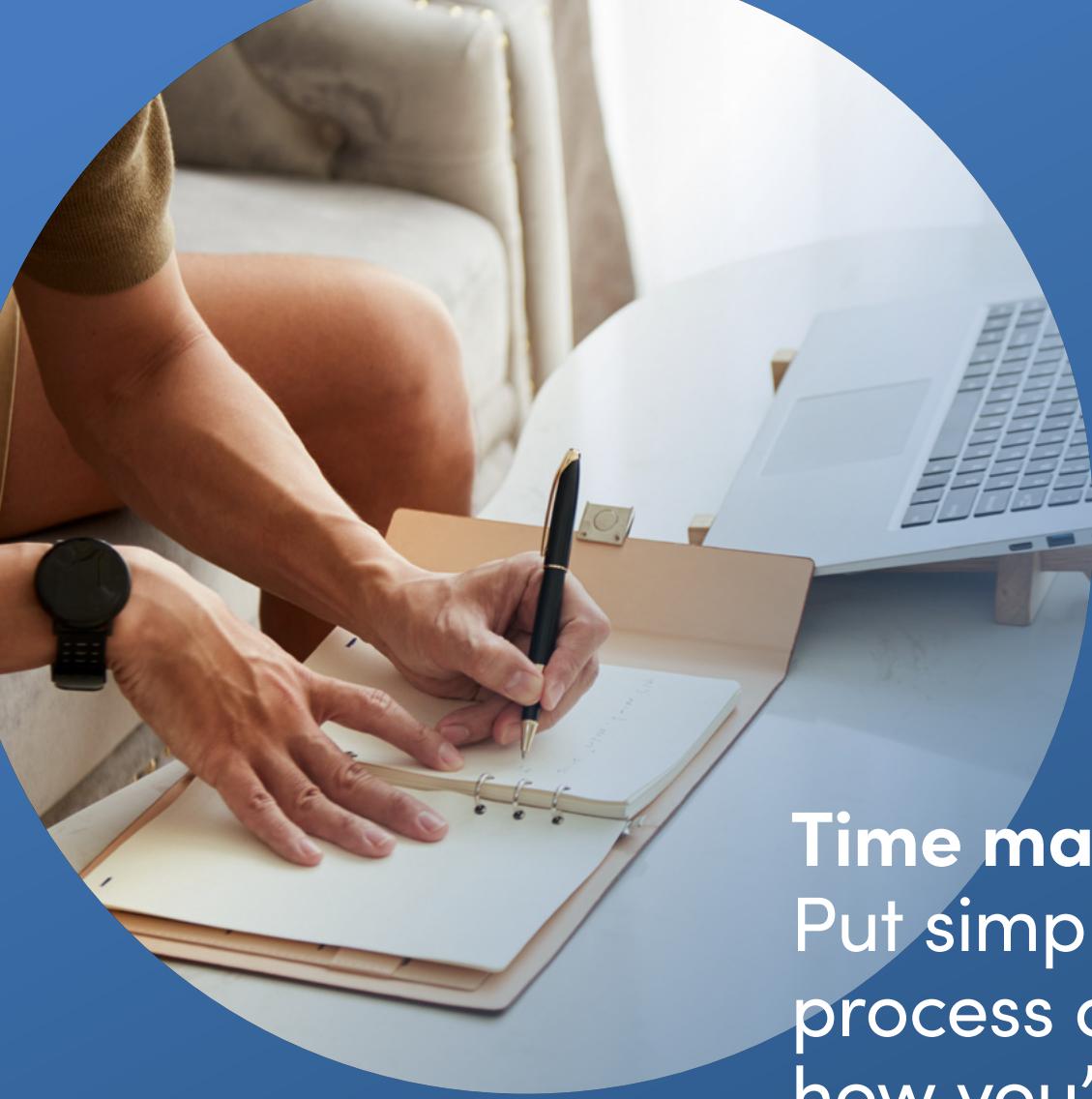


TIME MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES TO GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR DAY



Get practical tips to help you improve your time management skills. They'll enable you to increase your productivity and achieve a better work-life balance.

SUCCESS®



Time management:

Put simply, it's the process of planning how you'll use and optimize your time.

Several skills are required for successful time management including planning, organization and prioritization. Additionally, having a good feel for the time it takes to complete the tasks on your to-do list is crucial.

By developing effective time management skills, you'll get the most out of every moment of your day. It'll also endear you to the most important people in your life. Both your partner and your manager will appreciate your strong time management skills.

With this e-book, you'll discover the merits of time management and strategies for improving your time management skills. There are also tools, books and other resources to support your efforts.

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WHY IS TIME MANAGEMENT IMPORTANT?

Feeling pressed for time—all the time? Here are just a few of the biggest benefits of proper time management.

It can reduce your stress

The saying “stress is a killer” is no exaggeration. Chronic stress has been connected to an array of health conditions. The most common include anxiety, depression, gastrointestinal issues and high blood pressure.

You may not be able to completely remove stressors from your daily schedule. However, good time management can help reduce stress by making your schedule more manageable. The simple act of completing your tasks on time can be a great stress reducer in and of itself.

You'll endear yourself to people

Being successful in any endeavor requires developing strong relationships. That can be difficult to do if you're frequently late or missing deadlines. Managing your time better can help you meet both your own needs and the needs of those who rely on you.

It'll help you stay focused

Have you ever tried to clean a messy room but the clutter was so overwhelming you didn't even know where to begin? Poor time management can have the same effect on your entire life. If your schedule and priorities are in disarray, you can become too overwhelmed to focus on the task at hand.

Effectively managing your schedule can help you maintain better focus. This leads to higher quality work time, which can help you better manage your time going forward.

You can achieve better work-life balance

Work-life balance is often cited among the most important things to those in today's workforce. Maintaining this balance is something of a skill all its own, and a subset of that skill is good time management.



You may not be able to remove certain work-related tasks from your life entirely. But if you can manage your time, you should be able to complete your work with efficiency. Good time management can result in more free time to decompress or focus on other areas of your life.

You can achieve your goals faster

The goals you've set for yourself can feel as if they're perpetually on the horizon. While it's up to you when and how you'll achieve them, strong time management skills can certainly assist you.

Proper time management is important because you'll find more room to work toward your goals. Plus, your work will be of a higher quality than if you were scrambling to fit it all in.

It'll boost your confidence

Confidence is everything when it comes to achieving success beyond your wildest dreams. Yet it's difficult to feel confident if your daily schedule is in chaos due to poor time management. Planning and executing your schedule efficiently can help you feel ready to take on the world.

It can help you land your dream job

Why is time management important in the workplace? Well, that's a whole guide unto itself. But know this: If you want to land your dream job, then you must be able to manage your time.

Employers are not just looking for someone who shows up on time and meets their deadlines. They want someone who can seemingly be in three places at once. Of course, that's impossible, but proper time management can create the illusion that it isn't.

You can spend more quality time with loved ones

Spending all your time striving for success in the workplace can damage the important relationships in your life. But you don't have to relinquish your dreams to spend some quality time with those you love.

Improving your time management skills can allow you to excel in your work while still finding plenty of time to be with those who matter most.

You'll procrastinate less

Feeling like you have no time for everything you need to do can result in the paradoxical effect of procrastination. In fact, the anxiety and dread stemming from this feeling can have you wasting time more than ever.

Effective time management can help you create a clear schedule broken down into digestible bites. This in turn can remove that sense of stress and anxiety so you can focus on what you need to get done.

It will help with planning for the future

One of the best benefits of time management is it gives you the opportunity to do the things you've always wanted to do. Cue traveling across the country or going on that dream cruise. Without the ability to manage the day ahead of you, how can you expect to plot out a trip several months down the line?

Improving your time management skills allows you to see the day ahead of you. Not to mention the weeks, months and years beyond that.

10 SIMPLE TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR TIME MANAGEMENT SKILLS



There are 1,440 minutes in a day. That's all you're going to get! So you need to find ways to improve your time management and make the most of what you have. What you do—and don't do—determines your level of success.

Highly successful people are experts at managing their time and priorities. These efforts make an enormous difference when it comes to productivity and profitability. The good news is you don't need to go to school or take online courses to improve your time management. You just have to use some of these techniques.

1. Plan each day before it starts

Every minute you spend in planning can save you 10–12 minutes in execution, according to Brian Tracy in [Delegation & Supervision](#). It only takes a few moments to diligently plan your day. However, this small investment will save you from hours of wasted time and effort.

Decide what's important to you and in what order. Make sure your values don't conflict with work. Energy spent worrying diminishes your abilities.

Ask yourself the following questions to help identify what's important:

- What is the highest value-added action I can do?
- What can I do that I've done well before to make a difference?
- (If you work at a company) Why am I on the payroll?

Remember: Lists of goals, tasks and objectives are of no help unless you write them down. Putting your plans on paper makes a seemingly elusive goal more concrete. There's a connection that takes place between the brain and the hand. When you don't write it down, it's fuzzy, but as you write it and revise it, it becomes clear.

2. Schedule your top priorities first

All items on your to-do list do not hold equal weight in value or importance. Most people schedule their days with a mix of high- and low-value activities. Don't let the low-value ones hijack time and mental energy.

Improve your time management by identifying your top priorities. Then put them in your calendar before anything else.

3. Realize that ‘urgent’ doesn’t mean ‘important’

Lots of people—family, friends, customers—will tell you that something must be done “right now.” An unexpected phone call or a drop-in visitor may be urgent, but the consequences of dealing with either may not be important in the long run.

Before you jump at someone else’s “emergency,” pause to think whether it takes precedence over everything else. Urgent tasks are others-oriented. Important things are self-directed and have the greatest value for you. Using a time management matrix can help you evaluate between urgent and important.

4. Improve your time management by just saying ‘no’

Everything you do is something you have chosen to do, whether you are conscious of it or not. Some people have a difficult time accepting this truth, but your life is what you are making of it.

If you are frustrated, exhausted or overwhelmed, it may be a sign that you need to say “no” more often. Saying it may feel uncomfortable at first, especially when directed at those you love. However, saying no is essential for making room for what matters most in your life.

5. Expect the unexpected

Even if you schedule your priorities first and say no often, your time management efforts can still get derailed. Do you receive phone calls that divide your focus? Has anyone ever stopped by to say a “quick hello” that lasted forever? Has a crisis caused you to drop everything? I’m sure you’ve answered yes, yes, yes. Even with the best intentions, you can find yourself subject to someone else’s agenda.

Don’t let the unexpected get you off track. If possible, carve out blocks of time when you can’t be interrupted. Work to create margins in your life so that when the unexpected happens, you are able to deal with it.

6. Schedule breaks

If you’re easily distracted, try allotting eight to 10 minutes per hour for personal calls, food runs and the like. You’re less likely to interrupt your work outside the prescribed times if you know the break is coming.

7. Apply the 80/20 rule to everything

One of the most helpful concepts for managing a schedule is the Pareto principle, also known as the 80/20 rule. Named after Italian economist Vilfredo Pareto, the axiom says that 20% of your activities will give you 80% of your results. This means 20% of your customers will account for 80% of your sales, and 20% of your products will account for 80% of your profits. Finally, 20% of your team members will account for 80% of the group’s success.

In turn, you should spend 80% of your time on the vital 20% of everything you do. If you have a 10-item to-do list, tackle the top two with the majority of your might. If you have 20 staff members, spend 80% of your time with the top four. