

# TIME MANAGEMENT

Prioritizing your tasks is the key.

## Productive vs. Unproductive Work

**Unproductive work = Busy work.** Feels like effort but doesn't move goals forward.

Often caused by:

- distractions
- wrong task order
- handling tasks not urgent yet.

**Sam's Story:**

- Friday Afternoon, 1 – 5 pm tasks:
  - Research report (due 3 pm, 2 hrs.),
  - Status report (due 5 pm, 30 min),
  - Check Emails (no deadline).
- **Mistake:** Opened emails → got stuck researching sales numbers not due until next week.
- **Result:** Missed 3 p.m. deadline, status report unfinished, worked late.

### Better Approach: Planning + Prioritization

**Plan order by urgency + importance.**

- 1:00 – 3:00 → Research report (due 3 pm)
- 3:15 – 3:45 → Status report (due 5 pm)
- 4:00 – 4:45 → Emails (lower priority).

**Benefits of planning:**

- Clear priorities.
- Deadlines visible.
- Easier to assess new requests.
- Flexible when unexpected changes happen.

### Handling Changes (Boss Needs Status Report Early)

With a plan, Sam can:

- Pause research report.
- Do status report first (done ~2:15).
- Resume research report.
- Negotiate revised deadline (e.g., 3:45) if needed.

## Key Lessons

1. Busy ≠ Productive.
2. Always **do urgent + important tasks first.**
3. Email and “someday” tasks go last.
4. A written plan gives clarity and flexibility.
5. Proactively renegotiate deadlines when conflicts arise.

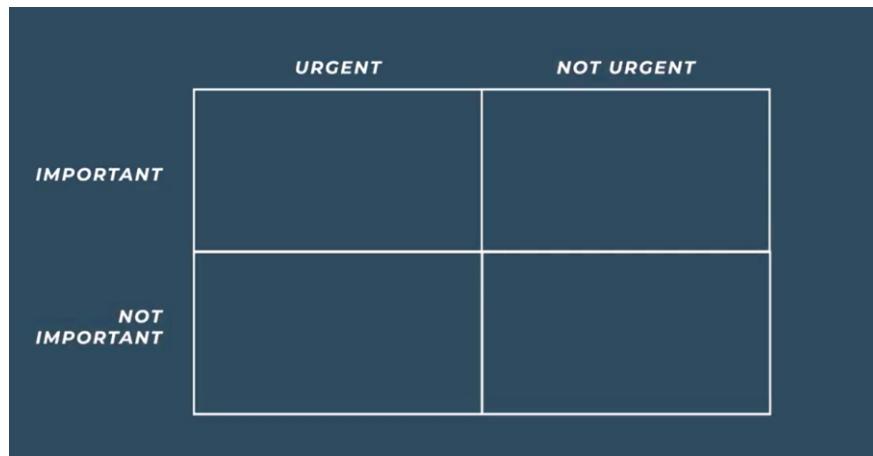
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*Framework to apply yourself: Plan → Prioritize → Execute → Adjust.*

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## How to prioritize your tasks:

- **List all tasks** → get everything out of your head.
- **Check deadlines** → what's due soonest?
- **Apply Eisenhower Matrix:**



- **Time-block** top 2 – 3 tasks into your day.
- **Re-evaluate** when new requests come in.

## Plan Your Time

- A plan = an organized task list.
- If unsure about duration → ask others, track your own time for future estimates.
- Break big tasks into smaller steps for progress visibility.
- Priorities usually come from leadership or customers. If unclear:
  - Watch meeting topics, announcements, and where successful colleagues focus.

## Why You Should Ignore Some Time-Saving Tips

- Saving a few minutes (like making coffee at home or leaving early) doesn't really change much. We usually just waste those minutes on small things like checking emails.
- **Main point:** Don't focus on saving time first. Focus on building the life you want. When your priorities are clear, time will naturally fit around them.

### Better ways:

1. **Go for big time wins** → cut long useless meetings, order groceries instead of shopping, use mornings for real work instead of late-night TV.
2. **Ask yourself** → "What do I actually want more time for?" Then plan those activities (gym, family, hobbies) into your week.
3. **Lock in priorities** → e.g., buying a game ticket makes you leave work on time because you've committed.

**Bottom line:** Don't waste energy shaving minutes. Free up real hours by cutting what doesn't matter and making space for what does.

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#### *One-line principle:*

*Focus on big wins, not tiny time hacks—build the life you want, and time will align itself.*

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## Work/Life Balance is a Myth

**Tom Peters** → Leadership expert; says time (not money) is your only true asset.

**Main idea** → Work-life balance has no fixed formula. It's what *you* define, based on values and priorities.

Work-life Balance = What **YOU** Make It!

*Spend your time in the way that will bring you what you want from your life.*

### Stories:

1. **Author's experience** → Early career = happy with 70-hour weeks. Later, valued more family time. At different stages, different balances felt right.
2. **Sam's case** → Stayed late Friday because he didn't plan tasks. If late work clashes with his idea of balance, he lost control.
3. **Client's case** → Boss texted 24/7. She replied from day one to impress him → trained him to expect constant availability → caused stress. Lesson: you teach people how to treat you.

## Key Lessons:

- Balance changes over time and that's normal.
  - Plan work to avoid unnecessary overtime.
  - Set boundaries; don't let others define your balance.
  - Be clear on your own definition of balance and manage around it.
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*"We often, maybe even mostly, let our schedule, schedule itself, ignoring the fact that time, not money, is our only true leadership asset."*

*~ Tom Peters.*

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## Where Does Your Time Go?

- Many people stay busy but don't know where their time really goes.
- **Best method:** Track your time honestly (30–60 min blocks, or 15 min for detail). Use categories like meetings, commuting, calls, paperwork, chatting, internet, etc.
- **Stories:**
  - Manager realized he wasted huge hours driving between meetings.
  - Another saw too much time lost to "drop-bys" in the office.
- **Lesson:** Tracking reveals blind spots → gives power to adjust.

## Tips:

- Do it for at least a month for useful insights.
- Be honest even cat video time should be logged. Then decide if it's worth keeping.
- You can keep fun breaks, but set limits (15 min breaks with a timer).
- Combine this with your idea of work-life balance → use your 24 hours better.

## Strategic Reserve Time (Dobson's idea):

- Total hours available – basic job functions = time left for special projects.
- This reserve shows what you *really* have for extra work.

## The Time/Money Tradeoff:

- Sometimes, there just aren't enough hours → you need to lighten your load.
- **At work:** delegate tasks or split big ones with teammates.
- **At home:** share chores with family, or if everyone's busy → outsource.

## Examples:

- Order groceries online → delivery saves hours.
- Pay a neighbor kid to mow the lawn or wash the car.
- Small spend = big time gain (as long as it doesn't create debt).

## Lesson:

Don't try to do everything yourself. Smartly spend money or share tasks to buy back time for what actually matters.

## How Long Will This Take?

**Big idea:** Time management heavily depends on your ability to **estimate tasks correctly**.

- Bad estimates = stress, missed deadlines, or wasted energy.
- Good estimates = realistic plans and higher productivity.

**Sam's story:** On that Friday, Sam knew his status report would take 30 mins because he did it weekly. He estimated his special report too because it was similar to one, he'd already done. His estimates came from *experience*, not guessing.

### Key takeaways:

- Best estimates come from **experience** → track how long tasks actually take.
- Keep a **log/table**: task name, description, estimated time, actual time, variance, notes.
- If no experience, **ask an expert** or do research.
- Use estimating methods:
  - **Analogous estimating** → base it on similar past tasks.
  - **Parametric estimating** → use formulas (e.g., 15 min per dataset × 3 months = 45 min).

**Why it matters:** Once you know how long stuff actually takes, you can plan your day realistically and avoid overloading yourself.

## Communications: When to Answer, When to Wait

**Main idea:** Constantly checking messages kills productivity. Instead, set times to review/respond, and organize messages smartly.

**David Allen's rules:** (On receiving a message, email etc.)

1. If no action needed → delete or file.
2. If action needed < 2 min → do it now.
3. If action > 2 min → flag, move to "Action" folder, and schedule it.
4. Waiting on someone → move to "Pending/Follow-up."

**Use folders/flags:** e.g., red = urgent follow-up, green = client, orange = students.

## Stories/examples:

- **Quick doc request** → takes < 2 min → just send it immediately.
- **Payroll policy email** → informational only → file it, no action.
- **Special report due in 1 week** → ~30 min task → put in “Action” folder + calendar.
- **Coworker says they’ll reply Friday** → move to “Pending” folder + note on calendar.

**Bottom line:** Stop reacting to every ping. Batch your responses, use a clear system, and you’ll save hours without missing anything important.

## Keeping it All Together

### Stop Wasting Time Looking for Stuff

- Studies show workers waste **9 – 21% of their time** just searching for lost info or items. That’s basically a whole day every week gone.
- **Fix it by grouping + organizing:**
  - Keep keys, wallet, glasses in the same spot every time.
  - Store all contacts in one searchable location.
  - Batch similar tasks together (e.g., handle all emails at once).

