

In Focus
Week 2 Materials

Time Management

Common Struggles in Maintaining Time Management

While there are nearly infinite reasons why time management issues occur, these are the most common ones contributing to the struggle. See which ones below that you resonate with most:

- ***Not prioritizing tasks effectively:*** oftentimes it is challenging to determine what tasks need to be completed first. In this struggle tasks that are prioritized usually take less time, less stress and less mental effort.
- ***Procrastination:*** put the task off -> then feel guilt about not completing the task-> then dread doing the task -> everything catches up (“snowball effect”) when the work hasn’t been completed. The cycle is repeated.
- ***Multitasking:*** the task will be more efficient and of higher quality when focusing on one task at a time. It can take 20-40% more time to complete tasks when multitasked, compared with completing the same list of tasks in sequence.
- ***Taking on too much:*** You are a person with a limited amount of time with mental, emotional and physiological needs. If you feel that you have overloaded your schedule at the expense of your personal needs, you are most likely correct.
- ***Thriving on “Busy” rather than “Effective”:*** The thrill or high of being busy may come from narrowly met deadlines, endless emails, frantic racing to class or meetings, endless piles of work. This can also be described as “thriving in chaos”, “working better under pressure” the adrenaline rush of getting “your second wind” and moving from task-to-task/event-to-event. Addiction to “busyness” can lead to stress and eventual burnout.
- ***Not managing distractions effectively:*** Some of us can lose as much as two hours a day to distractions! These distractions prevent us from achieving a flow with effectively completing work. Technology and other people are common distractions.
- ***Underestimating the time required to complete tasks:*** A common pitfall in Time Management is incorrectly estimating the time needed to complete a task, specifically if reviewed at a glance. What happens when the time you’ve designated for a certain task is not enough?
- ***Not taking breaks:*** Related to “Taking on too much”. Working for 8-10 hours straight is mentally exhausting, and lowers your work quality, creativity, focus and overall energy. Taking breaks is often seen as “wasting time”, when breaks are actually needed to function properly. Sometimes it is also seen as a distraction that is difficult to return from once started.
- ***No Boundaries:*** Related to “Taking on too much.” Difficulty saying “no” to extra tasks and events that inevitably overload the schedule contribute to resentment, stress and burnout.

Time Management Benefits

With practice and time, these benefits can be achieved and maintained! Which items might benefit you the most?

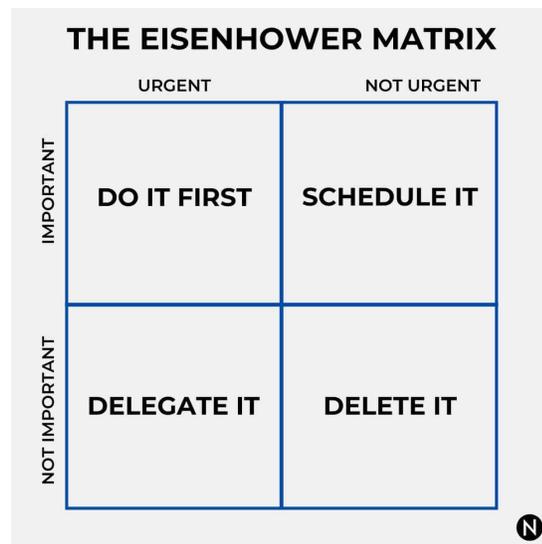
- More attentive and focused, with better quality of work.
- Lower stress, frustration and anxiety levels.
- More quality time with self and others.
- A sense of achievement and peace of mind.
- Better work-life balance.
- Less procrastination.
- More space to plan for bigger, longer term goals and priorities.
- Feeling healthier.

Time Management Strategies

- Keep a to-do list. ...
- Rank your tasks. ...
- Manage distractions. ...
- Time block your work. ...
- Track your time.
- Be kind to yourself ...
- Plan out each day. ...
- Prioritize your daily tasks. ...
- Use time management tools. ...
- Do not multitask. ...
- Determine your best productive times. ...
- Remove distractions ...
- Use a timer...
- Schedule short and long break times....
- Use positive self-talk....
- Prioritize your immediate needs....

The Eisenhower Matrix

Taken from *Four Week MBA* (<https://fourweekmba.com/eisenhower-matrix/>)



1. **Do It First (Urgent/Important)** – these tasks receive the highest priority because they are both urgent and important. These are typically same-day tasks or tasks with an impending deadline. Efficient businesses make sure that wherever possible, urgent and important tasks are completed first thing in the morning.
2. **Schedule It (Not urgent/Important)** – in the second quadrant are important tasks that are not urgent. This quadrant encompasses countless tasks such as responding to emails, scheduling appointments, advertising, and recruitment. Given that these tasks are important, they are commonly associated with long term goals that aid in growth. Businesses should set time aside to complete these tasks, otherwise they run the risk of being overwhelmed as “Schedule it” tasks become “Do it” tasks.
3. **Delegate It (Urgent/Not important)** – tasks in this quadrant require immediate attention, but their lack of importance means that delegation is appropriate. Delegation often involves subordinates but in some cases, a business may opt to delegate large aspects of its operations to another company. Uploading blog posts and some email correspondence or customer service falls into this quadrant.
4. **Delete It (Not urgent/Not important)** – these are invariably time-wasting activities that must be avoided. In the workplace, these tasks are often associated with procrastination – such as excessive social media usage, email inbox sorting and desk reorganization.

Recommended Books

- ***Order from Chaos: The Everyday Grind of Staying Organized with Adult ADHD***
By Jaclyn Paul
- ***CrazyBusy: Overstretched, Overbooked and About to Snap! Strategies for Handling Your Fast-Paced Life***
By Edward M. Hallowell, M.D.

Recommended Articles

- ***Time Management*** (Skills You Need)
<https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ps/time-management.html>
- ***10 Common Time Management Mistakes*** (Mind Tools)
<https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/time-management-mistakes.htm>
-

Apps (Android and iOS)

- My Daily Planner
- Smarter Time
- MyHours
- TimeTune
- Habit Tracker
- Habit 360
- Todoist
- Timetree
- Remember The Milk

You Tube Videos

- ***Stop Drop Self Control*** (UIUC Counseling Center)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PufdSgBGII0&t=3s>
- ***How To Master Time Management – ADHD Skills Part 1*** (Dr. Tracey Marks)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fWRF6BJ1OQk>
- ***How To Push Through Tough Tasks – ADHD Skills Part 2*** (Dr. Tracey Marks)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yj6_1t1PAcE

Accountability

A time management plan is unlikely to be effective without a reliable method of assessing progress and evaluating whether or not you have met your goals. Some projects frequently lack structure and deadlines and there may not be formal expectations regarding a time-frame for completion. The lack of formal accountability often affects productivity because the incentive to complete work at the deadline is largely absent within the project.

It is important to develop a method for evaluating the progress you are making towards your goals and to review your work on a consistent basis. This assessment should allow you to determine whether you have met your goals and, if not, assess what types of issues have affected your productivity. It is important that the system you develop tracks your time accurately because even small declines in productivity will have a substantial impact on your progress on a large project like the dissertation.

There are many ways to manage accountability. The system needs to be utilized consistently and provide you with meaningful information regarding your productivity so that you are able to make changes whenever necessary.

It may be helpful to include some of the following in your system:

- A work plan that designates how much time you will be working every week
- A consistent time for reviewing work completed during the past week
- At least 15 minutes allocated per week for reviewing your work
- A task list that breaks down large projects into smaller, more manageable tasks
- A strategy for managing issues that may be negatively impacting motivation
- A plan to manage issues that are interfering with your goals
- A mentor who can provide support, encouragement and constructive feedback related to your work
- A method for reviewing new assignments and determining how they impact goals

Routines and Structure

A significant challenge many students experience while working is the relative lack of structure associated between all of their work. Longer term projects can often be different from other projects in that they require a substantial amount of independent work and there may be less frequent deadlines. Many students have a limited amount of experience managing, supervising and working on large projects. Moreover, most students work more productively in a structured work environment in which a supervisor (e.g., faculty) assigns tasks, establishes expectations and sets deadlines.

There are a number of ways that students can increase the amount of structure associated with their work. It may be helpful, for example, to schedule more frequent meetings with your professors or to interact more consistently via email. These types of interactions establish expectations for the work and provide some accountability.

A routine is a specific type of structure – it determines when and where you will work during a designated time-frame. A routine is important because it removes the necessity of making a decision about whether or not to work. If you have a routine then you have already decided that you are going to work – now, the task is to follow through on that commitment. The research on decision-fatigue is relevant here – essentially, we become more fatigued throughout the day and the quality of our decisions declines due to accumulated fatigue. A routine can improve decision-making in situations where you may be vulnerable to decision-fatigue.

Some things to consider when establishing a routine:

- Be realistic – a routine is only meaningful if you follow it consistently;
- Be specific – identify specific times and places where you intend to work;
- Be professional – follow through on commitments you've made to yourself;
- Be flexible – determine where you will be most productive and work there;
- Be systematic – evaluate your work every weekly and adjust your routine;
- Be creative – long projects are vulnerable to fatigue;
- Be collaborative – working with colleagues makes you more accountable;
- Be persistent – identify strategies for working despite obstacles and challenges;

My time management skills

One error to avoid in considering making changes to your time management strategies is to think that everything you are going is not working. Consider the ways in which your current style is both helping and disrupting you.

The main advantages of the way I manage my time now are:

1.

2.

3.

If time management was no longer a problem, how would my life be different?

If I could change one thing about my time management strategies, I would

When something comes along that disrupts my original plan, I will

TIME MANAGEMENT SKILLS TEST

One of the greatest factors contributing to stress is our inability to manage time. Conversely, good time management skills allow us to organize our lives and be more productive, both at work and at home.

The following quiz will help identify trouble spots and guide us toward the goal of becoming successful time managers.

A scoring key at the end will indicate how far you need to go. Assign a numerical number to the following questions with 1=always; 2=usually; 3=sometimes; 4=never.

- I find that I have enough time for myself to do the things I enjoy doing.
- I'm aware of deadlines and schedule my work to meet them in time.
- I write down specific objectives in order to work toward goals.
- I use a calendar to write down appointments, deadlines, and things to do.
- I feel in control of time while at work and at home.
- I plan and schedule my time on a weekly and/or monthly basis.
- I make a daily to-do list and refer to it several times per day.
- I set priorities in order of importance and then schedule time around them.
- I'm able to find time when I need it in case something important comes up.
- I'm able to say no when I'm pressed for time.
- I try to delegate responsibility to others in order to make more time for myself.
- I organize my desk and work area to prevent clutter and confusion.
- I find it easy to eliminate or reschedule low priority items.
- I try to do things in a way that cuts down on duplicated effort.
- I find that doing everything myself is very inefficient.
- I try to shift priorities as soon as they change.
- I find it easy to identify sources of time problems.
- I find it easy to eliminate or reshuffle unnecessary paperwork.
- My meetings and activities are well organized and efficient.
- I know what I'm capable of and try not to overextend myself.
- I find it easy to keep up with changes that affect my schedule or workload.
- I try to schedule the most difficult work during my most productive times.
- I know what my responsibilities and duties are at all times.
- I try to get only the pertinent information before making a final decision.
- I finish one job or task before going on to the next.

Scoring key:

25 - 40 = Excellent time manager

41 - 55 = Good time manager

56 - 100 = Poor time manager

If you scored above 55, you have lots of work to do in order to become an effective time manager and avoid the stress that leads to productivity problems, stress, burnout, and disease. The most common areas to look for are:

- Not prioritizing tasks
- Not scheduling daily, weekly, or monthly activities
- Not delegating responsibility
- Not being able to say no
- Not writing down objectives in order to meet deadlines
- Not using a calendar or notebook to organize commitments
- Not shifting priorities to make room for more urgent matters or tasks
- Not reducing clutter and/or unnecessary paperwork
- Not being able to give up total control
- Not being able to avoid procrastination

The Way I Do Things Now

One error to avoid in considering making changes to your time management strategies is to think that *everything* you're doing is not working. Consider the ways in which your current style is both helping and disrupting you.

