In fact, most people procrastinate to some degree - but some are so chronically affected by procrastination that it disrupts their careers and thwarts even their best efforts.

The key to controlling and ultimately combating this destructive habit is to understand how and why it happens (even to the best of us) and to take a few simple steps to better manage your time and outcomes.

### Overcoming procrastination:

In a nutshell, you procrastinate when you put off things that you should be focusing on right now, usually in favor of doing something that is more enjoyable or that you're more comfortable doing.

Sometimes this happens when someone does not understand the difference between urgency and importance. The prevailing belief here: We all have the same amount of time in every day and procrastinators spend this time fully, but do not invest it wisely.

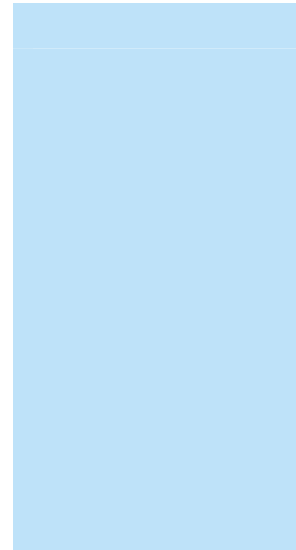
Instead, procrastinators focus so much on urgent issues that they have little or no time left for the important tasks, despite the unpleasant outcomes this may bring about.

Other causes of procrastination can be as simple as waiting for the "right" mood or the "right" time to tackle the important task at hand; a fear of failure or success; underdeveloped decision-making skills; poor organizational skills; or perfectionism.

### How to combat procrastination:

Whatever the reason behind procrastination, it must be recognized, dealt with and controlled before you miss opportunities or your career is derailed.

Part of the solution is to develop good organizational and personal effectiveness habits, such as those described in Mind Tools "Make Time for Success!" This helps you establish the right priorities, and manage your time in such a way that you make the most of the opportunities open to you.



The other part of the solution can be as simple as applying this rule of thumb: If you're not working (directly or indirectly) to progress your top priority projects, you're probably procrastinating.



And, when you're doing something important, such as working on your top-priority project or task, and something urgent comes up, recognize that this will take time away from this important work.

To do this, it is imperative to understand the difference between urgency and importance.

On one hand, let's say that your boss comes to your office and says he or she has called a meeting and wants you to join other team members in the conference room now. This is clearly urgent.

Or, your sales manager calls in from the field and explains that your biggest customer just received the wrong shipment and is in dire need of the correct shipment. This will require tracking down the original shipment, working through the placed orders, even the salesman's paperwork, etc. Again, this is urgent.

However, while immediate action is needed here, these things only tangentially affect the truly important things in your life.

Important things are likely to be the actions that serve to broaden you, build your career, or achieve something of real human significance to you. These important actions are often easy to pinpoint, for they are the ones that help you achieve your goals (another of the major topics within "Make Time for Success".)

This is not to say that you do not have to take care of the urgent things. Instead, you will need to take care of these things as efficiently as possible, while also staying on top of the important demands/going-ons of the day. You'll need to minimize the time spent on these urgent tasks, while still ensuring that they are successfully and efficiently resolved.

With proper planning and some self-discipline, many urgent matters disappear altogether or, when they do surface, your planning and discipline makes them less urgent and easier to deal

with. This means that you waste less of the valuable time that should be spent on the important things.

And, keep in mind that you probably do not have to handle every urgent matter yourself. Delegate as far as possible, so that you do not get caught up in remedying every urgent situation. To spend life “firefighting” is a misuse of your “important” time.

## **Activity** **Finding Out How You Really Spend Your Time**

## **Logs**

### **How to Use Tool:**

Activity logs help you to analyze how you actually spend your time. The first time you use an activity log you may be shocked to see the amount of time that you waste! Memory is a very poor guide when it comes to this, as it can be too easy to forget time spent reading junk mail, talking to colleagues, making coffee, eating lunch, etc.

You may also be unaware that your energy levels may vary through the day. In fact, most people function at different levels of effectiveness at different times. Your effectiveness may vary depending on the amount of sugar in your blood, the length of time since you last took a break, routine distractions, stress, discomfort, or a range of other factors. There is also some good evidence that you have daily rhythms of alertness and energy.

### **Keeping an Activity Log**

Keeping an Activity Log for several days helps you to understand how you spend your time, and when you perform at your best. Without modifying your behavior any further than you have to, note down the things you do as you do them on this template. Every time you change activities, whether opening mail, working, making coffee, gossiping with colleagues or whatever, note down the time of the change.

As well as recording activities, note how you feel, whether alert, flat, tired, energetic, etc. Do this periodically throughout the day. You may decide to integrate your activity log with a stress diary.

### **Learning from Your Log**

Once you have logged your time for a few days, analyze the log. You may be alarmed to see the length of time you spend doing low value jobs!

You may also see that you are energetic in some parts of the day, and flat in other parts. A lot of this can depend on the rest breaks you take, the times and amounts you eat, and quality of your nutrition. The activity log gives you some basis for experimenting with these variables.

### **Key points:**

Activity logs are useful tools for auditing the way that you use your time. They can also help you to track changes in your energy, alertness and effectiveness throughout the day.

By analyzing your activity log you will be able to identify and eliminate time-wasting or low-yield jobs. You will also know the times of day at which you are most effective, so that you can carry out your most important tasks during these times.

## **Time Management**

**Beat work overload. Increase your effectiveness. Achieve more.**

This section of Mind Tools shows you how to use personal time management skills. These are the simple, practical techniques that have helped the leading people in business, sport and public service reach the pinnacles of their careers.

The skills we explain help you become highly effective by showing you how to identify and focus on the activities that give you the greatest returns. Investing in these time management activities will actually save you time, helping you work smarter, not harder.

This section finishes by explaining goal-setting, a vitally important skill for deciding what you want to achieve with your life.



**Introduction to  
Time  
Management  
Beating  
Procrastination  
- Manage your**

time. Get it all done.

**Activity Logs** - Knowing where you waste it

**Action Plans** - Starting to achieve, in a small way

**Prioritized To Do Lists** - Taking control of your time

[Scheduling](#)

[Skills](#) - Bringing your workload under control

**Personal Goal Setting** -

Planning to live your life your way

[Time](#)

[Management](#)

[Products](#)

[Reviewed](#)

#### **Premium Member Tools:** (How to become a member)

- [Action Priority Matrix](#) - Making the most of your opportunities.
- [The Boston Matrix](#) - Focusing effort to get the greatest returns.
- [Costing Your Time](#) - Understand the real value of your time.
- [Critical Success Factors](#) - Identifying the things that really matter for success.
- [Nominal Group Technique](#) - Prioritizing issues and projects to achieve consensus.
- [Pickle Jar Theory](#) - Make your schedule work. Leave time for fun!
- [Prioritization](#) - Making best use of your time and resources.
- [Treasure Mapping](#) - Visualizing your goal for greater achievement
- [The Urgent/Important Matrix](#) - Using time effectively, not just efficiently



The first article introduces you to the importance of time management skills. To read it, click “Next article”, below. And for other useful techniques, see the suggested links underneath.

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## **Time Management Skills** **Work smarter. Improve time utilization.**

This section discusses personal time management skills. These are essential skills for effective people.

People who use these techniques routinely are the highest achievers in all walks of life, from business to sport to public service. If you use these skills well, then you will be able to function effectively, even under intense pressure.

At the heart of time management is an important shift in focus:

*Concentrate on results, not on being busy*

Many people spend their days in a frenzy of activity, but achieve very little because they are not concentrating on the right things.

### **The 80:20 Rule**

This is neatly summed up in the Pareto Principle, or the ‘80:20 Rule’. This argues that typically 80% of unfocussed effort generates only 20% of results. *The remaining 80% of results are achieved with only 20% of the effort.* While the ratio is not always 80:20, this broad pattern of a small proportion of activity generating non-scalar returns recurs so frequently as to be the norm in many areas.

By applying the time management tips and skills in this section you can optimize your effort to ensure that you concentrate as much of your time and energy as possible on the high payoff tasks. This ensures that you achieve the greatest

benefit possible with the limited amount of time available to you.

## **Time Management Tools**

The tools we will discuss are:

- Manage time. Get things done - Beating Procrastination
- Making sure you concentrate on the right things - Deciding Work Priorities
- Checking how you really spend your time - Activity Logs
- Planning to solve a problem - Action Plans
- Tackling the right tasks first - Prioritized To Do Lists
- Deciding what your personal priorities should be - Personal Goal Setting
- Planning to make the best use of your time - Effective Scheduling
- Time management products reviewed - Reviews

By the end of this section, you should have a much clearer understanding of how to use time to its greatest effect.

*These tools and many, many more are explained in Mind Tools' Make Time For Success! This contains more than 100 pages of time tested tips, techniques and secrets to improve your time management skills and get the most that life has to offer. You will learn how to set realistic goals, generate a life plan and leverage all of the opportunities that life has to offer. Many of the lessons include workbook exercises so that you really understand how to put these invaluable skills to work in your life. [Click here to learn more.](#)*

## **Beating**

## **Procrastination**

**Manage your time. Get it all done.**

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And, keep in mind that you probably do not have to handle every urgent matter yourself. Delegate as far as possible, so that you do not get caught up in remedying every urgent situation. To spend life “firefighting” is a misuse of your “important” time.

## **Deciding Your Work Priorities Finding Out What to Spend Your Time On**

### **How to Use Tool:**

An important part of focusing on results is working out what to focus on! Many people work very hard all day doing little jobs that do not actually affect the quality of their work.

This section concentrates on three areas - clarifying what you enjoy, understanding what your strengths and weaknesses are, and working out both what your job is and what constitutes excellent performance.

**Doing what you enjoy**  
It is important for your own quality of life that you

enjoy your job. If you know broadly what you like and dislike, you will be more able to move your job towards doing things that you enjoy. This is important as you are much more likely to do your job effectively if you love it than if you loathe it.

Of course, almost every job has tedious or unpleasant elements to it - it is important that these parts are done properly. And it is up to you to minimize the time you spend doing tedious jobs.

### **Concentrating on your strengths**

It is also important to know what your talents and weaknesses are. A good way of doing this is to carry out a SWOT analysis. This provides a formal approach to evaluating your strengths and weaknesses, and the opportunities and threats that you face. It makes a lot of sense to find a job that suits your strengths, and where your weaknesses do not matter.

### **Understanding how to be excellent at your job**

One excellent way of ensuring that you concentrate on the right things is to agree them with your employer!

You should ask the following questions:

- *What is the purpose of the job?*  
If possible, express this in a single sentence starting with the word 'To' - for example 'To ensure effective distribution in the South East...'
- *What are the measures of success?*  
Work out how your employer will decide whether you are good at your job or not. Find out what the key targets to be achieved are, and how achievement will be measured.
- *What is exceptional performance?*  
Find out what this is considered to be, and work out how to achieve it.
- *What are the priorities and deadlines?*  
You need to know this so that when you are overloaded with work, you know what to focus on.

- *What resources are available?*  
This ensures that you are using all the tools at your command.
- *What costs are acceptable?*  
This lets you know the boundaries within which you can move.
- *How does this relate to other people?*  
What is the broader picture within which you have to work?

If you have answers to these questions, you will know how to do your job in precisely the right way. If you know what exceptional performance is, you can plan to achieve it using all the resources you have available.

### **Key points:**

This section gives you three ways of deciding your work priorities:

- *Concentrating on what you enjoy*
- *Using a SWOT analysis to work out your strengths and weaknesses.*  
This helps you to play to your strengths, minimize weaknesses, and move in the right direction.
- Finally it explains how to *clarify your job* with your employer, and concentrate on doing well in the areas he or she considers to be most important.

By concentrating on the right priorities you will ensure that you are always working as effectively as possible.

If you're struggling to find direction in life or in your career so that you can set these priorities, click here to find out about "Design Your Life", our new life design and goal setting program.

## **Activity Logs Finding Out How You Really Spend Your Time**

### **How to Use Tool:**

Activity logs help you to analyze how you actually spend your time. The first time you use an activity log you may be shocked to see the amount of time that you waste! Memory is a very poor guide when it comes to this, as it can be too easy to forget time spent reading junk mail, talking to colleagues, making coffee, eating lunch, etc.

You may also be unaware that your energy levels may vary through the day. In fact, most people function at different levels of effectiveness at different times. Your effectiveness may vary depending on the amount of sugar in your blood, the length of time since you last took a break, routine distractions, stress, discomfort, or a range of other factors. There is also some good evidence that you have daily rhythms of alertness and energy.

### **Keeping an Activity Log**

Keeping an Activity Log for several days helps you to understand how you spend your time, and when you perform at your best. Without modifying your behavior any further than you have to, note down the things you do as you do them on this template. Every time you change activities, whether opening mail, working, making coffee, gossiping with colleagues or whatever, note down the time of the change.

As well as recording activities, note how you feel, whether alert, flat, tired, energetic, etc. Do this periodically throughout the day. You may decide to integrate your activity log with a stress diary.

### **Learning from Your Log**

Once you have logged your time for a few days, analyze the log. You may be alarmed to see the length of time you spend doing low value jobs!

You may also see that you are energetic in some parts of the day, and flat in other parts. A lot of this can depend on the rest breaks you take, the times and amounts you eat, and quality of your nutrition. The activity log gives you some basis for experimenting with these variables.

### **Key points:**

Activity logs are useful tools for auditing the way that you use your time. They



can also help you to track changes in your energy, alertness and effectiveness throughout the day.

By analyzing your activity log you will be able to identify and eliminate time-wasting or low-yield jobs. You will also know the times of day at which you are most effective, so that you can carry out your most important tasks during these times.

## **Action Plans - Small Scale Planning**

### **How to Use Tool:**

An Action Plan is a simple list of all of the tasks that you need to carry out to achieve an objective. It differs from a To Do List in that it focuses on the achievement of a single goal.

Wherever you want to achieve something significant, draw up an action plan. This helps you think about what you need to do to achieve that thing, so that you can get help where you need it and monitor your progress.

To draw up an Action Plan, simply list the tasks that you need to carry out to achieve your goal, in the order that you need to complete them. This is very simple, but is still very useful!

### **Tip:**

Action Plans are great for small projects, where deadlines are not particularly important or strenuous, and where you don't need to co-ordinate other people.

As your projects grow, however, you'll need to develop project management

skills. This is particularly the case if you need to schedule other people's time, or complete projects to tight deadlines. Visit the Mind Tools Project Planning section to learn these skills, and in particular, see our article on Gantt Charts.

### **Key points:**

An Action Plan is a list of things that you need to do to achieve a goal. To use it, simply carry out each task in the list!

Many more tools like this are explained in *Make Time For Success!*, our downloadable personal effectiveness and time management e-book. [Click here](#) to learn more.

## **To-Do**

## **Lists**

**Your first step in beating work overload.**

### **How to Use Tool:**

Do you feel overwhelmed by the amount of work you have to do? Do you face a constant barrage of looming deadlines? And do you sometimes just forget to do something important, so that people have to chase you to get work done?

All of these are symptoms of not keeping a proper "To-Do List". To-Do Lists are prioritized lists of all the tasks that you need to carry out. They list everything that you have to do, with the most important tasks at the top of the list, and the least important tasks at the bottom. And starting to keep a To-Do List effectively is often the first personal productivity/time management breakthrough that people make as they start to make a success of their careers.

By keeping a To-Do List, you make sure that you capture all of the tasks you have to complete in one place. This is essential if you're not going to forget things. And by prioritizing work, you plan the order in which you'll do things, so you can tell what needs your immediate attention, and what you can quietly

people around you. With To-Do Lists, you'll be much better organized and much more reliable. This is very important!

Whilst To-Do Lists are very simple, they are also extremely powerful, both as a method of organizing yourself and as a way of reducing stress. Often problems may seem overwhelming or you may have a seemingly huge number of demands on your time. This may leave you feeling out of control, and overburdened with work.

### **Preparing a To-Do List**

The solution is often simple: Firstly, download our To Do list template (you'll need to have Adobe Reader installed - [click here to get it free](#)).

Start by writing down the tasks that face you, and if they are large, break them down into their component elements. If these still seem large, break them down again. Do this until you have listed everything that you have to do, and until tasks are will take no more than 1 - 2 hours to complete.

Once you have done this, run through these jobs allocating priorities from A (very important) to F (unimportant). If too many tasks have a high priority, run through the list again and demote the less important ones. Once you have done this, rewrite the list in priority order.

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Become a highly effective leader; minimize stress; improve decision making; maximize your personal

You will then have a precise plan that you can use to eliminate the problems you face. You will be able to tackle these in order of importance. This allows you to separate important jobs from the many time-consuming trivial ones.

#### **Using Your To-Do Lists**

Different people use To-Do Lists in different ways in different situations: if you are in a sales-type role, a good way of motivating yourself is to keep your list relatively short and aim to

effectiveness; and much, much more.

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complete it every day.

In an operational role, or if tasks are large or dependent on too many other people, then it may be better to keep one list and 'chip away' at it.

It may be that you carry unimportant jobs from one To-Do List to the next. You may not be able to complete some very low priority jobs for several months. Only worry about this if you need to - if you are running up against a deadline for them, raise their priority.

If you have not used To-Do Lists before, try them now: They are one of the keys to being really productive and efficient.

#### **Key points:**

Prioritized To-Do Lists are fundamentally important to efficient work. If you use To-Do Lists, you will ensure that:

- You remember to carry out all necessary tasks
- You tackle the most important jobs first, and do not waste time on trivial tasks.
- You do not get stressed by a large number of unimportant jobs.

To draw up a Prioritized To-Do List, download our template and use it to list all the tasks you must carry out. Mark the importance of the task next to it, with a priority from A (very important) to F (unimportant). Redraft the list into this order of importance.

Now carry out the jobs at the top of the list first. These are the most important, most beneficial tasks to complete.

## **Personal Goal Setting** **Find direction. Live your life your way.**

### **How to Use Tool:**

Goal setting is a powerful process for personal planning.

The process of setting goals helps you choose where you want to go in life. By knowing precisely what you want to achieve, you know where you have to concentrate your efforts. You'll also quickly spot the distractions that would otherwise lure you from your course.

More than this, properly-set goals can be incredibly motivating, and as you get into the habit of setting and achieving goals, you'll find that your self-confidence builds fast.

### **Achieving More With Focus**

Goal setting techniques are used by top-level athletes, successful business-people and achievers in all fields. They give you long-term vision and short-term motivation. They focus your acquisition of knowledge and help you to organize your time and your resources so that you can make the very most of your life.

By setting sharp, clearly defined goals, you can measure and take pride in the achievement of those goals. You can see forward progress in what might previously have seemed a long pointless grind. By setting goals, you will also raise your self-confidence, as you recognize your ability and competence in achieving the goals that you have set.

Goals are set on a number of different levels: First you decide what you want to do with your life and what large-scale goals you want to achieve. Second, you break these down into the smaller and smaller targets that you must hit so that you reach your lifetime goals. Finally, once you have your plan, you start

working to achieve it.

## Starting to Set Personal Goals

This section explains a simple technique for setting personal goals. It starts with your lifetime goals, and then works through a series of lower level plans culminating in a daily to-do list. By setting up this structure of plans you can break even the biggest life goal down into a number of small tasks that you need to do each day to reach the lifetime goals.

(Don't forget: If you want to fast-track your goal setting and get the most from it, then either join our Design Your Life program or talk to one of our coaches.)

## Your Lifetime Goals

The first step in setting personal goals is to consider what you want to achieve in your lifetime, as setting Lifetime goals gives you the overall perspective that shapes all other aspects of your decision making.

To give a broad, balanced coverage of all important areas in your life, try to set goals in some these categories (or in categories of your own, where these are important to you):

- *Artistic:*  
Do you want to achieve any artistic goals? If so, what?
- *Attitude:*  
Is any part of your mindset holding you back? Is there any part of the way that you behave that upsets you? If so, set a goal to improve your behavior or find a solution to the problem.
- *Career:*  
What level do you want to reach in your career?
- *Education:*  
Is there any knowledge you want to acquire in particular? What information and skills will you need to achieve other goals?
- *Family:*  
Do you want to be a parent? If so, how are you going to be a good parent? How do you want to be seen by a partner or by members of your extended family?

- *Financial:*  
How much do you want to earn by what stage?
- *Physical:*  
Are there any athletic goals you want to achieve, or do you want good health deep into old age? What steps are you going to take to achieve this?
- *Pleasure:*  
How do you want to enjoy yourself? - you should ensure that some of your life is for you!
- *Public* *Service:*  
Do you want to make the world a better place by your existence? If so, how?

Once you have decided your goals in these categories, assign a priority to them from A to F. Then review the goals and re-prioritize until you are satisfied that they reflect the shape of the life that you want to lead. Also ensure that the goals that you have set are the goals that you want to achieve, not what your parents, spouse, family, or employers want them to be.

### **Starting to Achieve Your Lifetime Goals**

Once you have set your lifetime goals, set a 25 year plan of smaller goals that you should complete if you are to reach your lifetime plan. Then set a 5 year plan, 1 year plan, 6 month plan, and 1 month plan of progressively smaller goals that you should reach to achieve your lifetime goals. Each of these should be based on the previous plan.



Then create a daily to-do list of things that you should do today to work towards your lifetime goals. At an early stage these goals may be to read books and gather information on the achievement of your goals. This will help you to improve the quality and realism of your goal setting.

Finally review your plans, and make sure that they fit the way in which you want to live your

life.

## Staying on Course

Once you have decided your first set of plans, keep the process going by reviewing and updating your to-do list on a daily basis. Periodically review the longer term plans, and modify them to reflect your changing priorities and experience.

An easy way of doing this is to use the goal-setting software like GoalPro 6 on a daily basis - we review GoalPro on the left-hand sidebar, alternatively you can download GoalPro from Success Studios web site. GoalPro uses a similar set of categories to ones we recommend - either use theirs, or adapt the software to use ours.

## Goal Setting Tips

The following broad guidelines will help you to set effective goals:

- *State each goal as a positive statement:* Express your goals positively - 'Execute this technique well' is a much better goal than 'Don't make this stupid mistake'
- *Be precise:* Set a precise goal, putting in dates, times and amounts so that you can measure achievement. If you do this, you will know exactly when you have achieved the goal, and can take complete satisfaction from having achieved it.
- *Set priorities:* When you have several goals, give each a priority. This helps you to avoid feeling overwhelmed by too many goals, and helps to direct your attention to the most important ones.
- *Write goals down:* this crystallizes them and gives them more force.
- *Keep operational goals small:* Keep the low-level goals you are working towards small and achievable. If a goal is too large, then it can seem that you are not making progress towards it. Keeping goals small and incremental gives more opportunities for reward. Derive today's goals from larger ones.
- *Set performance goals, not outcome goals:* You should take care to set goals over which you have as much control as possible. There is nothing more dispiriting than failing to achieve a personal goal for reasons beyond your control. These could be bad business environments, poor judging, bad weather, injury, or just plain bad luck. If you base your goals on personal performance, then you can keep control over the achievement of your goals and draw satisfaction from



them.

- *Set realistic goals:* It is important to set goals that you can achieve. All sorts of people (parents, media, society) can set unrealistic goals for you. They will often do this in ignorance of your own desires and ambitions. Alternatively you may be naïve in setting very high goals. You might not appreciate either the obstacles in the way, or understand quite how much skill you need to develop to achieve a particular level of performance.
- *Do not set goals too low:* Just as it is important not to set goals unrealistically high, do not set them too low. People tend to do this where they are afraid of failure or where they are lazy! You should set goals so that they are slightly out of your immediate grasp, but not so far that there is no hope of achieving them. No one will put serious effort into achieving a goal that they believe is unrealistic. However, remember that your belief that a goal is unrealistic may be incorrect. If this could be the case, you can to change this belief by using imagery effectively.

This is something we focus on in detail in our “Design Your Life” program, which not only helps you decide your goals, it then helps you set the vivid, compelling goals you need if you’re to make the most of your goal setting.

<p><b>SMART</b></p> <p>A useful way of making goals more powerful is to use the SMART mnemonic. While there are plenty of variants, SMART usually stands for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>S</b> Specific</li><li>• <b>M</b> Measurable</li><li>• <b>A</b> Attainable</li><li>• <b>R</b> Relevant</li><li>• <b>T</b> Time-bound</li></ul> <p>For example, instead of having “to sail around the world” as a goal, it is more powerful to say “To have completed my trip around the world by December 31, 2015.” Obviously, this will only be attainable if a lot of preparation has been completed beforehand!</p>	<p><b>Goals:</b></p>
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## Achieving Goals

When you have achieved a goal, take the time to enjoy the satisfaction of having done so. Absorb the implications of the goal achievement, and observe the progress you have made towards other goals. If the goal was a significant one, reward yourself appropriately.

With the experience of having achieved this goal, review the rest of your goal plans:

- If you achieved the goal too easily, make your next goals harder
- If the goal took a dispiriting length of time to achieve, make the next goals a little easier
- If you learned something that would lead you to change other goals, do so
- If while achieving the goal you noticed a deficit in your skills, decide whether to set goals to fix this.

Failure to meet goals does not matter as long as you learn from it. Feed lessons learned back into your goal-setting program.

Remember too that your goals will change as you mature. Adjust them regularly to reflect this growth in your personality. If goals do not hold any attraction any longer, then let them go. Goal setting is your servant, not your master. It should bring you real pleasure, satisfaction and a sense of achievement.

### **Example:**

The best example of goal setting that you can have is to try setting your own goals. Set aside two hours to think through your lifetime goals in each of the categories. Then work back through the 25-year plan, 5-year plan, 1-year plan, 6-month plan, a 1-month plan. Finally draw up a To Do List of jobs to do tomorrow to move towards your goals.

Tomorrow, do those jobs, and start to use goal-setting routinely!

### **Key points:**

Goal setting is an important method of:

- Deciding what is important for you to achieve in your life
- Separating what is important from what is irrelevant
- Motivating yourself to achievement
- Building your self-confidence based on measured achievement of goals

When you achieve goals, allow yourself to enjoy this achievement of goals and reward yourself appropriately. Draw lessons where appropriate, and feed these back into future performance.

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## **Effective Scheduling** **Plan your time. Make time for yourself.**

### **Introduction:**

So far in this section of Mind Tools, we have looked at your priorities and your goals - these define what you aspire to do with your time. Scheduling is where these aspirations meet reality.

Scheduling is the process by which you look at the time available to you, and plan how you will use it to achieve the goals you have identified. By using a schedule properly, you can:

- Understand what you can realistically achieve with your time;
- Plan to make the best use of the time available;
- Leave enough time for things you absolutely must do;
- Preserve contingency time to handle 'the unexpected'; and
- Minimize stress by avoiding over-commitment to yourself and others.

A well thought-through schedule allows you to manage your commitments, while still leaving you time to do the things that are important to you. It is therefore your most important weapon for beating work overload.

## **Maximum Effectiveness**



## How to Use the Tool:

Scheduling is best done on a regular basis, for example at the start of every week or month. Go through the following steps in preparing your schedule:

6. Start by identifying the time you want to make available for your work. This will depend on the design of your job and on your personal goals in life.
7. Next, block in the actions you absolutely must take to do a good job. These will often be the things you are assessed against.

For example, if you manage people, then you must make time available for dealing with issues that arise, coaching, and supervision. Similarly, you must allow time to communicate with your boss and key people around you. (While people may let you get away with ‘neglecting them’ in the short-term, your best time management efforts will surely be derailed if you do not set aside time for those who are important in your life.)

8. Review your To Do List, and schedule in the high-priority urgent activities, as well as the essential maintenance tasks that cannot be delegated and cannot be avoided.
9. Next, block in appropriate contingency time. You will learn how much of this you need by experience. Normally, the more unpredictable your job, the more contingency time you need. The reality of many people’s work is of constant interruption: Studies show some managers getting an average of as little as six minutes uninterrupted work done at a time.

Obviously, you cannot tell when interruptions will occur. However, by leaving space in your schedule, you give yourself the flexibility to rearrange your schedule to react effectively to issues as they arise.

10. What you now have left is your “discretionary time”: the time available to deliver your priorities and achieve your goals. Review your Prioritized To Do List and personal goals, evaluate the time needed to achieve these actions, and schedule these in.

By the time you reach step 5, you may find that you have little or no discretionary time available. If this is the case, then revisit the assumptions you used in the first four steps. Question whether things are absolutely necessary, whether they can be delegated, or whether they can be done in an abbreviated way.



Remember that one of the most important ways people learn to achieve success is by maximizing the ‘leverage’ they can achieve with their time. They increase the amount of work they can manage by delegating work to other people, spending money outsourcing key tasks, or using technology to automate as much of their work as possible. This frees them up to achieve their goals.

Also, use this as an opportunity to review your To Do List and Personal Goals. Have you set goals that just aren't achievable with the time you have available? Are you taking on too many additional duties? Or are you treating things as being more important than they really are?

If your discretionary time is still limited, then you may need to renegotiate your workload. With a well-thought through schedule as evidence, you may find this surprisingly easy.

### **Key points:**

Scheduling is the process by which you plan your use of time. By scheduling effectively, you can both reduce stress and maximize your effectiveness.

Before you can schedule efficiently, you need an effective scheduling system. This can be a diary, calendar, paper-based organizer, PDA or a software package like MS Outlook. The best solution depends entirely on your circumstances.

Scheduling is then a five-step process:

6. Identify the time you have available.
7. Block in the essential tasks you must carry out to succeed in your job.
8. Schedule in high priority urgent tasks and vital "house-keeping" activities.
9. Block in appropriate contingency time to handle unpredictable interruptions.
10. In the time that remains, schedule the activities that address your priorities and personal goals.

## **The Psychology of Winning**

After listening to Nightingale Conant's "The Psychology of Winning," by Dennis Waitley, it's easy to see why the theories contained in this audio program are considered among the best. Waitley's theories on human potential and his understanding of motivation, leadership and discipline shine through in every one of the six cassette tapes contained in the comprehensive program.

As seems to be consistent among the Nightingale Conant products, this program lives up to its reputation for creating a winning attitude and truly winning results! As one of the most acclaimed and popular audio programs, my expectations were high for "The Psychology of Winning." Even so, my expectations were exceeded with top-notch information and steps that I have easily implemented into my life in my quest to be a true winner.

In fact, in "The Psychology of Winning," Waitley details the "Ten Steps to Winning," which are already used by Olympic athletes and top executives alike.

By applying positive self-expectancy, as Waitley recommends, it is easy to boost your own "winning average," almost instantly. Much more than it's hard-to-believe hype, "The Psychology of Winning" is real meat and potatoes, leaving the listener feeling full, yet wanting more.

The audio program is divided into two sets, Attitude Qualities and Action Qualities, each containing three two-sided audiotapes. In the first part of the program, Attitude Qualities, Waitley successfully defines and explains the importance of positive self-expectancy (my personal favorite), positive self-image, positive self-control, positive self-esteem and positive self-awareness. Clearly surpassing other similar programs, each of these tapes gives no-nonsense attitude advice, further supported by information on making the attitude changes necessary to becoming a winner.

In the second part of the program, Action Qualities, Waitley discusses positive self-motivation, positive self-direction, positive self-discipline, positive self-dimension, and positive self-projection, leaving no rock unturned.

As with all Nightingale Conant programs I have reviewed, "The Psychology of Winning" is as successful as the users ability to adopt the techniques and changes. Honestly, I find this not to be a difficult task, focusing on long-term commitment to the program and making changes each and every day, all with the goal of being a winner.

Repeated listening is essential to the program's success, but because the information is easy-to-understand and apply, I find listening to the tapes a rather easy task, with the results making the time I invest more than worthwhile. I look forward to listening to the tapes and have made scheduling time to do so a priority. For it doesn't take long to review a single tape and since each tape is clearly labeled with the information it covers, I simply choose a tape I feel I will benefit most from and put it in.

In short, this program is a MUST for anyone looking to improve their attitude and their performance – working to become a winner in every way!

For more information on "The Psychology of Winning" or the other Nightingale products, click [here](#) for the CD version, and [here](#) for the tape version.

*Note from James: When I first listened to the Psychology of Winning 10 years ago, it made a major difference to my life. Whilst in some areas ideas have moved on since PoW was recorded, this does not in any way diminish the importance of its message.*

## **Beating**

**Manage your time. Get it all done.**

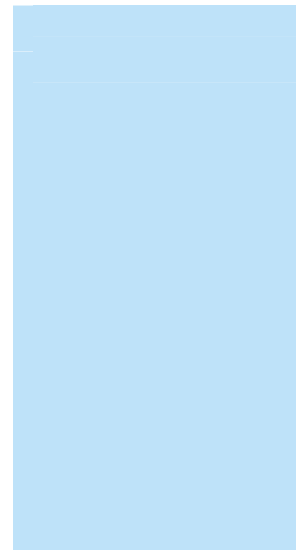
If you've found yourself putting off important tasks over and over again, you're not alone. In fact, most people procrastinate to some degree - but some are so chronically affected by procrastination that it disrupts their careers and thwarts even their best efforts.

The key to controlling and ultimately combating this destructive habit is to understand how and why it happens (even to the best of us) and to take a few simple steps to better manage your time and outcomes.

### **Overcoming procrastination:**

In a nutshell, you procrastinate when you put off things that you should be focusing on right now, usually in favor of doing something that is more enjoyable or that you're more comfortable doing.

## **Procrastination**



Sometimes this happens when someone does not understand the difference between urgency and importance. The prevailing belief here: We all have the same amount of time in every day and procrastinators spend this time fully, but do not invest it wisely.

Instead, procrastinators focus so much on urgent issues that they have little or no time left for the important tasks, despite the unpleasant outcomes this may bring about.

Other causes of procrastination can be as simple as waiting for the “right” mood or the “right” time to tackle the important task at hand; a fear of failure or success; underdeveloped decision-making skills; poor organizational skills; or perfectionism.

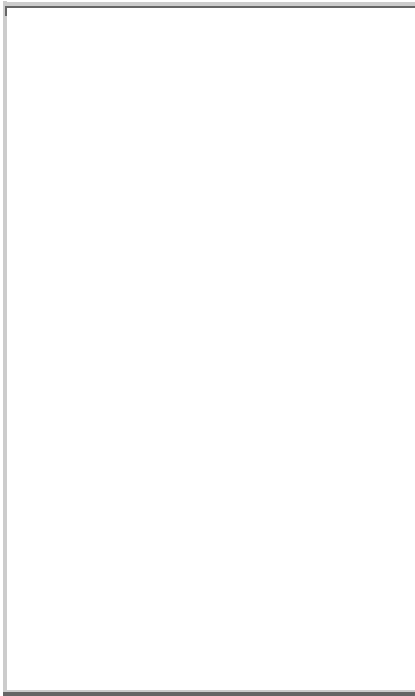
#### **How to combat procrastination:**

Whatever the reason behind procrastination, it must be recognized, dealt with and controlled before you miss opportunities or your career is derailed.

Part of the solution is to develop good organizational and personal effectiveness habits, such as those described in Mind Tools “Make Time for Success!” This helps you establish the right priorities, and manage your time in such a way that you make the most of the opportunities open to you.

The other part of the solution can be as simple as applying this rule of thumb: If you’re not working (directly or indirectly) to progress your top priority projects, you’re probably procrastinating.





And, when you're doing something important, such as working on your top-priority project or task, and something urgent comes up, recognize that this will take time away from this important work.

To do this, it is imperative to understand the difference between urgency and importance.

On one hand, let's say that your boss comes to your office and says he or she has called a meeting and wants you to join other team members in the conference room now. This is clearly urgent.

Or, your sales manager calls in from the field and explains that your biggest customer just received the wrong shipment and is in dire need of the correct shipment. This will require tracking down the original shipment, working through the placed orders, even the salesman's paperwork, etc. Again, this is urgent.

However, while immediate action is needed here, these things only tangentially affect the truly important things in your life.

Important things are likely to be the actions that serve to broaden you, build your career, or achieve something of real human significance to you. These important actions are often easy to pinpoint, for they are the ones that help you achieve your goals (another of the major topics within "Make Time for Success".)

This is not to say that you do not have to take care of the urgent things. Instead, you will need to take care of these things as efficiently as possible, while also staying on top of the important demands/going-ons of the day. You'll need to minimize the time spent on these urgent tasks, while still ensuring that they are successfully and efficiently resolved.

With proper planning and some self-discipline, many urgent matters disappear altogether or, when they do surface, your planning and discipline makes them less urgent and easier to deal with. This means that you waste less of the valuable time that should be spent on the important things.

And, keep in mind that you probably do not have to handle every urgent matter yourself. Delegate as far as possible, so that you do not get caught up in remedying every urgent situation. To spend life “firefighting” is a misuse of your “important” time.

## **Activity** **Finding Out How You Really Spend Your Time**

## **Logs**

### **How to Use Tool:**

Activity logs help you to analyze how you actually spend your time. The first time you use an activity log you may be shocked to see the amount of time that you waste! Memory is a very poor guide when it comes to this, as it can be too easy to forget time spent reading junk mail, talking to colleagues, making coffee, eating lunch, etc.

You may also be unaware that your energy levels may vary through the day. In fact, most people function at different levels of effectiveness at different times. Your effectiveness may vary depending on the amount of sugar in your blood, the length of time since you last took a break, routine distractions, stress, discomfort, or a range of other factors. There is also some good evidence that you have daily rhythms of alertness and energy.

### **Keeping an Activity Log**

Keeping an Activity Log for several days helps you to understand how you spend your time, and when you perform at your best. Without modifying your behavior any further than you have to, note down the things you do as you do them on this template. Every time you change activities, whether opening mail, working, making coffee, gossiping with colleagues or whatever, note down the time of the change.

As well as recording activities, note how you feel, whether alert, flat, tired, energetic, etc. Do this periodically throughout the day. You may decide to integrate your activity log with a stress diary.

### **Learning from Your Log**

Once you have logged your time for a few days, analyze the log. You may be alarmed to see the length of time you spend doing low value jobs!

You may also see that you are energetic in some parts of the day, and flat in other parts. A lot of this can depend on the rest breaks you take, the times and amounts you eat, and quality of your

nutrition. The activity log gives you some basis for experimenting with these variables.