### Setup basics:

- Clear desk → shred/recycle unneeded docs.
- Use obvious names for digital files + keep folder structure intuitive..
- Put key docs in the cloud (while following company security rules).

**Impact:** Just by being organized, you can gain back **4–8 hours a week** (a whole extra workday.)

## It's All About the Timing

A colleague at a startup struggled because his team worked **1 PM–11 PM**, while he preferred a more **traditional schedule**. Result: constant frustration—late-night calls annoyed him; his early calls annoyed them.

**Lesson:** Everyone has a **different productivity rhythm** (morning person, night owl)

### How to apply it:

- Do complex, high-focus tasks during your peak hours.
- Save routine/easy tasks for low-energy times.
- If flex time exists, use it. If not, at least reduce distractions and double-check work during low-energy windows.

**Big idea:** Productivity isn’t just *how much* you work—it’s *when* you work.

## Focus is a Competitive Advantage

### Focus = Career Superpower

- 3 out of 4 employees struggle because distractions → late work + errors + rework.
- The **4th employee** (the high performer) wins by staying focused, hitting priorities, and delivering clean work on time.

### Stories & Examples:

- *Successful people aren't superhuman.* They just cut distractions and double down on priorities.
- Inc. highlights habits like:
  - Structured to-do lists.
  - Eliminating distractions.
  - Prioritizing productivity, not busyness.
- Fast Company adds:
  - Stick to a schedule.
  - Hide your phone.
  - Use productivity apps smartly.
  - Align tasks with your most productive time.

**Takeaway:** Focus is a skill, not magic. With practice schedules, boundaries, and priority-driven work you can train yourself into that rare, high-performing “**4th employee**.”

## Multitasking is Madness

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*“To do two things at once though, is to do neither.”*

- *Publilius Syrus*

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### The Problem:

- Every time you switch tasks, you pay a **switching cost** (lost time getting back into flow).
- Worse, you carry **attention residue** (sticky thoughts from the last task) into the new one.
- Research (Sophie Leroy, 2009) shows: the thicker the residue, the worse your performance.

### Story:

Imagine you're deep into writing a report. Your manager walks in with a new task. Instead of saying “no,” you pause, jot a quick note on where you left off, and then switch. Without that transition, you'd waste even more time trying to restart later.

### Lesson:

- Finish one thing at a time when possible.
- If you must switch, **leave yourself breadcrumbs** (notes/instructions) so you can quickly re-enter the old task.
- When writing, just write. When calling, just call. Give tasks your full, undivided attention.

**Bottom Line:** Multitasking fragments your brain. Single-tasking = fewer mistakes, more productivity, and less stress.

## Overcoming Common Distractions

### Common Distraction - The Reality (Udemy, 2018):

- Talkative coworkers → 80% distracted
- Office noise → 70%
- Meetings → 60%
- Social media → 56% (with Facebook as the #1 culprit)

### Story:

Nir Eyal (author of *Indistractable*) once ditched his smartphone for a flip phone and even used an offline word processor. **Guess what?** He was still distracted. **Why?** Because distractions come **from the mind first** the tools just amplify them.

### Practical Fixes:

- **Coworkers & Meetings:** Don't cut them all off (you need relationships). Instead, set "do not disturb" signals and protect focus blocks.
- **Noise:** Use noise-canceling headphones or schedule deep work when the office is naturally quiet.
- **Social media:** Accept you'll use it but only at **scheduled times**, not every buzz.
- **Computer & Browser:**
  - Keep desktop clean
  - Close apps/files when done
  - Limit tabs (stash URLs in notes instead of leaving 20 tabs open)
- **Notifications:** Turn off most of them. You don't need a ping for every message.
- **Apps:** Use blockers or reminders to keep you on track.

**Bottom Line:** Distractions aren't just external they're internal. Once you control your environment *and* your impulses, focus becomes your competitive advantage.

## It's All Up to You

We've covered estimating time, grouping tasks, organizing data, working at the right times all useful. But the real shift happens when you actually **apply it to your life with small, measurable changes.**

### Case Story:

A business exec was always late to meetings. One day, she overheard a colleague say: "*Other than being late, she's a true professional.*" That stung. She decided to fix it.

- **Her plan:** Goal → *Be on time 95% of the time.*
- **System:**  = on time, ✓ = late (tracked in her calendar).
- **Reward:** If she hit 95%, she got to sleep in 30 mins on Saturday.
- **Support:** Set alarms to leave early, no excuses.

The result? She retrained herself through accountability + small rewards.

### Your Move:

- Pick **1–3 small changes** (not 10).
- Make them **measurable**.
- Track progress, reward wins.
- If you miss don't spiral. Just adjust and try again.