To help you think about this, respond to these sentence prompts:

The main advantages of the way I manage my time now are:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

The main disadvantages of the way I manage my time now are:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Consider a Change to Make

Below are a few of the most frequently recommended time management strategies from students. Based on the thoughts you've recorded above and these recommendations or other ideas you have, consider something you might like to try:

- ◆ Keep a calendar with your weekly commitments, and regularly assess when you have time available for work, exercise, friends, extra-curricular activities.
- ◆ Make lists of your tasks, and break these tasks into small pieces. Be realistic about how much work you can complete in a given amount of time.
- ◆ Clear time each day (like 10-15 minutes) to make a plan and make adjustments to your expectations for your goals that day.
- ◆ Don't expect you'll be able to work for a 6-hour stretch. Work in smaller chunks of time, like 1 to 2 hours, and be concrete about the work you plan to do in that time, such as "read chapter 12" or "write a paragraph on ___ for this paper."
- ◆ Depending on your optimal level for noise and light, the kind of chair and atmosphere, etc., find a place to work that is most conducive to your work style. And, plan to work at a time of day that's good for you (don't plan a lot of work in the morning if you're not a morning person).

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- ◆ If you're having trouble getting started on your work, try using the 10-minute rule: commit to working for 10-minutes without stopping. Many times, just getting started in this way can help you become engaged in the work.
- ◆ Conduct regular assessments about how you're doing. Try to be honest and clear with yourself about why something hasn't worked. For example, "I didn't feel like working today because I was tired." If your mind is drifting, write down right away why you're having trouble concentrating so you can understand better the steps to take, e.g., "I'm tired," "I'm bored," "I don't understand this," "I'm lonely," "I'm afraid I'll fail." Understanding your ambivalence about working allows you to sort through what's holding you back and help you make a choice about your next step and seek assistance.
- ◆ Don't give up on time management strategies if they don't work perfectly! Assess what isn't working and why.

Based on these suggestions or other ideas you have, put below a change you'd like to incorporate into your life:

If I could change one thing about my time management strategies, I would

Make a Plan for Inevitable Challenges

Time management often works best if you assume the plans will need revising. Life happens: a paper takes longer to write than expected; a friend might suddenly turn up for a visit; you found out a fabulous speaker is on campus; a new deadline surfaces; an illness or injury occurs; a family member is in need. Planning for the inevitable is a good way to help oneself stay on track. Knowing yourself can help you think about how you might get side-tracked and what you'll do if and when that happens.

When something comes along that disrupts my original plan, I will:

Next Steps

Consider talking with a Bureau academic counselor to tailor a time management plan for you and to examine your specific challenges.

continued → →

Select Time Management Resources

- ◆ Check the Bureau of Study Counsel's website for links to articles and handouts at <http://bsc.harvard.edu>, and click on "Online Study Skills Resources." Here you will find materials produced by the Bureau and links to websites at other universities.
- ◆ Allen, D. (2001). *Getting things done: The art of stress-free productivity*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.
- ◆ Ben-Shahar, T. (2009). *The pursuit of perfect: How to stop chasing perfection and start living a richer, happier life*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- ◆ Burka, J. B., & Yuen, L. M. (1983). *Procrastination: Why you do it, what to do about it*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press.
- ◆ Covey, S. R., Merrill, A. R., & Merrill, R. R. (1994). *First things first: To live, to love, to learn, to leave a legacy*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- ◆ Emmett, R. (2000). *The procrastinator's handbook: Mastering the art of doing it now*. New York, NY: Walker & Company.
- ◆ Fiore, N. A. (2007). *The now habit: A strategic program for overcoming procrastination and enjoying guilt-free play*. New York, NY: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin.
- ◆ Hallowell, E. M., & Ratey, J. J. (1994). *Driven to distraction: Recognizing and coping with Attention Deficit Disorder from childhood through adulthood*. New York, NY: Touchstone.
- ◆ <http://www.calnewport.com>. A website with many articles and suggestions for time management and effective studying by MIT post-doctoral associate, Cal Newport.
- ◆ Free services to create to-do lists and manage priorities can be found at <http://www.toodledo.com>, <http://www.tadalist.com>, <http://www.voo2do.com>, <http://www.rememberthemilk.com>.
- ◆ Investigate online tools to limit your Internet usage and monitor the way you spend your computer time. Check out for Mac: <http://visitsteve.com/made/selfcontrol/>; <http://getconcentrating.com/>; Mac and Windows: <http://www.macfreedom.com>. For Windows: <http://manictime.com/.bb>. Other applications include: <http://www.rescuetime.com/>, <http://minutesplease.com/>, <http://klok.mcgraphix.com/klok/downloads.html>.