### **Key points:**

Activity logs are useful tools for auditing the way that you use your time. They can also help you to track changes in your energy, alertness and effectiveness throughout the day.

By analyzing your activity log you will be able to identify and eliminate time-wasting or low-yield jobs. You will also know the times of day at which you are most effective, so that you can carry out your most important tasks during these times.

### **Key points:**

An Action Plan is a list of things that you need to do to achieve a goal. To use it, simply carry out each task in the list!

## **To-Do**

## **Lists**

**Your first step in beating work overload.**

### **How to Use Tool:**

Do you feel overwhelmed by the amount of work you have to do? Do you face a constant barrage of looming deadlines? And do you sometimes just forget to do something important, so that people have to chase you to get work done?

All of these are symptoms of not keeping a proper "To-Do List". To-Do Lists are prioritized lists of all the tasks that you need to carry out. They list everything that you have to do, with the most important tasks at the top of the list, and the least important tasks at the bottom. And starting to keep a To-Do List effectively is often the first personal productivity/time management breakthrough that people make as they start to make a success of their careers.

By keeping a To-Do List, you make sure that you capture all of the tasks you have to complete in one place. This is essential if you're not going to forget things. And by prioritizing work, you plan the order in which you'll do things, so you can tell what needs your immediate attention, and what you can quietly forget about until much, much later. This is essential if you're going to beat work overload. Without To-Do Lists, you'll seem dizzy, unfocused and unreliable to the people around you. With To-Do Lists, you'll be much better organized and much more reliable. This is very important!

Whilst To-Do Lists are very simple, they are also extremely powerful, both as a method of organizing yourself and as a way of reducing stress. Often problems may seem overwhelming or

you may have a seemingly huge number of demands on your time. This may leave you feeling out of control, and overburdened with work.

### Preparing a To-Do List

The solution is often simple: Firstly, download our To Do list template (you'll need to have Adobe Reader installed - [click here to get it free](#)).

Start by writing down the tasks that face you, and if they are large, break them down into their component elements. If these still seem large, break them down again. Do this until you have listed everything that you have to do, and until tasks are will take no more than 1 - 2 hours to complete.

Once you have done this, run through these jobs allocating priorities from A (very important) to F (unimportant). If too many tasks have a high priority, run through the list again and demote the less important ones. Once you have done this, rewrite the list in priority order.

You will then have a precise plan that you can use to eliminate the problems you face. You will be able to tackle these in order of importance. This allows you to separate important jobs from the many time-consuming trivial ones.

#### **Excel in Your Career, With MindTools.com...**

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### Using Your To-Do Lists

Different people use To-Do Lists in different ways in different situations: if you are in a sales-type role, a good way of motivating yourself is to keep your list relatively short and aim to complete it every day.

In an operational role, or if tasks are large or dependent on too many other people, then it may be better to keep one list and 'chip away' at it.

It may be that you carry unimportant jobs from one To-Do List to the next. You may not be able to complete some very low priority jobs for several months. Only worry about this if you need to - if you are running up against a deadline for them, raise their priority.

If you have not used To-Do Lists before, try them now: They are one of the keys to being really productive and efficient.

## Key points:

Prioritized To-Do Lists are fundamentally important to efficient work. If you use To-Do Lists, you will ensure that:

- You remember to carry out all necessary tasks
- You tackle the most important jobs first, and do not waste time on trivial tasks.
- You do not get stressed by a large number of unimportant jobs.

To draw up a Prioritized To-Do List, download our template and use it to list all the tasks you must carry out. Mark the importance of the task next to it, with a priority from A (very important) to F (unimportant). Redraft the list into this order of importance.

Now carry out the jobs at the top of the list first. These are the most important, most beneficial tasks to complete.

## Effective

**Plan your time. Make time for yourself.**

## Scheduling

### Introduction:

So far in this section of Mind Tools, we have looked at your priorities and your goals - these define what you aspire to do with your time. Scheduling is where these aspirations meet reality.

Scheduling is the process by which you look at the time available to you, and plan how you will use it to achieve the goals you have identified. By using a schedule properly, you can:

- Understand what you can realistically achieve with your time;
- Plan to make the best use of the time available;
- Leave enough time for things you absolutely must do;
- Preserve contingency time to handle 'the unexpected'; and
- Minimize stress by avoiding over-commitment to yourself and others.

A well thought-through schedule allows you to manage your commitments, while still leaving you time to do the things that are important to you. It is therefore your most important weapon for beating work overload.

### How to Use the Tool:

Scheduling is best done on a regular basis, for example at the start of every week or month. Go through the following steps in preparing your schedule:

1. Start by identifying the time you want to make available for your work. This will depend on the design of your job and on your personal goals in life.
2. Next, block in the actions you absolutely must take to do a good job. These will often be the things you are assessed against.

For example, if you manage people, then you must make time available for dealing with issues that arise, coaching, and supervision. Similarly, you must allow time to communicate with your boss and key people around you. (While people may let you get away with ‘neglecting them’ in the short-term, your best time management efforts will surely be derailed if you do not set aside time for those who are important in your life.)

3. Review your To Do List, and schedule in the high-priority urgent activities, as well as the essential maintenance tasks that cannot be delegated and cannot be avoided.
4. Next, block in appropriate contingency time. You will learn how much of this you need by experience. Normally, the more unpredictable your job, the more contingency time you need. The reality of many people’s work is of constant interruption: Studies show some managers getting an average of as little as six minutes uninterrupted work done at a time.

Obviously, you cannot tell when interruptions will occur. However, by leaving space in your schedule, you give yourself the flexibility to rearrange your schedule to react effectively to issues as they arise.

5. What you now have left is your “discretionary time”: the time available to deliver your priorities and achieve your goals. Review your Prioritized To Do List and personal goals, evaluate the time needed to achieve these actions, and schedule these in.

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By the time you reach step 5, you may find that you have little or no discretionary time available. If this is the case, then revisit the assumptions you used in the first four steps. Question whether things are absolutely necessary, whether they can be delegated, or whether they can be done in an abbreviated way.

Remember that one of the most important ways people learn to achieve success is by maximizing the ‘leverage’ they can achieve with their time. They increase the amount of work they can manage by delegating work to other people, spending money outsourcing key tasks, or using technology to automate as much of their work as possible. This frees them up to achieve their goals.

Also, use this as an opportunity to review your To Do List and Personal Goals. Have you set goals that just aren’t achievable with the time you have available? Are you taking on too many additional duties? Or are you treating

things as being more important than they really are?

### **Key points:**

An Action Plan is a list of things that you need to do to achieve a goal. To use it, simply carry out each task in the list!

### **To-Do**

### **Lists**

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Do you feel overwhelmed by the amount of work you have to do? Do you face a constant barrage of looming deadlines? And do you sometimes just forget to do something important, so that people have to chase you to get work done?

All of these are symptoms of not keeping a proper "To-Do List". To-Do Lists are prioritized lists of all the tasks that you need to carry out. They list everything that you have to do, with the most important tasks at the top of the list, and the least important tasks at the bottom. And starting to keep a To-Do List effectively is often the first personal productivity/time management breakthrough that people make as they start to make a success of their careers.

By keeping a To-Do List, you make sure that you capture all of the tasks you have to complete in one place. This is essential if you're not going to forget things. And by prioritizing work, you plan the order in which you'll do things, so you can tell what needs your immediate attention, and what you can quietly forget about until much, much later. This is essential if you're going to beat work overload. Without To-Do Lists, you'll seem dizzy, unfocused and unreliable to the people around you. With To-Do Lists, you'll be much better organized and much more reliable. This is very important!

Whilst To-Do Lists are very simple, they are also extremely powerful, both as a method of organizing yourself and as a way of reducing stress. Often problems may seem overwhelming or you may have a seemingly huge number of demands on your time. This may leave you feeling out of control, and overburdened with work.

### **Preparing a To-Do List**

The solution is often simple: Firstly, download our To Do list template (you'll need to have Adobe Reader installed - [click here to get it free](#)).

Start by writing down the tasks that face you, and if they are large, break them down into their component elements. If these still seem large, break them down again. Do this until you have

listed everything that you have to do, and until tasks are will take no more than 1 - 2 hours to complete.

Once you have done this, run through these jobs allocating priorities from A (very important) to F (unimportant). If too many tasks have a high priority, run through the list again and demote the less important ones. Once you have done this, rewrite the list in priority order.

You will then have a precise plan that you can use to eliminate the problems you face. You will be able to tackle these in order of importance. This allows you to separate important jobs from the many time-consuming trivial ones.

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### **Using Your To-Do Lists**

Different people use To-Do Lists in different ways in different situations: if you are in a sales-type role, a good way of motivating yourself is to keep your list relatively short and aim to complete it every day.

In an operational role, or if tasks are large or dependent on too many other people, then it may be better to keep one list and 'chip away' at it.

It may be that you carry unimportant jobs from one To-Do List to the next. You may not be able to complete some very low priority jobs for several months. Only worry about this if you need to - if you are running up against a deadline for them, raise their priority.

If you have not used To-Do Lists before, try them now: They are one of the keys to being really productive and efficient.

### **Key points:**

Prioritized To-Do Lists are fundamentally important to efficient work. If you use To-Do Lists, you will ensure that:

- You remember to carry out all necessary tasks
- You tackle the most important jobs first, and do not waste time on trivial tasks.
- You do not get stressed by a large number of unimportant jobs.



To draw up a Prioritized To-Do List, download our template and use it to list all the tasks you must carry out. Mark the importance of the task next to it, with a priority from A (very important) to F (unimportant). Redraft the list into this order of importance.

Now carry out the jobs at the top of the list first. These are the most important, most beneficial tasks to complete.

## **Effective**

**Plan your time. Make time for yourself.**

## **Scheduling**

### **Introduction:**

So far in this section of Mind Tools, we have looked at your priorities and your goals - these define what you aspire to do with your time. Scheduling is where these aspirations meet reality.

Scheduling is the process by which you look at the time available to you, and plan how you will use it to achieve the goals you have identified. By using a schedule properly, you can:

- Understand what you can realistically achieve with your time;
- Plan to make the best use of the time available;
- Leave enough time for things you absolutely must do;
- Preserve contingency time to handle 'the unexpected'; and
- Minimize stress by avoiding over-commitment to yourself and others.

A well thought-through schedule allows you to manage your commitments, while still leaving you time to do the things that are important to you. It is therefore your most important weapon for beating work overload.

### **How to Use the Tool:**

Scheduling is best done on a regular basis, for example at the start of every week or month. Go through the following steps in preparing your schedule:

6. Start by identifying the time you want to make available for your work. This will depend on the design of your job and on your personal goals in life.
7. Next, block in the actions you absolutely must take to do a good job. These will often be the things you are assessed against.

For example, if you manage people, then you must make time available for dealing with issues that arise, coaching, and supervision. Similarly, you must allow time to communicate with your boss and key people around you. (While people may let you get away with 'neglecting them' in the short-term, your best

time management efforts will surely be derailed if you do not set aside time for those who are important in your life.)

8. Review your To Do List, and schedule in the high-priority urgent activities, as well as the essential maintenance tasks that cannot be delegated and cannot be avoided.
9. Next, block in appropriate contingency time. You will learn how much of this you need by experience. Normally, the more unpredictable your job, the more contingency time you need. The reality of many people's work is of constant interruption: Studies show some managers getting an average of as little as six minutes uninterrupted work done at a time.

Obviously, you cannot tell when interruptions will occur. However, by leaving space in your schedule, you give yourself the flexibility to rearrange your schedule to react effectively to issues as they arise.

10. What you now have left is your "discretionary time": the time available to deliver your priorities and achieve your goals. Review your Prioritized To Do List and personal goals, evaluate the time needed to achieve these actions, and schedule these in.

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By the time you reach step 5, you may find that you have little or no discretionary time available. If this is the case, then revisit the assumptions you used in the first four steps. Question whether things are absolutely necessary, whether they can be delegated, or whether they can be done in an abbreviated way.

Remember that one of the most important ways people learn to achieve success is by maximizing the 'leverage' they can achieve with their time. They increase the amount of work they can manage by delegating work to other people, spending money outsourcing key tasks, or using technology to automate as much of their work as possible. This frees them up to achieve their goals.

Also, use this as an opportunity to review your To Do List and Personal Goals. Have you set goals that just aren't achievable with the time you have available? Are you taking on too many additional duties? Or are you treating things as being more important than they really are?

# TIME AUDIT

## SO WHERE DOES YOUR TIME GO?

Time is often equated with money, and just as we often find ourselves short of cash, we also find ourselves with short of time. To understand where your time goes, it is important to assess how you actually spend it. One way to do this is to keep simple operating records, and for this you will need a “yardstick” to evaluate your utilization of time. For this purpose, a schedule is included where you can record activities and accomplishments during a typical week, This should give you a start in observing your time usage more objectively. When you have completed this time chart, attempt to locate **your** time budgeting problems.

## Time Use Chart

Record everything you do during each half-hour period of a week that you choose. (You may even want to divide the blocks in 15 minute periods). At the end of a week, complete the Summary of Activities (you should also print a copy of this) to see how you spend your time.

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6:00 am							
6:30							
7:00							
7:30							
8:00							
8:30							
9:00							
9:30							
10:00							
10:30							
11:00							
11:30							
NOON							
12:30							
1:00							

<b>1:30</b>							
<b>2:00</b>							
<b>2:30</b>							
<b>3:00</b>							
<b>3:30</b>							
<b>4:00</b>							
<b>4:30</b>							
<b>5:00</b>							
<b>5:30</b>							
<b>Hours</b>	<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>	<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Sunday</b>
<b>6:00 pm</b>							
<b>6:30</b>							
<b>7:00</b>							
<b>7:30</b>							
<b>8:00</b>							
<b>8:30</b>							
<b>9:00</b>							
<b>9:30</b>							
<b>10:00</b>							
<b>10:30</b>							
<b>11:00</b>							
<b>11:30</b>							
<b>Midnight</b>							
<b>12:30</b>							
<b>1:00</b>							
<b>1:30</b>							
<b>2:00</b>							
<b>2:30</b>							
<b>3:00</b>							
<b>3:30</b>							
<b>4:00</b>							
<b>4:30</b>							
<b>5:00</b>							
<b>5:30</b>							

# SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES FOR THE TIME-USE CHART

Directions: At the end of the week, summarize your activities on the chart below. Once you evaluate where your time goes, print a copy of the Planned Weekly Schedule and fill it in with your course schedule, study time and other activities. Try to follow your schedule to improve your time use.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES										
ACTIVITY		MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	TOTAL	PERCENT*
<b>School Related</b>	<b>Class &amp; Lab</b>									
	<b>Study</b>									
	<b>Clubs &amp; Organizations</b>									
	<b>Total</b>									
<b>Work</b>										
<b>Personal</b>	<b>Social &amp; Recreational</b>									
	<b>TV &amp; Stereo</b>									
	<b>Total</b>									
<b>Health-related</b>	<b>Eating, Bathing, Exercise, etc.</b>									
	<b>Sleep</b>									
	<b>Total</b>									
<b>Travel</b>										
<b>Out-of-school Commitments</b>										
<b>Other</b>										
<b>Total Hours</b>		24	24	24	24	24	24	24	168	100

\*To determine percentage, divide the number of hours in an activity by 168. For example; 56 hours of sleep divided by 168 = 33.3%

## Evaluation of Time Use Summary

**NOW THAT YOU’VE SUMMARIZED YOUR TIME-USE CHART...**

This might be considered the “intermediate step” in the time-scheduling exercises. First, you were asked to keep track of how you SPENT your time. Later, you were asked to BUDGET your time. Now, you are asked to analyze your expenditures—so that an appropriate budget may be determined later. Respond to the following:

1. (Although it may be true that there is no such thing as the “typical” week in the life of a college student, for our purposes we will define “typical” as a situation in which YOU had control over what you did and when you did it, as opposed to a situation where demands were placed on you over which you could exercise little or no control.)

My Time-use chart appears to be \_\_\_\_typical \_\_\_\_not typical for me. If not typical, the reasons why include...

If this was not a typical week for you, make another Time-use chart and try charting the up-coming week.

2. SPECIFICALLY, what behavior changes, if any, will you need to make to bring your actual time schedule into agreement with what you think your ideal schedule should look like? Print a copy of the Planned Weekly Schdule and create your ideal schedule.

POSSIBLE PROBLEMS	POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS
Too much time spent PREPARING to study and not enough time actually STUDYING	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Determine the time of day when you are most alert and use that time for studying.</li> <li>2. Set realistic goals for amount of studying to be accomplished per day or week.</li> <li>3. Have ONE FIXED place for study.</li> </ol>
Lack of an adequate study plan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Schedule a set number of pages or chapters per study session.</li> <li>2. Know what you’re responsible for (ask the instructor or look at the syllabus).</li> </ol>
Difficulty in deciding WHAT to study WHEN	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Put the most uninteresting and/or difficult subject first on your study schedule.</li> <li>2. Schedule each of your classes into some study-time-slots during the week.</li> <li>3. Use times when you are most alert for</li> </ol>

	study.
Having to ask yourself, "What am I learning?"	Study to discover key concepts and main points. The details will only make sense once you have mastered the general ideas.

# Different Methods of Time Management

## ABC Method of Time Management

**Step #1:** Successful leaders in almost every field organize each day according to the priority assigned to the activities to be accomplished. Make sufficient copies of the **Daily Activity Guide** to insure a two-week supply, and use the form as an aid in planning each day's work.

**Step #2:** Beginning with tomorrow, write in the day of the week and begin listing the things that you need to do. Things that *must* be done this day are to be listed under "I Must Do!" Things that *should* be done this day, if possible, but could be postponed, if necessary, are to be listed under "I Should Do!" Things that *could* be done, if time permits, but may be delayed without penalty are to be listed under "I Could Do!"

**Step #3:** Repeat Step #2 each day for the next two weeks. At the end of each day, evaluate the day's accomplishments according to the following scale:

	A. "Must Do" <i>Completed</i>	B. "Should Do" <i>Completed</i>	C. "Could Do" <i>Completed</i>
Terrific	<i>All</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>All</i>
Very Good	<i>All</i>	<i>All</i>	$\frac{3}{4}+$
Good	<i>All</i>	$\frac{3}{4}+$	$\frac{1}{2}+$
Okay	$\frac{3}{4}+$	$\frac{1}{2}+$	$\frac{1}{4}+$
Bad	$\frac{1}{2}+$	$\frac{1}{4}+$	<i>None</i>
Very Bad	$\frac{1}{4}+$	<i>None</i>	<i>None</i>
Terrible	<i>None</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>None</i>

## The A-B-C Value Rating

This isn't rocket science, but it is helpful to assign high (A), medium (B), and low priority (C), to your activities. Why? Because it's easy to waste time doing low priority tasks—like cleaning your room the night before an exam.

- Ask yourself questions like: "What is important?" versus "What is urgent?" versus "What is both urgent and important?" If you have too many "A" tasks, you need to decide which is more important.
- Keep important tasks at the top of your to-do list; write them in red ink;



or keep the important task list on top of the less important task list.

