

TIME MANAGEMENT

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

– Ben Franklin

“If only I had the time.” How many times have you used this excuse? Let’s put time into perspective. You have a total of 8,760 hours in a year. Say you work 40 hours a week for 49 weeks (1,952 hours), spend 1 hour per day getting to and from work (365 hours), eat 3 meals each day of 1 hour each (1,095 hours), spend 1 hour a day getting dressed/undressed (365 hours) and sleep 8 hours per night (2,920 hours). Total deduction: 6,705 hours. That means you have nearly 85 24-hour days left over – 22% of the year to spend as you wish!

Even if the above equation does not match your situation, we do know this: you have the same number of hours each day as everyone else. How you spend them decides on you – your goals, responsibilities and dreams. The issue, then, is not having too little time, but rather not managing time effectively. The following tips can help you get your life on track, and even result in some free time for you!

- Generate to-do lists. Many of us live by these already. Make your list of things to do and prioritize them. Take care of those items at the top of your list immediately. Crossing off items brings such a glorious feeling of accomplishment!
- Finish what you start. Multi-tasking is necessary in many areas of life, but splitting up your workstream too much wastes time and energy.
- It’s your time. Block out at least an hour of each day for yourself, an hour where you will not schedule any meetings, answer the phone and so forth. Take this hour to generate your to-do list, meditate or finish a lingering task.
- Set goals. How can you not waste time if you do not know what you are working towards? Set goals for your personal and professional life.
- Cut down. Learn to say no. You do not have to be in every organization, attend every social gathering and chair every committee!
- Adopt a 10-minute strategy. Anyone can commit 10 minutes of attention and effort to a task, no matter how unpleasant. After 10 minutes you may find you want to keep going!
- Break it up. Break large tasks into component parts. Rather than deciding to read a book by Friday, vow to read a minimum of 20 pages per day.
- Use a clock/timer. Sound crazy? It will help keep you on track! Give yourself time limits

for meetings, projects, phone calls and stick to them.

- Be assertive. Don't let others take advantage of you or your time.
- Hide. During your "productive hours," avoid people and places that tend to take up your time. If you go to the library to work and end up chatting for hours instead, find a new work area.
- Take advantage of waiting. Rather than cursing under your breath about waiting at the doctor's office, for an appointment or for members of your group to arrive, make use of your time. Read that article for class, start tomorrow's to-do list, write a letter to your grandparents.
- Listen carefully. If we could count the hours wasted because of miscommunication, we would be amazed. Practice your listening skills and learn to communicate effectively.
- Be prepared. Make the most of your time and activities. Be prepared for classes, meetings and group activities.
- Quality, not quantity. Do not judge your success by how many hours you kept busy today. Judge it by how much you accomplished.
- Personal deadlines. Don't just let your bosses and professors assign deadlines. Give yourself time limits for certain tasks.
- Some things take a while. Accept the fact that some tasks take a lot of time. Schedule blocks of time for these in your planner, just as you would a meeting or class. Then focus your energy on that task for that period of time.
- Plan your calls and emails. Don't succumb to the pressure or temptation of constantly checking your email or answering your phone. Select one or two times a day for email (remember to set time limits!) and let your machine take your calls during your productive time.

As you can see, there is no magic involved in learning to manage your time. It is simply a matter of identifying what items are worthy of your time, what habits need to be changed and adopting strategies to make these changes.

References:

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