Bureau academic counselors are available to consult with you about this topic or other things that might be on your mind. Call 617-495-2581 or stop by at 5 Linden Street to schedule a time.

Revised November 2011, updated 2015

Weekly Planner

| | Mon | Tues | Wed | Thurs | Fri | Sat | Sun |
|---------|-----|------|-----|-------|-----|-----|-----|
| 7-8am | | | | | | | |
| 8-9am | | | | | | | |
| 9-10am | | | | | | | |
| 10-11am | | | | | | | |
| 11-12pm | | | | | | | |
| 12-1pm | | | | | | | |
| 1-2pm | | | | | | | |
| 2-3pm | | | | | | | |
| 3-4pm | | | | | | | |
| 4-5pm | | | | | | | |
| 5-6pm | | | | | | | |
| 6-7pm | | | | | | | |
| 7-8pm | | | | | | | |
| 8-9pm | | | | | | | |
| 9-10pm | | | | | | | |
| 10-11pm | | | | | | | |
| 11-12am | | | | | | | |

"WHERE DOES TIME GO?"



Number of hours of sleep each night _____ x 7 = _____

Number of hours spent grooming each day _____ x 7 = _____

Number of hours for meals/snacks, including
preparation/clean-up time _____ x 7 = _____

Travel time to and from campus _____ x 5 = _____

Number of hours per week for regular activities
(chapter meetings, leadership/service activities,
intramurals, church, etc.) _____

Number of hours per day of errands, etc _____ x 7 = _____

Number of hours of work per week _____

Number of hours in class per week _____

Number of hours per week with friends, social
parties, going out, watching tv, etc _____

Number of hours per week for home/family
responsibilities _____

Total = _____

168 hours in a week
- _____ hours of activities
= _____ extra hours (What do I need them for?)

WHERE DOES TIME GO?

Example

| | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Number of hours of sleep each night | $8 \times 7 = 56$ |
| Number of hours spent grooming each day | $1 \times 7 = 7$ |
| Number of hours for meals/snacks, including preparation/clean-up time | $3 \times 7 = 21$ |
| Travel time to and from campus | $30 \text{ min.} \times 5 = 2.5$ |
| Number of hours per week for regular activities (chapter meetings, leadership/service activities, intramurals, church, etc.) | 6 |
| Number of hours per day of errands, etc | $1 \times 7 = 7$ |
| Number of hours of work per week | 15 |
| Number of hours in class per week | 15 |
| Number of hours per week with friends, social parties, going out, watching tv, etc | 10 |
| Number of hours per week for home/family responsibilities | 0 |
| | Total = 139.5 |

168.0 hours in a week

- 139.5 hours of activities

= 28.5 extra hours

Prioritizing Activity

Rate each activity in order of importance from 1-6, with 1 being the most important. Discard/say no to the 3 activities you think are least important.

- _____ Have coffee with friend
- _____ Meeting with academic advisor
- _____ Study for next week's test
- _____ Go to movie
- _____ Attend meeting for student organization
- _____ Volunteer for activity on campus
- _____ Read for tomorrow's quiz
- _____ Take on extra shift at work this week
- _____ Work on paper due in 10 days

Developing a Workplan

A workplan typically includes several important elements, including a task list, short-term goals, expected outcomes and system for evaluating progress towards the goals. A workplan can be highly detailed and specific or it can be fairly general. Ideally, it provides guidance on what tasks need to be completed, goals for a particular interval of time and how to assess your progress.

A workplan should also provides answers to several important questions related to the structure of your day, including:

- What will be the primary focus of my work today?
- Where do I plan on working?
- When will I start working?
- How long do I plan on working?
- What strategies will I utilize to manage workplace distractions?
- Who will I be collaborating with in order to meet these goals?
- Why have I established these goals instead of other options?

There are many ways to construct an effective workplan, but it needs to have clear goals and objectives so that you can evaluate whether or not you are meeting these goals. The key is to make sure your workplan has specific, measurable elements to it (e.g., I plan to write for three hours with the goal of writing four pages of text). The ability to measure your progress is necessary so that you can make adjustments to the workplan so that you are able to meet your long-term goals.