- Break important tasks into manageable chunks. You may be able to accomplish something on one or another important task without having to do it all at once. See our To-Do List in the next section.
- Understand that doing less important tasks may be easier or more familiar or seem like you are getting things done, BUT may not count for much (a clean room won't get you an A in chemistry!).
- Important tasks are often difficult and anxiety provoking simply because of their importance. Once again, break them into manageable chunks, build your tolerance and skill, and reward yourself for staying on target.

## Fastfacts: Procrastination

### Introduction

Procrastination is probably the single most common time management problem. Everyone procrastinates to some extent; however, there are several reasons why university students rank highly among those most vulnerable to procrastination:

1. There is always a tremendous amount of work to do. Regardless of how much time you spend studying, it can seem impossible to get “finished.”
2. For most students, only a small number of hours each day are spent in classes and labs. The majority of time is unstructured, and you're responsible for deciding what to do and when to do it.
3. In the university environment, particularly in residence, there is usually something more enjoyable to do than studying. Many activities compete for a limited number of hours in a week; studying is often pushed to the bottom of the list.
4. Procrastination is common among high-achieving and high-ability students because of its connection to perfectionism.

Given these conditions, it's not hard to understand why procrastination is such a common problem for university students. Learning some strategies to control procrastination can help make getting started less painful and reduce getting behind. Good time management doesn't necessarily mean working harder or working more - it means working smarter. Here's how.

## **Strategy 1: Realistic Goal Setting**

One common reason for procrastinating is that often too much of the same activity must be done at one sitting. Rather than spending three hours in one evening reading fifty pages for Psychology, plan to read for one hour each day over three days. This is especially important for subjects which are difficult or unpleasant. If you spend thirty to sixty minutes each day, rather than leaving a week's work for one marathon session, you'll be far less likely to put the work off.

## **Strategy 2: Plan to Work, Plan to Play**

In the section above we've used the term "plan" - something which is usually missing from the procrastinator's vocabulary. If you use the "I do whatever I feel like doing whenever I feel like doing it" method of time management, this scenario is probably familiar to you: you can't work effectively because your mind is on the other things you'd rather be doing, yet you feel guilty when you're not working because there's so much waiting to be done.

Although there is something to be said for waiting for inspiration to strike, it is usually not a very efficient way to get things done. Planning does not mean rigid or elaborate scheduling, but it does require some skill and intelligent decision making. A good time plan is probably the single most effective way to control procrastination. For information about time planning, see the Fastfacts entitled *Effective Time Planning Strategies*, or check out *Learning Time*, our award-winning Web-based workshop on time management issues.

## **Strategy 3: The "Making a Molehill out of a Mountain" Method**

Procrastination often results when the task seems difficult, unpleasant, or overpowering. You can bring the task down to size and make it less intimidating by using this method. As soon as you receive a big assignment, set aside a mere 10 or 15 minutes a day to work on it. By the end of one week, you'll have spent at least an hour on the task, and you may have found that it's not quite as scary as you thought. By spending only a few minutes each day, you are accomplishing a small, and therefore less intimidating, task - one that is less likely to get put off. Once you are involved and maybe even interested in the task, you may be motivated to spend more time on it. Be cautious, however, since very large tasks such as a thesis require larger blocks of time. Manageable, daily periods of work are the key, while starting early helps to ensure that due dates will be met.

## **Strategy 4: Self Discipline?**

Students often blame their problems with procrastination on laziness or a lack of self discipline. However, the cause is usually not as simple as that. For example, there is an interesting connection between procrastination and perfectionism. Students for whom nothing less than an A will do may procrastinate on an assignment so that when their mark is not up to their standard, they can blame it on the fact that they did the assignment in a hurry. They create an emotional "out" - the low mark does not reflect their true ability, so there is no loss of self esteem.

Procrastination can sometimes be an indication of a fear of failure, or of disappointing family. Sometimes it is a symptom of a lack of motivation, the loss of a sense of purpose for being at university. In fact, there are many reasons why students procrastinate. The strategies in this Fastfacts can help with procrastination temporarily, but understanding why you procrastinate is essential for its long-term management. You can explore the connection between procrastination and other issues in more detail in *Learning Time*, our Web-based workshop mentioned under Strategy 2.

## **Strategy 5: Get Help**

The Learning Peer Helpers in the Learning Commons offer University of Guelph students free individual assistance and advice with controlling procrastination, time planning, and many other learning and study issues. Students can drop in, make an appointment, call ext. 53632 or e-mail. Visit the Learning Services Home Page to find out more about our programs, resources, and services.

## Fastfacts: Making a Task List

### Introduction

One of the basics of effective time management is to be aware of all that needs to be done. Though many people keep track of day-to-day activities in their heads, effective time managers facilitate planning and productivity by making a task list. If you develop the skill of listing tasks regularly, you'll benefit in several ways:

- You will be less likely to forget even minor tasks.
- You may procrastinate less when you have a realistic idea of the work that needs to be done, and the time available to do it.
- You'll have more flexibility when deciding what to do and when to do it because you determine which tasks have high priority.
- You'll have both a short- and long-range view of the work coming up.

### Step 1: List

The first step is to write down all the study related tasks that need to be done. For most students this is just an extension of what they're already doing. Almost everyone uses a calendar of some sort to jot down due dates and tests. The key differences are that you do it *regularly* - usually once a week works well - and that *all* the study tasks you have, everything from day-to-day readings to working on labs or major assignments, are put on the list.

### Step 2: Estimate

This second step is critical, but very few people do it. For each task on the list, estimate the amount of time it will take you to complete it. At first you may find this difficult, and your guesses may be way off. With practice, however, your accuracy will quickly increase. Major assignments which span several weeks may pose a problem, but by breaking the assignment down into steps, estimating becomes much easier. An essay, for example, could break down like this:

1. Choose preliminary topic and have it approved by instructor.
2. Do bibliographic search to make sure enough information is available on topic.
3. Finalize topic and do research.
4. Organize and categorize research material and create an outline.
5. Write rough copy.
6. Get feedback on rough copy and revise.
7. Edit, polish, and print good copy.
8. Do references and footnotes.

Estimate how long each step will take, and then total the estimations. Next, add a safety margin to the total. This “sanity zone” allows for all the unexpected things that can happen over the course of several weeks - everything from your getting sick to not finding a book you need in the library. Fifty percent over the initial estimate is commonly used, but the more experience you have, the less safety margin you’ll need.

Divide the new total by the number of weeks you have to do the assignment. For example:

Estimated time for assignment: 10 hours x 1.5 (sanity zone) = 15  
15 hours divided by 5 weeks to do assignment = 3 hours per week

You would then put 3 hours for this assignment on your task list for each of the next five weeks. If you need to compromise a few hours somewhere, assignment time is usually a safe choice if the due date is far enough away.

Although at first it may be wild guessing, estimating how long study tasks will take is one of the few ways of getting a realistic picture of how much work you really have to do.

### **Step 3: Prioritize**

The next step is to prioritize - decide what tasks are most important to do first and number them in rank order. Everyone has his or her own criteria for making these decisions - marks, due dates, required subjects, and majors usually figure prominently when priorities are set. Sometimes during the semester (particularly if you've been procrastinating) there will be more items on the list than can be realistically completed in a week. If time is tight you can delegate certain tasks (such as word processing) or postpone low priority items. Prioritizing forces you to weigh the importance of each item on the task list, and to make a conscious, thoughtful decision about what to do when.

## Step 4: Consult the Experts

Learning Services, part of the Learning Commons on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of the Library, is the best source on campus and online for information and advice on procrastination, time management, and other issues related to learning, studying, and academic performance.

- The Learning Peer Helpers in the Learning Commons provide information and advice on many learning- and study-related topics for University of Guelph students. They know first-hand the challenges that time management presents and draw on their own experience as successful students to help others. A Peer from your program or a similar one can discuss planning ideas and effective strategies relevant to your courses and workload. You can stop by during our drop-in hours or set up an appointment for yourself or a small group from your class, cluster, or floor. You can also email your questions to out all our programs and services.
- More detailed information on time management is available in *Time Management for University Students*, a Learning Commons publication. It costs \$9 and can be purchased at the Learning Commons or online.
- During the fall semester, you can also attend a free time management workshop or clinic. Visit the Learning Services Home Page for details on all our programs and services.
- *Learning Time* is an award-winning Web-based workshop which covers a range of time management topics, including concentration. It's a comprehensive compendium of information, strategies, suggestions, and advice designed to resolve the persistent or recurring time management issues commonly faced by experienced undergraduate and graduate university students. *Learning Time* is currently open and free to all visitors.

## Time Management Webshop

*Learning Time* is an award-winning, Web-based workshop on time management and related topics. It's a comprehensive compendium of information, strategies, suggestions, and advice designed to resolve the persistent or recurring time management issues commonly faced by experienced undergraduate and graduate university students.

*Learning Time* is currently open and free to all visitors.

## **Fastfacts: Making Time Management Work for You**

### **Introduction**

Following the steps for creating a time plan is really the easy part of time management. The challenge in effectively managing your time is the process of monitoring, analyzing, and revising your plan until it works. This Fastfacts will look at what may be required to make your chosen method of time management manageable.

### **Patience**

One of the most important things to keep in mind if you're struggling with time management is that effective planning is a skill that takes time to acquire, to practise, and to polish. One of the most common reasons students give up trying to manage time is that they assume that once a time plan has been drawn up, the process is complete. Some frustration is inevitable and even to be expected. At first it may seem that you're getting less done than before because planning and monitoring are time-consuming and distracting. But it's a good idea to iron out the bugs in your time plan at the beginning of the semester when the pressure and workload are at a minimum. The trial and error approach of trying out strategies, seeing them fail, and then trying something else are essential parts of the process. If you can endure the first few weeks, later in the semester you'll reap the benefits when you need them the most.

## Analysis

Another difficult aspect of time management is the fact that you have no one but yourself to monitor how effectively you are using your time. Self-monitoring is essential; you must be your own watchdog. No skill can improve without feedback, so set aside a few minutes each day to evaluate how your time plan is working. Whether tasks have been accomplished or not, figure out why. Have you simply over or underestimated how much can be done in a study session? Are you monitoring progress too much by interrupting your reading every few minutes to see how many pages are left before the end of the chapter? Your thoughtful analysis of the reasons why your time plan works or does not work is the key to the continuous improvement of your skills.

## Flexibility

Your time plan will be doomed if you assume that it is written in stone. Students are subject to all the same diseases, disasters, and distractions as the rest of the adult population, so cultivate the sensitivity to know when you're being productive and when you're beating your head against the wall, and take appropriate action. Don't stop writing your essay in the middle of a great idea because you only scheduled an hour for it. Learn effective procrastination - recognize when putting a task off and doing something else is an intelligent, conscious decision and when it is just procrastinating. Be gentle with yourself if you fall short of your expectations, but monitor any negative patterns that emerge and analyze their source. By expecting the unexpected and building flexibility into your time plan, you'll have a better chance of achieving your goals.

## Awareness

Time management and learning skills are often grouped together for a very good reason. To be successful at either, it is necessary to be strategic. This involves several steps. First, you plan - in this instance how you will use your time. Second, you monitor - is this working? Am I achieving what I planned to do? How am I enjoying this? How difficult is it? Third, you analyze - why did or didn't this plan work? If it did work, you look at



where or how else effective strategies can be used. If the plan didn't work, you develop new strategies and try them out. The common denominator of all these steps is awareness - of the importance of time management, of how you are using your time, of what works or doesn't work for you.

## **Information**

Learning to manage time is an ongoing process. The more aware you are of how other people use their time, the more quickly you will see and pick up new strategies. The bigger your repertoire of time management strategies, the easier it will be to adapt to new challenges, such as working around exams or a thesis, or the time management situations a full-time job and family life may bring. The moral here is keep your eyes open, listen when people talk about how time is used, and keep trying out new methods and techniques. The ability to manage time effectively is a very valuable asset to have in the working world. If you can master time management in the stressful, unstructured environment of the university, you can be confident of your ability to manage time in almost any situation after graduation.

## **Advice**

Sometimes it's helpful to speak to someone about your style and method of time management so that you can gather new ideas or discuss what's not working. The Learning Peer Helpers in the Learning Commons provide information, advice, and answers on time planning and many other learning- and study-related topics for University of Guelph students. A Peer from your program or a similar one can discuss planning ideas and effective strategies relevant to your courses and workload. You can stop by during our drop-in hours or set up an appointment for yourself or a small group from your class, cluster, or floor. You can also email your questions to [For the current semester's drop-in hours or to set up an appointment, call ext. 53632 or drop by the Learning Commons desk on the first floor of the Library. Visit the Learning Services Home Page to find out about all our programs and services.](#)

# Fastfacts: Effective Time Planning Strategies

## Introduction

One of the best methods of using time effectively and controlling procrastination is to plan when you will do specific study tasks. If you've been using the "I do what I feel like doing when I feel like doing it" method of time management and would like to reduce the stress, procrastination, and guilt that go with it, consider trying a flexible time plan like the one discussed below. Planning does not mean following a rigid, military-like schedule; rather, it means making intelligent decisions about when it is easiest and most efficient to get your work done. Time management means working smarter, not necessarily harder, and a good time plan is the key.

## Find Out What Time is Really Available

When only a relatively few hours each week are spent in classes and labs compared to high school, it is easy to misjudge the amount of time which is actually available for studying. By making a master timetable of your weekly activities, you can not only get a realistic picture of how many hours are actually free, you can also plan work periods around other activities which you consider important and don't want to sacrifice for studying.

Using a standard class schedule form, or something similar, make a timetable of all your activities which are the same each week. ( Download a .pdf version of Guelph's class schedule [here](#).) These activities include classes and labs, sleep, meals, travelling time, sports or fitness activities, part-time jobs, church activities, etc., but not study time. It is important to be realistic about how long these activities take. For example, leave seven to eight hours a night for sleep, even if you can get away with five or six, and give yourself an hour for lunch and supper, so you can relax, socialize, or run errands as well as eat. Once this master timetable is complete, make a copy for each week in the semester.

## List Study Tasks

Most people use some method of recording what they need to do, if nothing more than jotting due dates on a calendar. To plan your time more effectively, each week make a comprehensive list of study tasks which includes some time to work on major assignments. The tasks are then rank-ordered according to your priorities, and the amount of time needed to complete each task is estimated. These three important steps - list, prioritize, and estimate - are a key element in time management. For more information on these steps see the award-winning Fastfacts Making a Task List.

## Decide What to Do When

Each week, using your task list and a copy of your master timetable, decide when you will do each task. Tailor the amount of detail in your time plan to your individual strengths, habits, and preferences. Some students like to know what specific task they will be doing in each free hour. Others will list what needs to be done on a particular day, but not specify a time for each task. A few students can work successfully from a weekly list, but it's difficult not to procrastinate with this method because big, unpleasant, or overwhelming tasks almost always get pushed to the bottom of the list.

When making these conscious, intelligent decisions about what to do when, consider your body's natural highs and lows. Plan to do priority tasks when your energy is high and your concentration is at its best. Save shopping, housework, or physical activities for late in the afternoon or evening if, like many students, that's when you're normally tired.

When planning how to use large chunks of time, it's usually more efficient to alternate tasks or subjects, so that in a three-hour period, for example, you would spend one hour each on three different subjects, rather than a marathon three-hour session on just one. One hour is only an example and may be too much or not enough for some tasks - the "best" method is always what works best for you.

Plan frequent breaks, especially when you're under a lot of pressure. Your brain needs time to digest and process information; moreover, breaks relieve stress, help sustain motivation, and provide a transition period when switching subjects. The guideline is about ten minutes per hour of study.

Each day, include an hour of "flexible" time in your plan. Flex time has several important functions. If you underestimate the amount of time some task takes, flex time provides an extra hour to finish it without getting behind or sacrificing some other activity.

Procrastinators can use flex time to do work they've put off, or to reward themselves with sixty minutes of guilt free "do nothing" time when they haven't procrastinated.

## Consult the Experts

Learning Services, part of the Learning Commons on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of the Library, is the best source on campus and online for information and advice on procrastination, time management, and other issues related to learning, studying, and academic performance.

- The Learning Peer Helpers in the Learning Commons provide information, advice, and answers on time planning and many other learning- and study-related topics for University of Guelph students. They know first-hand the challenges that time management presents and draw on their own experience as successful students to help others. A Peer from your program or a similar one can discuss planning ideas and effective strategies relevant to your courses and workload. You can stop by during our drop-in hours or set up an appointment for yourself or a small group from your class, cluster, or floor. You can also email your questions to [learning@uoguelph.ca](mailto:learning@uoguelph.ca). For the current semester's drop-in hours or to set up an appointment, call ext. 53632 or drop by the Learning Commons desk on the first floor of the Library.
- More detailed information on time management is available in *Time Management for University Students*, a Learning Commons publication. It costs \$9 and can be purchased at the Learning Commons or online.
- During the fall semester, you can also attend a free time management workshop or clinic. Visit the Learning Services Home Page for details on all our programs and services.

## Other Fastfacts in this series:

- Controlling Procrastination
- Making a Tasklist which has won an award
- Making Time Management Work for You

## **Time Management Webshop**

*Learning Time* is an award-winning Web-based workshop on time management and related topics. It's a comprehensive compendium of information, strategies, suggestions, and advice designed to resolve the persistent or recurring time management issues commonly faced by experienced undergraduate and graduate university students.

*Learning Time* is currently open and free to all visitors.

# TIME SCHEDULING SUGGESTIONS

Time scheduling will not make you a perfectly efficient person. Very few people can rigorously keep a detailed schedule day after day over a long period of time. In fact, many students who draw up a study schedule and find themselves unable to stick to it become impatient and often give up the scheduling idea completely.

The following method of organizing time has been helpful to many students and does not take much time. It is more flexible than many methods and helps the student to establish long term, intermediate, and short term time goals.

## 1. Long Term Schedule

Construct a schedule of your fixed commitments only. These include only obligations you are required to meet every week, e.g., job hours, classes, church, organization meetings, etc.

## 2. Intermediate Schedule - One per week

Now make a short list of MAJOR EVENTS and AMOUNT OF WORK to be accomplished in each subject this week. This may include non-study activities. For example:

- Quiz Wednesday
- Paper Tuesday
- Ball game Tuesday night
- Finish 40 pages in English by Friday
- Finish 150 pages in History by Friday

These events will change from week to week and it is important to make a NEW LIST FOR EACH WEEK. Sunday night may be the most convenient time to do this.

## 3. Short Term Schedule - One per day

On a small note card each evening before retiring or early in the morning make out a specific daily schedule. Write down specifically WHAT is to be accomplished. Such a schedule might include:

## Wednesday

- 8:00 - 8:30 Review History
- 9:30 - 10:30 Preview Math and prepare for Quiz
- 4:45 Pick up cleaning on way home
- 7:00 - 10:15 Chpt. 5, 6 (History)
- 10:30 Phone calls

### Establish Short and Long Term Goals

Did you ever notice that people tell you how important it is to have goals, but never really say what they are or how to write them? That's because goals are really about who you are as a person (and, of course, they are different for everyone) and what you decide to do with your time and your life. You can't talk about goals without also talking about personal development, personal values, and your willingness to take control of your life (see the earlier section on getting organized).

OK, long term goals are simply a description of what you want for yourself in the future—say about 3 to 5 years out. The best way to define them is to give examples: graduate college, get a good job, find a life partner, get rich quick, etc... A goal is not a plan, it's more like a wish list with (hopefully) a basis in reality.

So, imagine yourself in the future: Where are you living? Where are you working? (Don't be afraid to take a risk!) What does your lifestyle look like?

Once you have some long term ideas, back up a few months, years or whatever, to establish intermediate and short term objectives. These are the beginnings of a plan! For example, maybe you see yourself as a Doctor, nice home, car, 2.5 kids, yada, yada, yada... That means that you have to graduate college..., get good grades..., pass chemistry..., go to class..., get up in the morning...

Use the example below to establish some goals for yourself. Think of the time frame involved, and try to identify concrete steps that you can take to achieve your goals.

### HOW COME I NEVER HAVE ENOUGH TIME?

Do you have trouble finding enough time to study? Do you frequently find yourself rushing to places, missing deadlines, feeling you have insufficient time for relaxation and personal relationships, or having a general sense of being overwhelmed? Do you realize that you probably have as many as 68 hours of available time each week?

Steve, like all other students in the world, has a 168 hour week (seven days x 24 hours). If he goes to bed at midnight and wakes up at 8:00 a.m., he is sleeping 56 hours a week, leaving 112 waking hours. Steve is taking 15 credits this semester and works 15 hours a week at his part-time job.

Combine those 30 hours with two hours a day for eating and personal care, and he still has 68 hours of available time a week. Even if he studies 30 hours a week, he still has a considerable amount of time left--38 hours—for other activities! That is, if Steve plans his time and uses it prudently.

The Social Sciences offer students two principles that can help them utilize their

time effectively. The first is efficiency, a term used in Industrial Psychology, which means the most output for the least input. In other words, students who plan and use their study schedule efficiently avoid wasting time and are able to get their work done with the minimum amount of time and discomfort.

Parkinson's Law, a term developed by a British historian from his lighthearted observations of politics, states that work expands to fill the time available. It is quite common for students to use a whole hour to complete an assignment that would only take a half hour with total concentration.

To become an efficient student who avoids the pitfalls of Parkinson's Law, Steve starts each week of classes by making a written schedule showing all the hours he is awake. He fills in the hours he spends in class and at work each day, including any travel time necessary. He then notes which hours comprise his 68 hours that are available for studying and entertainment.

Steve next makes a list of goals he wants to accomplish that week. Realizing that he needs to prioritize his list of goals, he fills in those activities that need to be completed by a specific deadline and then plugs in those that are less urgent. Steve estimates how much studying time he would like to devote to each of his classes on a daily basis in addition to making time available to study for tests or complete any projects he knows will be due. He also marks down scheduled social and recreational activities.

Since most students have not kept a schedule before, it would be best to overestimate the time needed for each activity in order to insure that there will be enough time to accomplish everything that is planned. This extra time would be used in case the student has underestimated the time needed or is interrupted while working.

It is very important to schedule in time to relax and have fun—for sports, friends, going out, or whatever you prefer to do with your free time. This plan will help you accomplish your goals and still allow plenty of leisure time if you follow your new schedule.

When planning your schedule, don't be discouraged at first if you don't complete everything you set out to do. Remember that you are trying something new and it will take some experience and revision, according to your own personal characteristics, to work out the schedule that best suits you.



It is important to get started organizing your time right away. Taking the first step causes much less stress and frustration than procrastinating.

Be kind to yourself. Accept when things don't go as planned, and learn how to adjust your schedule as needed. Be sure to allow sufficient time for entertainment, since a relaxed, happy student is more likely to be efficient and successful.

Finally, keep in mind that for most students there really is enough time! **WEEKLY TIME MANAGEMENT SCHEDULE**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Times Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat Sun

5:00 am

6:00 am

7:00 am

8:00 am

9:00 am

10:00 am

11:00 am

12:00 pm

1:00 pm

2:00 pm

3:00 pm

4:00 pm

5:00 pm

6:00 pm

7:00 pm

8:00 pm

9:00 pm

10:00 pm

11:00 pm

12:00 am

1:00 am

2::00 am

3:00 am

4:00 am

**How to Beat Procrastination**



"I know I should do it, but I just can't seem to get started."

"What a drag! I wish I didn't have to do this dumb job."

"Just one more video game - then I'll get going."

Sound familiar? Almost all of us procrastinate some of the time about some things. We all have our list of things we try to avoid doing (term papers, the laundry, studying for an exam, etc.). Putting off doing tasks we do not like is normal, but if procrastination gets out of hand, we end up wasting a lot of valuable time and energy.

Here are some suggestions on how to beat procrastination:

1. Recognize when you are procrastinating. Often we doodle, dawdle, daydream or otherwise side-track ourselves without realizing it. Become aware of your favorite procrastination tactics and learn to catch yourself as soon as you wander off.
2. Break inertia. Ever watch a freight train start to move? That first forward jolt takes the most energy; keeping the train rolling is much easier. Do some small things to get your task started (e.g., write the first sentence of the term paper). Then pace yourself. You'll probably find it's much easier to keep rolling along at a comfortable clip.
3. Divide your project into small, manageable pieces. Take one step at a time and don't worry about reaching the ultimate goal. Make use of small chunks of time. Writing a few lines of that paper before dinner may inspire you to return to the paper later.
4. Set reachable sub-goals that are specific. For instance, "Read 20 pages of Chapter 5 by 8:00 tonight," rather than "Do some studying later." This helps you gain a sense of accomplishment from having reached your goal.
5. Don't sabotage yourself. Set up your environment with as few distractions as possible. Face it, getting down to an unpleasant task is tough enough without giving yourself easy excuses to procrastinate. Arrange your work space just the way you like it, and work at times when you have peak energy.
6. Reward your non-procrastinating behavior. So you finally made a dent in that chore you've been putting off. Great! Give yourself a little something special as a reward.
7. Enjoy your freedom. When you complete an unpleasant task, take a moment to feel how nice it is to have it over and done with. No more nagging yourself to do the job, no more feeling like there's a weight on your shoulders. ENJOY!

Identify obstacles to time management

### **Over-scheduling**

So you still have not learned that it takes more time to get things done than you typically imagine...

- It may be a pain, but try the time estimates, time monitor exercise mentioned earlier.
- Review your priorities. People frequently get caught doing lower priority tasks in place of more important things (do you really need to clean your room today?).
- Frequently ask yourself, “What is the best use of my time right now?”

### **Over-accessability**

Everybody in Washington needs a personal assistant to screen their calls.

- How might you regulate traffic? Don’t answer the phone, close the door, use a “do not disturb” sign?
- Check your motivation: Are you trying to be all things to all people? Trying to be liked? Afraid to be disliked? What are your priorities? What is important?
- Try assertive communication: “I’d really like to go out with you tonight (or talk right now), but I really have to do the laundry (something else.)”

### **Tyranny of the urgent**

A ringing phone demands attention, so does a big test tomorrow. Both are urgent. Which is most important?

- Constantly running up against urgent tasks suggests that you may be having trouble budgeting your time, trouble identifying priorities, or suffering from procrastination issues.
- Delegate or ignore less important but urgent tasks.
- Truly important tasks require a time line from the due date, working back to the start, with a breakdown of sub-tasks. This helps to identify the “last minute” for each stage—so you can meet your over all project deadline. Try making this type of time line and budget extra time for unforeseen complications.

### **Distractability**

The beacon of attention (narrow, precise, focused, concentrated) requires enormous energy to sustain. It’s easier to let your mind wander, drift, or react to a variety of stimuli.

- Try building concentration with short, focused bursts of attention and effort. A good, ten minute effort, with short-term goals, can be very productive (short, intensive efforts help with boredom too!).
- Check your anxiety level. Is your distractability rooted in fear of failure? See the tense and nervous section of this site.

- Check your frustration tolerance. Are you struggling with a difficult task and need more time to learn? Try pacing yourself and get a tutor.

## **Procrastination**

Everybody procrastinates at one time or another, over one thing or another... The trick is knowing what you procrastinate over, how, and why. What do you procrastinate over the most? What time of day do you find yourself procrastinating? What is your favorite mode of procrastination? (TV, Internet, e-mail, housekeeping, etc.)

- Some things are easily put off because of their general insignificance or low relative value. Others are put off because of your own uncertainty about what to do or how to do it. Some are put off because they're extremely important or particularly difficult. Check your motivation.
- Some people fear failure because of the importance or difficulty of the task. Some fear success, because success leads to more demands. Some people resent authority and resist compliance out of hostility. Some people are perfectionists and refuse to try if they are not guaranteed a perfect outcome. Some have low frustration tolerance and don't want to be bothered. And finally, some people are just depressed, they have little energy for anybody or anything. Which of these sounds like you?
- If procrastination has become a serious problem for you, call the UCC at 994-5300, and ask to speak with a Counselor.

## **Fear of failure**

"Oh my god, oh my god! If I flunk this test, my parents will kill me! I'll never graduate! I'll never get a job! I'll be forced to drop out! I'll end up on the street! My whole life will be ruined!!!" Sound like you?

- Irrational "self-talk", that critical voice in your head, exaggerates stress, increases or decreases motivation, increases or decreases action, disrupts attention/concentration, decreases effectiveness, and ultimately provides an excuse for poor performance.
- What are you telling yourself? Does it motivate you or just make you anxious?
- Replace irrational self-talk with positive/realistic statements: "It's just a test. I know a fair amount of this material, I'll do OK, and besides, the test score may or may not measure the things that I learned in this class. This information may or may not contribute to my career performance. The only person that I have to satisfy truly is myself. Did I honestly make the effort that I wanted to make in this course? What can I do differently for the next time?"

## **Perfectionism**

If at first you don't succeed, why bother?

- Like other psychological obstacles to effective time management, perfectionism serves to inhibit action, avoid complications, escape anxiety, and ultimately

provides an excuse for poor performance... (“I didn’t really try, so it’s not a fair indicator of my ability.”) It reflects all-or-none thinking -anything less than an “A” feels like an “F”, so why bother?

- Check the underlying motivation for your perfectionism: Do any of the above apply to you? Are you trying to avoid action because of uncertainty or fear?
- Check the relative value of what you are trying to do. Some things are important enough to be done perfectly, but most might be satisfied with a “good enough” effort.

## **Depression**

Normal, everyday depression can last from a few hours to a few days. We’ve all felt it: being down or sad over a disappointment, failure, or loss. These feelings are a normal part of being human. But prolonged, persistent, negative mood which begins to color and interfere with your health, social well-being, and academic success, may need some sort of intervention/assistance or professional help.

- **Causes of Depression**  
Significant loss, disappointment, or failure. Loss of control over the environment or unrealistic expectations. Negative thinking about yourself or your life.
- **Emotional Symptoms**  
Sadness, anxiety, guilt, anger, mood swings, irritability, helplessness/hopelessness.
- **Physical Symptoms**  
Sleeping too much or too little, eating too much or too little, significant weight gain or loss, fatigue, low energy, loss of social/sexual pleasure.
- **Behavioral Symptoms**  
Crying easily, withdrawal, quick temper, loss of interest in one’s appearance, loss of interest in favorite activities or entertainments, increased use of alcohol or drugs.
- **Thoughts and Perceptual Symptoms**  
Feelings of failure, self-criticism, helplessness, hopelessness, resentment, excessive blaming of oneself or others, and pessimism about the future.
- **Overcoming Depression**  
The problem and the paradox of depression is that it takes energy and effort to overcome it. Be aware of the causes of your depression, check your self-statements and replace them with positive, realistic assessments. Get active socially, ask friends or roommates to help keep you on track. Eat well, cut back on caffeine, alcohol and sugar. Get some exercise. Volunteer or help someone else. Reawaken your interests and entertainments. Make a progress chart with small, reasonable goals and congratulate/reward yourself for your efforts. Be realistic about your skills, abilities and expectations; accept that you are different from others in this regard and may require a longer learning period.

**Make a To-Do List**

- Print out a copy of the Weekly Schedule that is part of this section of the site.
- Construct an overview for your upcoming week by writing in some of your higher priority tasks. (Refer to your completed "identify things to do" (PDF) exercise.)
- Remember your time estimates. Are you being realistic?
- Make your to-do list using the following guidelines. Be specific and break tasks into manageable chunks. Set priorities using the A-B-C value rating system.
- Your to-do list can be a daily plan or, like the one below, a running list of priorities for the week.

### To-Do List

A "to do list" is a technique to aid you in better organizing and defining the tasks you need to complete and to help you become more efficient.

Bad List	Good List
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• make a to-do list</li> <li>• study Chemistry</li> <li>• do lab report</li> <li>• go to bank</li> <li>• write English paper</li> <li>• buy birthday card for Grandmother</li> <li>• do laundry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (A) make a to-do list</li> <li>• (A) reread chapter 3 pp. 10-20</li> <li>• (A) reread chapter 3 pp. 21-30</li> <li>• (B) review lecture notes from 2/13, 2/15</li> <li>• (A) make flash cards of formulas</li> <li>• (A) outline lab report</li> <li>• (A) write lab report</li> <li>• (B) type lab report</li> <li>• (B) go to bank</li> <li>• (B) choose topic for English paper</li> <li>• (B) make an outline</li> <li>• look up sources in library</li> <li>• take notes on readings</li> <li>• rewrite paper/make corrections</li> <li>• type paper</li> <li>• buy birthday card for Grandmother</li> <li>• © do laundry</li> <li>• read history pp. 80-90</li> <li>• read history pp. 91-100</li> <li>• read history pp. 101-110</li> </ul>

### Additional tips to remember when making a list

- get into the habit of making your list every morning or every evening.
- be specific - define exactly what you have to do
- break your tasks into small steps - it leads to greater success
- ask yourself if it is feasible for you to complete all your A's during the day
- ask yourself if you will feel good about yourself if you complete all your A's for the day

# Time Scheduling

Being successful at the university level will probably require a more careful and effective utilization of time than the student has ever achieved before. He is typically scheduled for fifteen or more hours of classroom work per week, in addition, he is expected to average about two hours of preparation for each hour in the classroom. This means that he has at least a forty-five hour work week and is consequently involved in a full-time occupation! Many students find that this full-time job must be supplemented by other part-time jobs and/or family and social responsibilities which add a great deal more time. A common student complaint, therefore, is that there is just not enough time to go around.

The job of being a university student, like most other jobs, can be carried out either efficiently or inefficiently. The way we use time (or waste it) is largely a matter of habit patterns. One of the best techniques for developing more efficient habits of time use is to prepare a time schedule. Research psychologist and efficiency experts can produce impressive statistics demonstrating the efficiency of a well-organized time schedule. The work habits of people who have achieved outstanding success invariably show a well-designed pattern or schedule. When a person has several duties confronting him simultaneously he often will fail to do any of them. The purpose of scheduling is not to make a slave of the student, but to free him from the scholastic inefficiency and anxiety that is, at least partially, a function of wasted time, inadequate planning, hasty, last minute study, etc.

The most successful system for most students is to combine long-range and short-range planning. thus, a student can make a general schedule for an entire quarter and then prepare a more specific plan for two or three days a week at a time.

**LONG-RANGE SCHEDULE:** Some suggestions for developing a long-range strategy, such as a semester schedule.

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## **1. PLAN ENOUGH TIME FOR STUDY.**

The University expects a student to average about two hours in studying (including library work, term papers, themes, etc.) for each hour spent in the classroom. This is an appropriate and realistic guideline. A genuinely high ability student may get by adequately with less. However, many students would do well to plan for somewhat more than the two-for-one ratio.

## **2. STUDY AT THE SAME TIME EVERY DAY.**

In so far as possible, a student should schedule certain hours which are used for studying almost every day in a habitual, systematic way. Having regular hours at least five days a week will make it easier to habitually follow the schedule and to maintain an active approach to study.

## **3. MAKE USE OF THE FREE HOURS DURING THE SCHOOL DAY.**

The hours between classes are perhaps a student's most valuable study time yet, ironically, the most frequently misused. A student may effectively utilize these hours reviewing the material and editing the notes of the preceding class and/or studying the material to be discussed in the following class.

## **4. PLAN STUDY PERIODS TO FOLLOW CLASS PERIODS.**

This should be done whenever possible. The next best procedure is to schedule the period for study immediately preceding the class. A student should specify the particular course he will study rather than just marking "study" on his schedule.

## **5. SPACE STUDY PERIODS.**

Fifty to ninety minutes of study at a time for each course works best. Relaxation periods of ten or fifteen minutes should be scheduled between study periods. It is more efficient to study hard for a definite period of time, and then stop for a few minutes, than attempt to study on indefinitely.



## **6. PLAN FOR WEEKLY REVIEWS.**

At least one hour each week for each class (distinct from study time) should be scheduled. The weekend is a good time for review.

## **7. LEAVE SOME UNSCHEDULED TIME FOR FLEXIBILITY.**

This is important! Lack of flexibility is the major reason why schedules fail. Students tend to over-schedule themselves.

## **8. ALLOT TIME FOR PLANNED RECREATION, CAMPUS AND CHURCH ACTIVITIES, ETC.**

When a student plans his schedule, he should begin by listing the activities that come at fixed hours and cannot be changed. Classes and laboratories, eating in the dorm dining hall, sleep, and work for money are examples of time uses which the student typically cannot alter. Next, he can schedule his flexible time commitments. These hours can be interchanged with other hours if he finds that his schedule must be changed during the week. Recreational activities are planned last.

When forced to deviate from his planned schedule (and that will invariably occur), the student should trade time rather than steal it from his schedule. Thus, if he has an unexpected visitor at a time he has reserved for study, he can substitute an equal amount of study time for the period he had set aside for recreation.

### **NO ONE CAN BE PERFECT**

Jimmy Student started working on his paper the day it was assigned. It was due in two weeks. A day didn't go by during those two weeks when he didn't work on it. He wrote and rewrote, typed and retyped. Actually, he finished it in a week, but tore up the final copy and started again.

The day before it was due, he began to feel real anxious because he was still not satisfied. He didn't sleep well that night because he knew, like it or not, he was going to have to hand it in.

His heart sank a week later when he got the paper back. The professor wrote "Good Paper" and graded it B+. Ruefully, Jimmy said to himself, "I knew it was a lousy paper. I shouldn't have even bothered handing it in."

He didn't even notice the professor's comment. The only thing that registered was that it wasn't graded A+. For all he cared, it could have been graded C or D or F. It was all the same; anything less than A+ was a failure.

Jimmy is a perfectionist in the extreme and nothing short of perfection satisfies him. Jimmy never learned that even when you try your best at something you may not come out on top of everybody. He never learned that nobody—not even the most powerful, the most beloved, and yes, even the most learned in this world—is perfect.

Perfectionists are extremists; everything is all or none, and this can take a heavy toll on their lives. They can become so obsessed with achieving the perfect grade, or job, or mate, or car, or even a seat at the movies, that they miss out on much of life and the meaningful satisfactions that life affords us.

Maybe, somehow, they've been made to feel that they can only be liked or loved through their accomplishments and that if they come out second best once in a while they'll lose everyone's respect and love.

Perfectionists are chasing an impossible dream. They'll never find a relationship where there's never any discord or disappointment, where peace, love and harmony always prevail, where every sexual encounter is perfectly exquisite and only a "Perfect 10" is worth bothering with.

They are doomed to lifelong disappointment and feelings of failure, even those who are indeed skilled or bright or beautiful. As time goes on, they become less productive, and less successful in their work and their relationships. They become procrastinators; they "lose the forest for the trees," and they become very unpleasant people to be around.

We know we won't die, or starve, or be ridiculed or rejected if we don't come out on top every time. We know we can find pleasure and joy in life without a "Perfect 10." We know how good it feels when we give something our best shot and let it go at that.

**So go out and give some perfectionists a hug, just for the hell of it. Let them**

know they're O.K. and that trying their best is the best.

# Overcoming Procrastination

## Introduction

William Knaus, a psychologist, estimated that 90% of college students procrastinate. Of these students, 25% are chronic procrastinators and they are usually the ones who end up dropping out of college.

## What is Procrastination?

Procrastination is the avoidance of doing a task which needs to be accomplished. This can lead to feelings of guilt, inadequacy, depression and self-doubt among students. Procrastination has a high potential for painful consequences. It interferes with the academic and personal success of students.

## Why do Students Procrastinate?

- **Poor Time Management.** Procrastination means not managing time wisely. You may be uncertain of your priorities, goals and objectives. You may also be overwhelmed with the task. As a result, you keep putting off your academic assignments for a later date, or spending a great deal of time with your friends and social activities, or worrying about your upcoming examination, class project and papers rather than completing them.
- **Difficulty Concentrating.** When you sit at your desk you find yourself daydreaming, staring into space, looking at pictures of your boyfriend/girlfriend, etc., instead of doing the task. Your environment is distracting and noisy. You keep running back and forth for equipment such as pencils, erasers, dictionary, etc. Your desk is cluttered and unorganized and sometimes you sit/lay on your bed to study or do your assignments. You probably notice that all of the examples that you have just read promote time wasting and frustration.
- **Fear and Anxiety.** You may be overwhelmed with the task and afraid of getting a failing grade. As a result, you spend a great deal of time worrying about your upcoming exams, papers and projects, rather than completing them.
- **Negative Beliefs** such as; “I cannot succeed in anything” and “I lack the necessary skills to perform the task” may allow you to stop yourself from getting work done.
- **Personal problems.** For example, financial difficulties, problems with your boyfriend/girlfriend, etc.
- **Finding the Task Boring.**
- **Unrealistic Expectations and Perfectionism.** You may believe that you **MUST** read everything ever written on a subject before you can begin to write your paper. You may think that you haven't done the best you possibly could do, so it's not good enough to hand in.
- **Fear of Failure.** You may think that if you don't get an 'A', you are failure. Or that if you fail an exam, you, as a person, are a failure, rather than that you are a perfectly ok person who has failed an exam.

## **How to Overcome Procrastination**

- Recognize self-defeating problems such as; fear and anxiety, difficulty concentrating, poor time management, indecisiveness and perfectionism.
- Identify your own goals, strengths and weaknesses, values and priorities.
- Compare your actions with the values you feel you have. Are your values consistent with your actions?
- Discipline yourself to use time wisely: Set priorities.
- Study in small blocks instead of long time periods. For example, you will accomplish more if you study/work in 60 minute blocks and take frequent 10 minute breaks in between, than if you study/work for 2-3 hours straight, with no breaks. Reward yourself after you complete a task.
- Motivate yourself to study: Dwell on success, not on failure. Try to study in small groups. Break large assignments into small tasks. Keep a reminder schedule and checklist.
- Set realistic goals.
- Modify your environment: Eliminate or minimize noise/ distraction. Ensure adequate lighting. Have necessary equipment at hand. Don't waste time going back and forth to get things. Don't get too comfortable when studying. A desk and straight-backed chair is usually best (a bed is no place to study). Be neat! Take a few minutes to straighten your desk. This can help to reduce day-dreaming.

## Perfectionism

- Do you feel like what you accomplish is never quite good enough?
- Do you often put off turning in papers or projects, waiting to get them just right?
- Do you feel you must give more than 100 percent on everything you do or else you will be mediocre or even a failure?

If so, rather than simply working toward success, you may in fact be trying to be perfect. Perfectionism refers to a set of self-defeating thoughts and behaviors aimed at reaching excessively high unrealistic goals. Perfectionism is often mistakenly seen in our society as desirable or even necessary for success. However, recent studies have shown that perfectionistic attitudes actually interfere with success. The desire to be perfect can both rob you of a sense of personal satisfaction and cause you to fail to achieve as much as

people who have more realistic strivings.

## **Causes of Perfectionism**

If you are a perfectionist, it is likely that you learned early in life that other people valued you because of how much you accomplished or achieved. As a result you may have learned to value yourself only on the basis of other people's approval. Thus your self-esteem may have come to be based primarily on external standards. This can leave you vulnerable and excessively sensitive to the opinions and criticism of others. In attempting to protect yourself from such criticism, you may decide

that being perfect is  
your only defense.

A number of the  
following negative  
feelings, thoughts,  
and beliefs may be  
associated with  
perfectionism:

- Fear of failure. Perfectionists often equate failure to achieve their goals with a lack of personal worth or value.
- Fear of making mistakes. Perfectionists often equate mistakes with failure. In orienting their lives around avoiding mistakes, perfectionists miss opportunities to learn and grow.
- Fear of disapproval. If they let others see their flaws, perfectionists often fear that they will no longer be accepted. Trying to be perfect is a way of trying to protect themselves from criticism, rejection, and disapproval.
- All-or-none thinking. Perfectionists frequently believe that they are worthless if their accomplishments are not perfect. Perfectionists have difficulty seeing situations in perspective. For example, a straight "A" student who receives a "B" might believe, "I am a total failure."
- Overemphasis on "shoulds." Perfectionists' lives are often structured by an endless list of "shoulds" that serve as rigid rules for how their lives must be led. With such an overemphasis on shoulds, perfectionists rarely take into account their own wants and desires.
- Believing that others are easily successful. Perfectionists tend to perceive others as achieving success with a minimum of effort, few errors, emotional stress, and maximum self-confidence. At the same time, perfectionists view their own efforts as unending and forever inadequate.

### **The Vicious Cycle of Perfectionism**

Perfectionistic attitudes set in motion a vicious cycle. First, perfectionists set unreachable goals. Second, they fail to meet these goals because the goals were impossible to begin with. Failure to reach them was thus inevitable. Third, the constant pressure to achieve perfection and the inevitable chronic failure reduce productivity and effectiveness. Fourth, this cycle leads perfectionists to be self-critical and self-blaming which results in lower self-esteem. It may also lead to anxiety and depression. At this point perfectionists may give up completely on their goals and set different goals thinking, "This time if only I try harder I will succeed." Such thinking sets the entire cycle in motion again.

This vicious cycle can be illustrated by looking at a way in which perfectionists often deal with interpersonal relationships.

Perfectionists tend to anticipate or fear disapproval and rejection from those around them. Given such fear, perfectionists may react defensively to criticism and in doing so frustrate and alienate others. Without realizing it, perfectionists may also apply their unrealistically high standards to others, becoming critical and demanding of them. Furthermore, perfectionists may avoid letting others see their mistakes, not realizing that self-disclosure allows others to perceive them as more human and



thus more likeable.  
Because of this  
vicious cycle  
perfectionists often  
have difficulty  
being close to  
people and  
therefore have less  
than satisfactory  
interpersonal  
relationships.

### **Healthy Striving**

Healthy goal setting  
and striving are  
quite different from  
the self-defeating  
process of  
perfectionism.  
Healthy strivers  
tend to set goals  
based on their own  
wants and desires  
rather than  
primarily in  
response to  
external  
expectations. Their  
goals are usually  
just one step  
beyond what they  
have already  
accomplished. In  
other words, their  
goals are realistic,

internal, and potentially attainable. Healthy strivers take pleasure in the process of pursuing the task at hand rather than focusing only on the end result. When they experience disapproval or failure, their reactions are generally limited to specific situations rather than generalized to their entire self-worth.

### **What to do About Perfectionism**

The first step in changing from perfectionistic attitudes to healthy striving is to realize that perfectionism is undesirable. Perfection is an illusion that is unattainable. The next step is to

challenge the self-defeating thoughts and behaviors that fuel perfectionism.

Some of the following strategies may help:

- Set realistic and reachable goals based on your own wants and needs and what you have accomplished in the past. This will enable you to achieve and also will lead to a greater sense of self-esteem.
- Set subsequent goals in a sequential manner. As you reach a goal, set your next goal one level beyond your present level of accomplishment.
- Experiment with your standards for success. Choose any activity and instead of aiming for 100 percent, try for 90 percent, 80 percent, or even 60 percent success. This will help you to realize that the world does not end when you are not perfect.
- Focus on the process of doing an activity not just on the end result. Evaluate your success not only in terms of what you accomplished but also in terms of how much you enjoyed the task. Recognize that there can be value in the process of pursuing a goal.
- Use feelings of anxiety and depression as opportunities to ask yourself, "Have I set up impossible expectations for myself in this situation?"
- Confront the fears that may be behind your perfectionism by asking yourself, "What am I afraid of? What is the worst thing that could happen?"
- Recognize that many positive things can only be learned by making mistakes. When you make a mistake ask, "What can I learn from this experience?" More specifically, think of a recent mistake you have made and list all the things you can learn from it.
- Avoid all-or-none thinking in relation to your goals. Learn to discriminate the tasks you want to give high priority to from those tasks that are less important to you. On less important tasks, choose to put forth less effort. Once you have tried these suggestions, you are likely to realize that perfectionism is not a helpful or necessary influence in your life. There are alternative ways to think that are more beneficial. Not only are you likely to achieve more without your perfectionism, but you will feel better about yourself in the process.

## **What is Perfectionism?**

**Perfectionism is not a healthy pursuit of excellence.**

Perfectionism is not a healthy pursuit of excellence. There are big differences between perfectionists and healthy achievers. Perfectionists believe that mistakes must never be made and that the highest standards of performance

must always be achieved.

Those who strive for excellence in a healthy way take genuine pleasure in trying to meet high standards. Perfectionists on the other hand are full of self-doubts and fears of disapproval, ridicule and rejection. The healthy striver has drive, while the perfectionist is driven.

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### Perfectionist versus Healthy Striver

Perfectionist	Healthy Striver
Sets standards beyond reach and reason	Sets high standards, but just beyond reach
Is never satisfied by anything less than perfection	Enjoys process as well as outcome
Becomes dysfunctionally depressed when experiences failure and disappointment	Bounces back from failure and disappointment quickly and with energy
Is preoccupied with fear of failure and disapproval—this can deplete energy levels	Keeps normal anxiety and fear of failure and disapproval within bounds—uses them to create energy
Sees mistakes as evidence of unworthiness	Sees mistakes as opportunities for growth and learning
Becomes overly defensive when criticized	Reacts positively to helpful criticism

### Costs of Perfectionism

Perfectionism takes a great toll. Perfectionists are likely to experience decreased productivity, impaired health, troubled interpersonal relationships, and low self-esteem. Perfectionists are vulnerable to:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Depression</li><li>• Performance anxiety</li><li>• Test anxiety</li><li>• Social anxiety</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Compulsiveness</li><li>• Suicidal thoughts</li><li>• Loneliness</li><li>• Impatience</li></ul>
--	--

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Writer's block</li><li>• Obsessiveness</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Frustration</li><li>• Anger</li></ul> |
|--|---|

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## Perfectionism: Myths and Realities

Sometimes it's hard to distinguish motivation for healthy achievement from unhealthy perfectionism, and sometimes we make the distinction even harder by holding on to myths about perfectionism. This makes life a good deal more difficult than need be. Below are common myths about perfectionism.

**MYTH:** I wouldn't be the success I am today if I weren't such a perfectionist.

**REALITY:** Perfectionism does not lead to success and fulfillment. Although some perfectionists are remarkably successful, what they fail to realize is that their success has been achieved despite-not because of-their compulsive striving.

There is no evidence that perfectionists are more successful than their non-perfectionistic counterparts. There is evidence that given similar levels of talent, skill or intellect, perfectionists perform less successfully than non-perfectionists.

**MYTH:** Perfectionists get things done and they do things right.

**REALITY:** Perfectionists often have problems with procrastination, missed deadlines, and low productivity.

Psychologists find that perfectionists tend to be "all-or-nothing" thinkers. They see events and experiences as either good or bad, perfect or imperfect, with nothing in between. Such thinking often leads to procrastination, because a requirement of flawless perfection, in even the smallest of tasks, can become fearfully overwhelming. The perfectionist believes that the flawless product or superb performance must be produced every time. Perfectionists believe if it can't be done perfectly, it's not worth doing.

Such beliefs often lead to undesired results. A perfectionist student may turn in a paper weeks late (or not at all), rather than turn it in on time with less-than-perfect sentences. A perfectionist worker may spend so much time agonizing over some non-critical detail that a critical project misses its deadline.

**MYTH:** Perfectionists are determined to overcome all obstacles to success.

**REALITY:** Although perfectionists follow an “I’ll-keep-trying-until-it’s-perfect” credo, they are especially vulnerable to potentially serious difficulties such as depression, writer’s block, and performance and social anxiety.

These internal blocks to productivity, achievement, and success result from the perfectionist’s focus on end-products. Instead of concentrating on the process of accomplishing a task, perfectionists focus exclusively on the outcome of their efforts. Far from an asset, this relentless pursuit of the ultimate goal becomes the perfectionist’s greatest liability; the resultant sense of overwhelming anxiety often sabotages the perfectionist’s efforts.

**MYTH:** Perfectionists just have this enormous desire to please others and to be the very best they can.

**REALITY:** Perfectionistic tendencies often begin as an attempt to win love, acceptance, and approval.

Perfectionists are driven by low self-esteem, so their own needs ultimately blind them to the needs and wishes of others. Indeed, their compulsiveness may lead others to beg for a change that the perfectionist cannot or will not make. Perfectionism is more likely to complicate than enhance one’s relationships.

The “perfect human” is as appealing and mythical a concept as the unicorn. Many of our greatest endeavors are indeed accomplished while striving to perfect ourselves. Great achievers, like perfectionists, want to be and do better; unlike perfectionists, they are willing to make mistakes and risk failure. Great achievers recognize mistakes, failure, and general imperfection as part of the reality of being human.

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## Coping Strategies

Overcoming perfectionism requires courage, for it means accepting our imperfections and humanness. Here are several strategies that will help replace perfectionistic habits with healthier, more satisfying behavior patterns.

### **1. Make a list of the advantages and disadvantages of trying to be perfect.**

When you make your own list of costs and benefits, you may find that the costs are too great. You may discover that problems with relationships, excessive workaholism, eating and substance abuse problems, and other compulsive behaviors (plus the accompanying anxiety, nervousness, feelings of inadequacy, self-criticism, and so on) actually

outweigh whatever advantages perfectionism holds for you.

**2. Increase your awareness of the self-critical nature of your all-or-nothing thoughts, and how they extend to other people in your life.**

Learn to substitute more realistic, reasonable thoughts for your habitually critical ones. When you find yourself berating a less-than-perfect performance, whether your own or someone else's, force yourself to look at and acknowledge the good parts of that performance. Then ask yourself questions like these: Is it really as bad as I feel it is? How do other people see it? Is it a reasonably good performance for the person(s) and circumstances involved?

**3. Be realistic about what you can do.**

By setting more realistic goals, you will gradually realize that "imperfect" results do not lead to the punitive consequences you expect and fear. Suppose you swim laps every day, not as athletic training, but for relaxation and exercise. You set yourself the goal of 20 laps, and you can barely swim 15. If you are perfectionistic, you soon feel disappointed at your poor performance and anxious about improving it. You may even give up swimming because you're not "good enough."

Suppose that instead you tell yourself 15 laps is good enough for now. You accept the possibility that you may never be able to swim 20 laps easily, if at all. So you continue swimming without anxiety. You don't necessarily stop trying to improve, but you swim for fun and exercise and relaxation-for however many laps you can. Perfectionists often miss out on fun, relaxation and satisfaction.

**4. Set strict time limits on each of your projects. When the time is up, move on: attend to another activity.**

This technique reduces the procrastination that typically results from perfectionism. Suppose you must find references for a term paper and also study for an exam. Set time limits. For example: Decide that you will spend only 3 hours looking up references, then only 3 more hours studying for the test. If you stick to your time limits, you won't spend the entire day searching for elusive references, nor try to study late at night when you are too tired to be effective.

**5. Learn how to deal with criticism.**

Perfectionists often view criticism as a personal attack, responding to it defensively. Concentrate on being more objective about the criticism, and about yourself. If someone criticizes you for making a mistake, acknowledge the mistake and assert your right to make mistakes.

Remind that person and yourself that if you stop making mistakes, you also stop learning and growing. Once you no

longer buy into the fallacy that humans must be perfect to be worthwhile, you won't feel so angry or defensive when you make a mistake. Criticism will then seem like a natural thing from which to learn, rather than something to be avoided at all costs.



# Time Management

## Introduction

- There's no such thing as time management! So why should you read the rest of this handout? Because there is such a thing as self management and that's the key to making time your ally rather than your enemy.
- There are only 24 hours in your day, just the same as everybody else's. So how do you end up frustrated, angry, behind in your work, and dead on your feet? Maybe because you don't know how to use those 24 hours to your advantage.

## Step #1

- If using your time wisely is a problem for you, you probably don't have a very good idea of where it all goes. It just seems to go! A good place to start, then, is to keep track of how you use your time. Get a Weekly schedule (available in the Learning Skills corner of the Counseling and Testing Center's Career Library) and faithfully keep track of how you use your waking hours for one week. The results will probably surprise you.

## Step #2

- The next step is to pick up several more of these Weekly Schedules and do some planning. You'll discover, among other things, that if you get seven hours sleep a night, you have 119 hours per week to do everything you need to do. That, of course, includes going to class, eating, athletic events, social activities, personal hygiene, time-in-transit, studying, student organizations, telephone and TV time, etc. Be sure to schedule time for all these in your 119 hours. Then try sticking to your schedule for a week. This should give you a good idea of where your real priorities are!

## Procrastination

- If you have trouble, chances are there's a culprit lurking somewhere, dodging your every move. Chances are this culprit's name is Procrastination. Procrastination masquerades in a million disguises. Among the more common of these are:
  - "One more day won't make any difference; I'll just put that off until tomorrow."
  - "It won't matter if I'm a few minutes late; no one else will be on time."
  - "I can't start on this paper until I know just how I want the first paragraph to read."
  - "I work best under pressure."
  - "I'll watch just 15 more minutes of TV."
  - Fill in the blank: "\_\_\_\_\_."

## Interruptions

- Learn to say NO once your priorities are set. Turning down an invitation doesn't mean you'll never be asked to do something again. Weigh the consequences. Making a decision based on what you know is best for you at the time, leads to greater respect from your friends, not to a reputation as a party-pooper.
- Stay away from the telephone when you're trying to get work done. If it's really important, they'll call back.

### **Schedule / Plan Ahead**

- Use a monthly calendar to help you allocate your study time on the Weekly Schedule. At the beginning of each quarter, spend an hour with your calendar to enter all important dates. As you receive course syllabi, enter the dates for quizzes, papers, etc., on your calendar. Then estimate the time needed to prepare for each of these. If your history paper is due the eighth week of the quarter and it usually takes you four weeks to do a paper, start work on the paper the second week of the quarter, allowing yourself an extra week for typing and an extra week for disaster. If you stick to this schedule, you'll amaze yourself by having the paper finished in the seventh week. The rule-of-thumb is "Plan ahead by working backwards."
- By counting backwards like this, you'll be surprised how well you're using your time and how much better your grade will be when you're not under pressure. And, by being really honest with yourself and taking account of all your priorities, you'll be able to go to the football game and not feel guilty.
- At the start of each week, transfer important items from your calendar to your Weekly Schedule. This helps you to avoid things that might otherwise sneak up on you.
- Be sure to schedule time for your fitness routine and for study breaks. Your brain works best when it has sufficient oxygen. Your concentration is enhanced when you go hard at a task until you feel yourself fading. Then Break! A good rule-of-thumb is to work for 45 minutes and then break for 15. But watch yourself! More than 15 minutes is more than a break!

### **Conclusion**

- Suggestions such as these don't lead to enslavement by a calendar. It may sound awful, especially if you're a skilled time mismanager. But it actually leads to a greater sense of freedom and accomplishment because you're in control. That's all self-management is—managing your life more effectively. By following these suggestions, you'll be happier, more satisfied, and more productive. Try it—you'll like it!

- One last thing: WEAR A WATCH!

Managing your time  
successfully implies  
accomplishing what  
is most important  
for you. When you

don't accomplish what you truly want, you may feel confused, compromised, and frustrated. Many people try to use time management techniques that work for others, only to be disappointed. Often this is because they don't also identify the goals most important to them and gear the techniques toward those goals. Effective time management must include techniques for good prioritizing.

### **Myths About Time Management**

Before exploring specific time-management techniques, consider several common myths which contribute to poor time

management,  
especially  
undermining your  
efforts to establish  
and follow your  
priorities:

**MYTH:** My life is  
completely  
controlled by  
external events.

**FACT:** You can  
have some control  
over many aspects  
of your life, but you  
and you alone are  
responsible for  
initiating that  
control. Learn to  
recognize what you  
can and can't  
control before  
making your  
choices. Anticipate  
the future and  
clarify the external  
demands that must  
be faced. From  
there, it is easier to  
determine what can  
be done, and within  
what time frame,  
despite the  
demands.

**MYTH:** I should meet everyone's expectations.

**FACT:** The needs and demands of others may be inappropriate for you and your lifestyle. They may be poorly timed, highly questionable, or simply unattainable. They may be of a different priority than your own. By trying to meet the expectations of others, you may be shortchanging yourself and your needs. First become clear about what your needs are and then you consider what others expect of you.

**MYTH:** I should have no limits.

**FACT:** We all have limits . . . failure to acknowledge this may cause you to

become perfectionistic in your expectations. Perfectionists are especially prone to procrastination because the perfection they demand is impossible. For example, no paper will ever be perfect in all ways. The immediate consequence of turning in an imperfect paper may be brief, acute anxiety, but the long-term consequences of procrastination—e.g., inconveniences, academic or career losses and lingering self doubts—are usually more devastating.

### **Specific Techniques**

While it is important to develop your own

style for managing your time and work, consider how the following techniques might help you.

**FIRST, STACK THE CARDS IN YOUR FAVOR. For example:**

- **Use your biological rhythms to your advantage.**

Identify the times of day when your energy levels are at their highest and do your most important work at those times. For example, if you work best in the morning, do not plan all your studying for the evening.

- **Optimize your work environment.**

Keep things you need in your work area and make sure

the physical environment is conducive to concentration, not just comfort. You may need to experiment to determine the right work environment. For example, some work best in a quiet setting while others work best with background music; some work best amidst clutter, while others need a cleared desk or table; some work best at a place reserved only for study while others work best at the kitchen table; etc. Find what works best for you!

- **Safeguard blocks of work time.** Protect your time by saying “no” to various interruptions, activities, requests, or persons. Interruptions are a



two-fold problem:  
the interruption  
itself, and the  
expectation of  
further  
interruptions. Both  
reduce your  
effectiveness  
considerably. Some  
interruptions can be  
avoided by keeping  
in mind the  
following:

\*\*Arrange your  
work area so that  
your back is to the  
traffic flow.

\*\*Close your door;  
open it selectively.

\*\*Find and use a  
special space such  
as a library carrel  
or an office where  
friends will be  
unable to find you.

\*\*Unplug your  
phone, or install an  
answering machine.  
Return telephone  
calls when it is  
more convenient  
for you, perhaps

when you take a  
study break.

SECOND,  
PRIORITIZE THE  
THINGS YOU WISH  
TO DO:

**STEP 1: Develop  
an overview of  
everything that  
you want to  
accomplish.** Start  
by determining the  
time frame you'd  
like to work with (a  
semester, a month,  
a week, a day?).  
Five goals for the  
week, for example,  
might include  
studying for an  
exam on Friday,  
spending more time  
with a friend you've  
been neglecting,  
exercising three  
times for half an  
hour each time,  
attending  
Wednesday's  
clothing sale, and  
watching a few  
"soaps." Notice that  
the goals include  
not only academic

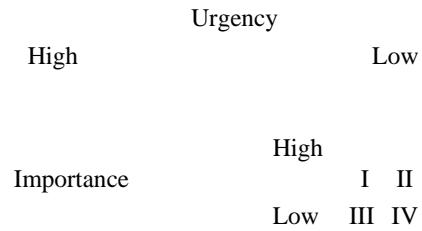
responsibilities but also personal and social activities. Write each of your goals on a separate index card.

**STEP 2: Organize your goals according to their priority.** Stephen Covey (1989) suggests using the following Table and thinking of priorities in terms of two dimensions, urgency and importance. First, determine how urgent each of the goals is and separate your index cards into urgent and non-urgent piles. From our examples, studying for the exam and attending the clothing sale may be more urgent than socializing or exercising because they have deadlines coming up soon.

Next separate the pile of urgent items into important and non-important items, and similarly the pile of non-urgent items into important and non-important items. Then refer to the Table below. From our examples, studying for the exam may be both urgent and important and would fall under Quadrant I in our Table. Attending the sale may end up in Quadrant III—i.e., urgent and non-important. Of the three non-urgent goals, let's say socializing with the friend and exercising feel important; they would fall into Quadrant II.

Finally, if you considered watching the "soaps" to be both

non-urgent and non-important, that activity would fall into Quadrant IV.



By placing your goals in each of these quadrants, you can get a better sense of how to prioritize, and thus how to distribute your time and energy. Obviously, Quadrant I goals go high on the list. Less obvious, however, poor time managers give too little time and energy to Quadrant II activities (e.g., the research paper which is due "later!") and/or too much time and energy to Quadrant

III & Quadrant IV  
activities.

**An additional hint**

**for Step 2:** While you may find it easy to distinguish between urgent and non-urgent goals, distinguishing according to importance may be harder. If so, try adding a "middle step," using an approach suggested by Alan Lakein (1989). Here you would assign the categories "A," "B," or "C" to each goal. Assign "A" to those items which are most important to you, "B" to those of moderate importance, and "C" to those of low importance. Having identified the extremes—the "A's" and the "C's"—you may now find it easier to address the "middle" items—the "B's"—

and to reclassify them to either "A" or "C" categories. Then you can place them into their appropriate quadrants of the above Table. If, ultimately, certain "B" items are truly intermediate in their importance, you may have to give them intermediate levels of time and energy. (Not all jobs that are worth doing are worth doing exceedingly well!)

Throughout, the point is to devote your time and energy according to your priorities, and to avoid getting bogged down by low priority tasks.

**THIRD, PLAN  
AHEAD  
ACCORDING TO  
YOUR  
PRIORITIES—  
ESPECIALLY**

**THOSE IN  
QUADRANTS I &  
II.**

- **Make a long range timetable:**  
Identify academic goals and deadlines (e.g., dates of exams, dates papers are due, etc) and make target dates for your non-academic goals. Next, determine the steps you need to follow to reach these goals. Segment the larger activities into a series of smaller units. Then, make a reasonable timetable for accomplishing your goals on time.

- **Remember your day to day personal maintenance:**  
Certain activities—if neglected—will throw your life out of balance and undermine your



high priority efforts (i.e., activities such as sleeping, eating, socializing, exercising, doing the laundry, etc.). Include them in your planning.

- **Plan each day and week as you go through the timetable:**

Consider each week as a subcategory to be planned, and similarly each day within a given week. Each day and each week, review your time table.

New, unexpected items will come up; adjust your plans accordingly. (Hint:

To avoid frustration, expect some unexpected things to happen—e.g., things like problems with your computer. Plan in extra time and/or be ready to adjust your plan, still keeping your high

priority goals in  
mind.)

#### **FOURTH, AVOID OVER-PLANNING!**

This may seem to  
contradict the  
preceding, but we  
mean it: avoid  
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Beyond a certain  
point, adding  
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#### **Tip for Saving Time**

- Carry pocket work.
- Guard against the power of Parkinson's Law (work expands to fill up all available time). Set time limits. You will use all available time.
- Set priorities realistically.
- Start writing that paper. Write the first sentence.
- Be aware of robbers of time:
  - Laziness
  - Side trackers
  - Procrastination
  - Daydreaming
- Have courage. Follow a schedule and leave friends behind.
- Concentrate time and efforts.
- Use the subconscious mind. Keep paper and pencil by your bed and jot down ideas before you have a chance to lose them.
- Beat the sleepy feeling. Don't take naps. Do take walks.
- Use precious time to think, when walking, jogging, etc.
- Take study breaks to keep from getting bored. You think and work better in sprints . Five minute breaks are motivators and material studied has a chance to

sink in. However, slow starters should have longer work periods. Review before taking a break.

- Use a month at a glance calendar.
- Obey the alarm clock. GET UP!!
- Write notes to yourself so you know where to begin the next time, also as reminders of things that need to be done.

## **Improving Time Management**

1. Use an appointment calendar to keep track of all due dates, meetings and scheduled activities.

2. Make and use to do lists everyday.

3. Set priorities. Categorize to do list tasks into high, medium and low priorities and focus on high priorities first.

4. Divide large tasks into several smaller parts. Focus on a small task to complete one part at a time. This will make a big project feel more manageable.

5. Regularly ask yourself "What is the best use of my time right now?" Do that task.

6. Anticipate deadlines and foreseeable high stress periods (midterms, finals week, deadlines for papers) and plan for extra study hours.

7. Schedule time for breaks. It can be hard to stay focused when you're tired or hungry. Get up and stretch or have a snack. Keep breaks to 10-15 minutes.

8. Make time to take care of yourself. Proper sleep, exercise and nutrition help you stay physically fit and mentally alert.

9. Learn to say No. Commit yourself only to those

activities you have time for.

10. Learn to say 'later'. Postpone phone calls, visits from friends, and other interruptions or distractions for breaks or after studying.

## Specific Techniques

While it is important to develop your own style for managing your time and work, consider how the following techniques might help you.

**FIRST, STACK THE CARDS IN YOUR FAVOR.** For example:

- Use your biological rhythms to your advantage. Identify the times of day when your energy levels are at their highest and do your most important work at those times. For example, if you work best in the morning, do not plan all your studying for the evening.
- Optimize your work environment. Keep things you need in your work area and make sure the physical environment is conducive to concentration, not just comfort. You may need to experiment to determine the right work environment. For example, some work best in a quiet setting while others work best with background music; some work best amidst clutter, while others need a cleared desk or table; some work best at a place reserved only for study while others work best at the kitchen table; etc. Find what works best for you!
- Safeguard blocks of work time. Protect your time by saying “no” to various interruptions, activities, requests, or persons. Interruptions are a two-fold problem: the interruption itself, and the expectation of further interruptions. Both reduce your effectiveness considerably. Some interruptions can be avoided by keeping in mind the following:

\*\*Arrange your work area so that your back is to the traffic flow.

\*\*Close your door; open it selectively.

\*\*Find and use a special space such as a library carrel or an office where friends will be unable to find you.

\*\*Unplug your phone, or install an answering machine. Return telephone calls when it is more convenient for you, perhaps when you take a study break.

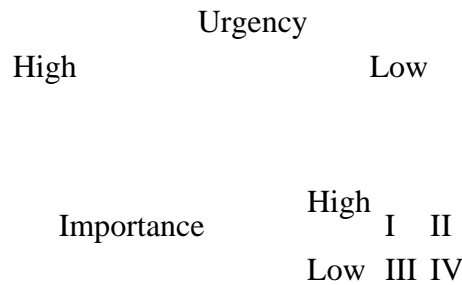
**SECOND, PRIORITIZE THE THINGS YOU WISH TO DO:**

**STEP 1:** Develop an overview of everything that you want to accomplish. Start by determining the time frame you’d like to work with (a semester, a month, a week, a day?). Five goals for the week, for example, might include studying for an exam on Friday, spending more time with a friend you’ve been neglecting, exercising three times for half an hour each time, attending Wednesday’s clothing sale, and watching a few “soaps.” Notice that the goals include not only academic responsibilities but also personal and social activities. Write each of your goals on a separate index card.

**STEP 2:** Organize your goals according to their priority. Stephen Covey (1989) suggests using the following Table and thinking of priorities in terms of two dimensions, urgency and importance. First, determine how urgent each of the goals is and separate your index cards into urgent and non-urgent piles. From our examples, studying for the exam and attending the clothing sale may be more urgent than socializing or exercising because they have deadlines coming up soon.

Next separate the pile of urgent items into important and non-important items, and similarly the pile of non-urgent items into important and non-important items. Then refer to the Table below. From our examples, studying for the exam may be both urgent and important and would fall under Quadrant I in our Table. Attending the sale may end up in Quadrant III—i.e., urgent and non-important. Of the three non-urgent goals, let’s say socializing with the friend and exercising feel important; they would fall into Quadrant II.

Finally, if you considered watching the “soaps” to be both non-urgent and non-important, that activity would fall into Quadrant IV.



By placing your goals in each of these quadrants, you can get a better sense of how to prioritize, and thus how to distribute your time and energy. Obviously, Quadrant I goals go high on the list. Less obvious, however, poor time managers give too little time and energy to Quadrant II activities (e.g., the research paper which is due “later!”) and/or too much time and energy to Quadrant III & Quadrant IV activities.

An additional hint for Step 2: While you may find it easy to distinguish between urgent and non-urgent goals, distinguishing according to importance may be harder. If so, try adding a “middle step,” using an approach suggested by Alan Lakein (1989). Here you would assign the categories “A,” “B,” or “C” to each goal. Assign “A” to those items which are most important to you, “B” to those of moderate importance, and “C” to those of low importance. Having identified the extremes—the “A’s” and the “C’s”—you may now find it easier to address the “middle” items—the “B’s”—and to reclassify them to either “A” or “C” categories. Then you can place them into their appropriate quadrants of the above Table. If, ultimately, certain “B” items are truly intermediate in their importance, you may have to give them intermediate levels of time and energy. (Not all jobs that are worth doing are worth doing exceedingly well!)

Throughout, the point is to devote your time and energy according to your priorities, and to avoid getting bogged down by low priority tasks.

**THIRD, PLAN AHEAD ACCORDING TO YOUR PRIORITIES—ESPECIALLY THOSE IN QUADRANTS I & II.**

- **Make a long range timetable:** Identify academic goals and deadlines (e.g., dates of exams, dates papers are due, etc) and make target dates for your non-academic goals. Next, determine the steps you need to follow to reach these goals. Segment the larger activities into a series of smaller units. Then, make a reasonable timetable for accomplishing your goals on time.
- **Remember your day to day personal maintenance:** Certain activities—if neglected—will throw your life out of balance and undermine your high priority efforts (i.e., activities such as sleeping, eating, socializing, exercising, doing the laundry, etc.). Include them in your planning.
- **Plan each day and week as you go through the timetable:** Consider each week as a subcategory to be planned, and similarly each day within a given week. Each day and each week, review your time table. New, unexpected items will come up; adjust your plans accordingly. (Hint: To avoid frustration, expect some unexpected things to happen—e.g., things like problems with your computer. Plan in extra time and/or be ready to adjust your plan, still keeping your high priority goals in mind.)

#### FOURTH, AVOID OVER-PLANNING!

This may seem to contradict the preceding, but we mean it: avoid over-organizing. Beyond a certain point, adding techniques may simply create additional time problems rather than solving previous ones.

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# Glossary of quality management

**Accountability** - Holding an individual or group subject to blame or penalty for the results of specified tasks, functions or results. The risk can be that the individual or group, while having responsibility to make a contribution to the task or result, cannot control all of the factors affecting the outcome and may be blamed (or credited) undeservedly for effects of other factors.

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**Accreditation** certification by a duly recognized body of the facilities, capability, objectivity, competence, and integrity of an agency, service or operational group or individual to provide the specific service(s) or operation(s) needed.

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**Affinity diagram** A tool that is used to help groups identify the common themes that are associated with a particular problem. A process to organize disparate language information by placing it on cards and grouping the cards that go together in a creative way. "Header" cards are then used to summarize each group of cards. alternative definition:

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**Affinity Diagram** A tool used to organize ideas, usually generated through brainstorming, into groups of related thoughts. The emphasis is on a pre-rational, gut-fell sort of grouping, often done by the members of the group with little or no talking. Also known as the KJ method after its creator, Kawakita Jiro.

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**AS9100** Quality system requirements for suppliers to the aerospace industry (previously known as AS9000).

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**ASQ** American Society for Quality [1]

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**Audit** An onsite verification activity used to determine the effective implementation of a supplier's documented quality system.

alternative definition

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**Audit Client** Organization or person requesting an audit. --- not to be confused with auditee

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**Auditee** Organization being audited.

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**Audit Criteria** Set of policies, procedures, or requirements. Audit Criteria are used as a reference against which Audit Evidence is compared. [Reference ISO 19011:2002 Section 3, 'Terms and Definitions']

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**Audit Evidence** Records, statements of fact or other information which are relevant to the Audit Criteria and verifiable. [Reference ISO 19011:2002 Section 3, 'Terms and Definitions']

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**Audit Findings** Results of the evaluation of the collected Audit Evidence against Audit Criteria. Audit findings can be positive, neutral, and negative. [Reference ISO 19011:2002 Section 3, 'Terms and Definitions']

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**Auditor** Person with the competence to conduct an audit.

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**Availability** A product or service's ability to perform its intended function at a given time and under appropriate conditions. It can be expressed by the ratio operative time/total time where operative time is the time that it is functioning or ready to function.

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**Balanced Scorecard** A suggested tool to describe the relevant measures of a business, usually in the following categories:

- financial, or return on investment and economic value-added;
  - customer, or satisfaction, retention, market and account share;
  - internal, or response time, cost, and new product introductions; and
  - learning and growth, or employee satisfaction and information system availability.
- 

**Baldrige Award** - A national award established in 1988 [named for Malcolm Baldrige, former Secretary of Commerce] for the purpose of recognizing and promoting outstanding corporate [for-profit companies] efforts to improve quality and productivity.

The Baldrige Award Guidelines are sometimes used as a checklist or framework for developing and implementing a plan for Total Quality or, for assessing organizational progress toward Total Quality. Some concerns and criticisms of the award include: a) it creates winners and losers by being limited to one company in each category, b) apparent emphasis on results over methods, c) insistence on “benchmarking” without accompanying instruction and cautionary information on the inherent risks in that practice. The homepage can be found at [2]

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**Benchmarking** A technique that involves comparing one’s own processes to excellent examples of similar processes in other organizations or departments. Through benchmarking, rapid learning can occur, and processes can undergo dramatic improvements.

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**Brainstorming** A tool used to encourage creative thinking and new ideas. A group formulates and records as many ideas as possible concerning a certain subject, regardless of the content of the ideas. No discussion, evaluation, or criticism of ideas is allowed until the brainstorming session is complete.

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**calibration** comparison of a measurement instrument or system of unverified accuracy to a measurement instrument or system of known accuracy to detect any variation from the required performance specification.

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**Cause & Effect diagram** A tool used to analyze all factors (causes) that contribute to a given situation or occurrence (effect) by breaking down main causes into smaller and smaller sub-causes. It is also known as the Ishikawa or the fishbone diagram.

---

**Central Limit Theorem** - states that the probability histograms of the sample mean and sample sum of  $n$  draws with replacement from a box of labeled tickets converge to a normal curve as the sample size  $n$  grows

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**Certificate of Compliance** A document signed by an authorized party affirming that the supplier of a product or service has been tested/analysed/measured/verified to meet the requirements of relevant specifications. See also ‘Certificate of Analysis’.

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**Certificate of Conformance (Certificate of Conformity)** A document signed by an authorized party affirming that a product or service has met the requirements of the relevant specifications, contract, or regulation.

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**Certification Audits** Audits relating to registration (e.g., ISO 9001 audits).

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**Common Cause** A source of variation that is always present as part of the random variation inherent in the process itself. Its origin can usually be traced to an element of the system which only management can correct.

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**Competence** Demonstrated ability to apply knowledge skills.

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**Continuous improvement** On-going improvement of any and all aspects of an organization including products, services, communications, environment, functions, individual processes, etc. Continuous Improvement Action taken to find ways in improve processes, decrease variation , decrease costs, and improve effectiveness of the organization.

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**Contract review** Contract review involves the steps associated with contracting with suppliers. These steps involve acceptance of the contract or order, the tender of a contract, and review of the contract.

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**Contribution** Forgiveness for error or mistake.

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**Control** - Three commonly-used versions of this word: (supervision)- to influence or manipulate an employee's behavior through the threat of consequences or the promise of reward, whether these are explicit or implied; (engineering)- to influence or manipulate a process through feedback or feedforward; (statistical)- a description of behavior of the variation in the output of a process.

---

**Control Chart** A chart that indicates upper and lower statistical control limits, and an average line, for samples or subgroups of a given process. If all points on the control chart are within the limits, variation may be ascribed to common causes and the process is deemed to be "in control." If points fall outside the limits, it is an indication that special causes of variation are occurring, and the process is said to be "out of control."

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**Control Limit** A statistically-determined line on a control chart used to analyze variation within a process. If variation exceeds the control limits, then the process is being affected by special causes and is said to be "out of control." A control limit is not the same as a specification limit.

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**Cost of poor quality** The costs incurred by producing products or services of poor quality. These costs usually include the cost of inspection, rework, duplicate work, scrapping rejects, replacements and refunds, complaints, and loss of customers and reputation.

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**Cost of quality** Philip Crosby's term for the cost of poor quality.

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**Count chart (c chart)** An attributes data control chart that evaluates process stability by charting the counts of occurrences of a given event in successive samples.

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**Count-per-unit chart (u chart)** A control chart that evaluates process stability by charting the number of occurrences of a given event per unit sampled, in a series of samples.

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**Cp** Commonly used process capability index defined as  $[\text{USL (upper spec limit)} - \text{LSL (lower spec limit)}] / [6 \times \text{sigma}]$ , where sigma is the estimated process standard deviation.

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**Cpk** Commonly used process capability index defined as the lesser of  $\text{USL} - m / 3\text{sigma}$  or  $m - \text{LSL} / 3\text{sigma}$ , where sigma is the estimated process standard deviation.

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**Crosby, Philip** One of the quality guru's. Crosby founded several consulting agencies including Career IV, Philip Crosby Associates, and the Quality College. He has authored several books including Quality Is Free and Quality Without Tears. Crosby is well-known for his theory of "zero defects."

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**Cumulative Sum Chart** Control chart that shows the cumulative sum of deviations from a set value in successive samples. Each plotted point indicates the algebraic sum of the last point and all deviations since. PathMaker does not support cumulative sum charts.

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**Customer** Any recipient of a product or service; anyone who is affected by what one produces. A customer can be external or outside the organization, or they can be internal to the organization.

---

**Decision Matrix** A tool used to evaluate problems, solutions, or ideas. The possibilities are listed down the left-hand side of the matrix and relevant criteria are listed across the top. Each possibility is then rated on a numeric scale of importance or effectiveness (e.g. on a scale of 1 to 10) for each criterion, and each rating is recorded in the appropriate box. When all ratings are complete, the scores for each possibility are added to determine which has the highest overall rating and thus deserves the greatest attention.

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**Defect** An error in construction of a product or service that renders it unusable; an error that causes a product or service to not meet requirements.

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**Deming cycle** Alternate name for the Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle, a four-stage approach to problem-solving. It is also sometimes called the Shewhart cycle.

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**Deming, W. Edwards** Known as the father of quality control. Deming began his work in quality control in the United States during World War II to aid the war effort. After the war, he went to Japan to help in the rebuilding of their country. His methods of quality control became an integral part of Japanese industry. Deming is a celebrated author and is well-known for his “14 Points” for effective management.

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**Diagnostic journey/Remedial journey** A problem-solving approach in which a problem is investigated by looking first at symptoms, and gradually working back towards root causes. Once root causes have been established, experimentation and tracking are used in the remedial journey - the finding of a cure for the roots of the problem.

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**DOE (Design of experiments)** DOE is the science of designing sets of experiments which will generate enough useful data to make sound decisions without costing too much or taking too long.

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**Employee involvement** Regular participation of employees in decision-making and suggestions. The driving forces behind increasing the involvement of employees are the conviction that more brains are better, that people in the process know it best, and that involved employees will be more motivated to do what is best for the organization.

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**Empowerment** Usually refers to giving employees decision-making and problem-solving authority within their jobs.

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**External customer** A person or organization outside your organization who receives the output of a process. Of all external customers, the end-user should be the most important.

---

**Failure Mode Effects Analysis (FMEA)** A technique that systematically analyzes the types of failures which will be expected as a product is used, and what the effects of each “failure mode” will be.

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**Facilitator** Person who helps a team with issues of teamwork, communication, and problem-solving. A facilitator should not contribute to the actual content of the team’s project, focusing instead as an observer of the team’s functioning as a group.

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**Fishbone diagram** Another name for an Ishikawa diagram or cause & effect diagram, derived from the shape of the diagram as used by its creator, Kaoru Ishikawa.

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**Flowchart** A graphical representation of a given process delineating each step. A flowchart is used to diagram how a process actually functions and where waste, error, and frustration enter the process.

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**Force Field Analysis** A tool, developed by social psychologist Kurt Lewin, which is used to analyze the opposing forces involved in causing/resisting any change. It is shown in balance sheet format with forces that will help (driving forces) listed on the left and forces that hinder (restraining forces) listed on the right.

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**Frequency distribution** An organization of data, usually in a chart, which depicts how often different events occur. A histogram is one common type of frequency distribution, and a frequency polygon is another.

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**Gantt chart** A bar chart that shows planned work and finished work in relation to time. Each task in a list has a bar corresponding to it. The length of the bar is used to indicate the expected or actual duration of the task.

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**Histogram** A specialized bar chart showing the distribution of measurement data. It will pictorially reveal the amount and type of variation within a process.

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**Hoshin kanri** Japanese term for hoshin planning, a form of interactive strategic planning which aids the flow of information up and down the organizational layers in a systematic, productive way.

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**Hoshin planning** A method of strategic planning for quality. It helps executives integrate quality improvement into the organization's long-range plan. According to the GOAL/QPC Health Care Application Research Committee, "Hoshin Planning is a method used to ensure that the mission, vision, goals, and annual objectives of an organization are communicated to and implemented by everyone, from the executive level to the 'front line' level."

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**Indicator** Quantitative measure of performance. Indicators are usually ratios comparing the number of occurrences a certain phenomenon and the number of times the phenomenon could have occurred.

---

**Internal customer** Someone within your organization, further downstream in a process, who receives the output of your work.

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**Ishikawa diagram** Another name for the cause & effect diagram, after its inventor, Kaoru Ishikawa.

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**Kaoru Ishikawa** One of Japan's quality control pioneers. He developed the cause & effect diagram (Ishikawa diagram) in 1943 and published many books addressing quality control. In addition to his work at Kawasaki, Ishikawa was a long-standing member of the Union of Japanese Scientists and Engineers and an assistant professor at the University of Tokyo.

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**Juran, Joseph M.** One of the great quality gurus, and, like Deming, an early student of the work of Walter Shewhart at Western Electric. His work has specialized in linking management to quality engineering. Dr. Juran is the founder of the Juran Institute which has long been the vehicle of his work in quality management and is well-known for espousing "the quality trilogy" of quality planning, quality control, and quality improvement. Juran has authored many books and other works in an effort to spread awareness of quality management ideas and applications.

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**Just-in-time instruction** Training given as needed for immediate application, without lag time and the usual loss of retention.

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**Kaizen** A Japanese word meaning continuous improvement through constant striving to reach higher standards.

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**KJ method** Another name for the affinity diagram, after its inventor, Kawakita Jiro.

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**Mean** The average of a group of measurement values. Mean is determined by dividing the sum of the values by the number of values in the group.

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**Median** The middle of a group of measurement values when arranged in numerical order. For example, in the group (32, 45, 78, 79, 101), 78 is the median. If the group contains an even number of values, the median is the average of the two middle values.

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**Metacraftsmanship** Metacraftsmanship is a term used to tie together the many ideas shared by quality improvement, reengineering, management, leadership, and customer-driven production. Although these theories have much in common, they are often treated as separate and disparate approaches to improving a business. Metacraftsmanship focuses on overcoming the losses to society which are engendered by specialization, and suggests ways of getting complex organizations to work the way a single craftsman would.

---

**Mission statement** A written declaration of the purpose of an organization or project team. Organizational mission or vision statements often include an organizational vision for the future, goals, and values.

---

**Mode** The most frequently occurring value in a group of measurements The most common value obtained in a set of observations. For example, for a data set (3, 7, 3, 9, 9, 3, 5, 1, 8, 5), the unique mode is 3. Similarly, for a data set (2, 4, 9, 6, 4, 6, 6, 2, 8, 2), there are two modes: 2 and 6.

[3] A distribution with a single mode is said to be unimodal. A distribution with more than one mode is said to be bimodal, trimodal, etc., or in general, multimodal.

---

**Noise** In the context of quality management, noise is essentially variability. For example, if you are making ketchup, noise in the process comes from variations in the quality of incoming tomatoes, in changes in ambient temperature and humidity, in variations in machinery performance, in variations in the quality of human factors, etc.

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**Nominal group technique** Technique used to encourage creative thinking and new ideas, but is more controlled than brainstorming. Each member of a group writes down his or her ideas and then contributes one to the group pool. All contributed ideas are then discussed and prioritized.

---

**np chart** A control chart indicating the number of defective units in a given sample.

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**Paradigm** A way of thinking about a given subject that defines how one views events, relationships, ideas, etc. within the boundaries of that subject.

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**Pareto chart** A bar chart that orders data from the most frequent to the least frequent, allowing the analyst to determine the most important factor in a given situation or process.

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**Pareto principle** The idea that a few root problems are responsible for the large majority

of consequences. The Pareto principle is derived from the work of Vilfredo Pareto, a turn-of-the-century Italian economist who studied the distributions of wealth in different countries. He concluded that a fairly consistent minority – about 20% – of people controlled the large majority – about 80% – of a society’s wealth. This same distribution has been observed in other areas and has been termed the Pareto principle. It is defined by J.M. Juran as the idea that 80% of all effects are produced by only 20% of the possible causes.

---

**Percent chart (p chart)** A control chart that determines the stability of a process by finding what percentage of total units in a sample are defective.

---

**Pie chart** A chart that compares groups of data to the whole data set by showing each group as a “slice” of the entire “pie.” Pie charts are particularly useful for investigating what percentage each group represents.

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**Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle** A four-step improvement process originally conceived of by Walter A. Shewhart. The first step involves planning for the necessary improvement; the second step is the implementation of the plan; the third step is to check the results of the plan; the last step is to act upon the results of the plan. It is also known as the Shewhart cycle, the Deming cycle, and the PDCA cycle.

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**Policy deployment** Another name for hoshin planning.

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**Population** Total set of items from which a sample set is taken.

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**Process Capability 1.** A statistical measure indicating the inherent variation for a given

event in a stable process, usually defined as the process width divided by 6 sigma. 2. Competence of the process, based on tested performance, to achieve certain results.

---

**Process Capability Index** Measurement indicating the ability of a process to produce specified results. Cp and Cpk are two process capability indices.

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**Quality Assurance (QA)** Traditionally refers to the systematic post-production checks, inspection, or reviews done to ensure quality of a product or service though in the strict sense of the definition that is an end of process quality control activity. Modern quality management systems consider Quality Assurance that through tools such Quality Audits, Quality Control, and specifically Systems Audits assures that the processes, tools, and safeguards are in place to produce quality products

---

**Quality Audit** An independent investigation and assessment of quality activities and results to determine whether or not the quality plan is effective and appropriate.

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**Quality Circles** 1. Quality improvement teams or groups. 2. In Japan, groups of employees formed for the study of and sharing information regarding quality control issues and theory.

---

**Quality Control** The use of techniques and activities that compare actual quality performance with goals and define appropriate action in response to a shortfall.

---

**Quality Improvement** A systematic approach to the processes of work that looks to remove waste, loss, rework, frustration, etc. in order to make the processes of work more effective, efficient, and appropriate.

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**Quality Improvement Team** A group of employees that take on a project to improve a given process or design a new process within an organization.

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**Quality Function Deployment (QFD)** A technique used to translate customer requirements into appropriate goals for each stage of product or service development and output. The two approaches to quality function deployment are known as the House of Quality and the Matrix of Matrices.

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**Quality Loss Function** An algebraic function that illustrates the loss of quality that occurs when a characteristic deviates from its target value. It is expressed often in monetary terms. Dr. Genichi Taguchi coined this term; his work suggests that quality losses vary as the square of the deviation from target.

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**Range Chart** Control chart in which the range of the subgroup is used to track the instantaneous variation within a process, i.e. the variation in the process at any one time, when many input factors would not have time to vary enough to make a detectable difference. Range charts are usually paired with average charts for complete analysis.

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**Recorder** The team member that takes minutes during team meetings to capture team's progress. Once the team is well underway, this role can be rotated through out the group.

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**Regression Analysis** A statistical technique used to determine the best mathematical expression to describe the relationship between a response and independent variables.

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**Reliability** The probability of a product or service successfully doing its job under given conditions.



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**Robust** The ability of a product or service to function appropriately regardless of external conditions and other uncontrollable factors.

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**Robust Design** An approach to the planning of new products and services that harnesses Taguchi methods.

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**Run chart** Also known as a line chart, or line graph. A chart that plots data over time, allowing you to identify trends and anomalies.

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**Sample** A subset of a population used to represent the population in statistical analysis. Samples are almost always random, which means that all individuals in the population are equally likely to be chosen for the sample.

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**Sample Standard Deviation Chart (s-chart)** Control chart in which the standard deviation of the subgroup is tracked to determine the variation within a process over time. Sample standard deviation charts are usually paired with average charts for complete analysis.

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**Scatterplot** A tool that studies the possible relationship between two variables expressed on the x-axis and y-axis of a graph. The direction and density of the points plotted will indicate various relationships or a lack of any relationship between the variables.

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**Seven Tools of Quality** Quality improvement tools that include the histogram, Pareto chart, check sheet, control chart, cause-and-effect diagram, flowchart, and scatter diagram.

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**Shewhart Cycle** Another name for the Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle. It is also sometimes called the Deming cycle.

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**Walter A. Shewhart** The father of statistical process control or statistical quality control. He pioneered statistical quality control and improvement methods when he worked for Western Electric and Bell Telephone in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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**Special Causes** Causes of variation in a process that are not inherent in the process itself but originate from circumstances that are out of the ordinary. Special causes are indicated by points that fall outside the limits of a control chart.

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**Specification Limit** An engineering or design requirement that must be met in order to produce a satisfactory product.

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**Statistical Process Control (SPC)** Analysis and control of a process through the use of statistical techniques, particularly control charts.

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**Statistical Quality Control (SQC)** Analysis and control of quality through the use of statistical techniques, essentially the same as SPC.

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**Structural Variation** Variation caused by recurring system-wide changes such as seasonal changes or long-term trends.

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**Supplier** Anyone whose output (materials, information, service, etc.) becomes an input to another person or group in a process of work. A supplier can be external or internal to the organization.

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**Taguchi, Genichi** Developed a set of practices known as Taguchi Methods, as they are known in the U.S., for improving quality while reducing costs. Taguchi Methods focus on the design of efficient experiments, and the increasing of signal to noise ratios. Dr. Taguchi also articulated the developed the quality loss function. Currently, he is executive director of the American Supplier Institute and director of the Japan Industrial Technology Institute.

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**Tampering** Dr. Deming cautions against tampering with systems that are “in control.” It is very common for management to react to variation which is in fact normal, thereby starting wild goose chases after sources of problems which don’t exist. Tampering with stable processes actually increases variation.

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**Tree Diagram** A chart used to break any task, goal, or category into increasingly detailed levels of information. Family trees are the classic example of a tree diagram. In PathMaker, the structure of the tree diagram is identical to that of the cause & effect diagram.

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**Timekeeper** Team member who keeps track of time spent on each agenda item during team meetings. This job can easily be rotated among team members.

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**Total Quality Management** Managing for quality in all aspects of an organization focusing on employee participation and customer satisfaction. Often used as a catch-all phrase for implementing various quality control and improvement tools.

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**Type I Error** Rejecting something that is acceptable. Also known as an alpha error.

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**Type II Error** Accepting something that should have been rejected. Also known as beta error.

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**u chart** A control chart showing the count of defects per unit in a series of random samples.

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**Value-Added** Each time work is done to inputs to transform them into something of greater usefulness as an end product.

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**Variables Data** Data that is measured on a continuous and infinite scale such as temperature, distance, and pressure rather than in discrete units or yes/no options. Variables data is used to create histograms, some control charts, and sometimes run charts.

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**Variance** A measure of deviation from the mean in a sample or population.

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**Variation** Change in the output or result of a process. Variation can be caused by common causes, special causes, tampering, or structural variation.

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**Vision** Often incorporated into an organizational mission (or vision) statement to clarify what the organization hopes to be doing at some point in the future. The vision should act as a guide in choosing courses of action for the organization.

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**Zero Defects** Philip Crosby's recommended performance standard that leaves no doubt regarding the goal of total quality. Crosby's theory holds that people can continually move closer to this goal by committing themselves to their work and the improvement process.