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<http://nickjanetakis.com/blog/schedules-arent-a-constraint-on-life-they-let-you-live-it>

Learn how to schedule your time

1) List everything on paper

Creating a schedule is very much like programming. It's an iterative process. You can't just go from nothing on paper to a perfect calendar driven schedule.

In order to determine what should be scheduled you have to know what you do on a daily basis.

So the first thing you should do is list every single task you want to accomplish. I personally use notebook paper for this but feel free to use a text document or something else. You don't need fancy software.

To give you an idea, I spent about 45 minutes on this step and ended up with 70 things to do. Your goal here is to get a brain dump of what your life is like, so don't worry about categorizing things or thinking about how long each task will take.

I have tasks such as *check e-mail*, *brainstorm new blog post ideas* and *do push ups until I cannot do anymore*. Feel free to include long term tasks too, they are very important. For example if you want to attend a conference 8 months from now, write it down.

2) Figure out which tasks are recurring

Now that you have a list of tasks, start making notes next to them. The first thing you'll want to do is determine if a task is recurring and if so, are you going to be doing this every day, week, etc..

You'll probably end up having tasks that you do once or more per day, while others might be twice a week. You might also have 1 off tasks that aren't recurring on a set schedule but you may end up doing them more than once, such as *speak at a local meetup*.

3) Prioritize tasks that are important to you

I use a simple rating system here and just jot down a 1, 2 or 3 next to a task to help me figure out whether or not a task is really important. You don't need to make this super complicated.

For example, in my case *create my next course* is a high priority item so I'd rank it a 3 while *watch a movie* is fairly low priority so I'd give it a 1.

4) Which tasks are not time sensitive?

The next step is to mark tasks that can technically be completed at any point in the day because this is going to allow you to be flexible with your schedule.

For example if I allocate 15 minutes for a task to *straighten up living area* at 1pm and I have another 15 minute task at 5pm to *research new books to read*, it doesn't matter if I clean up at 1pm or 5pm. Both tasks are interchangeable.

This will mainly be useful for recurring daily tasks.

5) Put everything into a calendar

Creating a schedule doesn't need to be high tech. A calendar is the perfect tool for the job here. I personally use Google Calendar but you can use whatever you want.

Just make sure you pick something that's fairly easy to use. Ease of use is really important because if it's annoying to create your schedule then it's going to deter you from creating it.

This is going to take a while the first time because you're probably not used to judging how long things will take to do. Your goal here isn't perfection -- just get the tasks in your calendar and use your best judgment for the time each task will take. You can always refine how long things take as you get more experience.

You'll want to put your important items at times where you're personally most productive. For me, that's in the early morning but it'll be different for everyone.

Don't stress out if you go off track from your schedule

Scheduling your time is just like any other skill based thing. You need to practice it before you're good at it. Don't stress out if you're constantly off schedule. Think of it as progress towards learning how to manage your time.

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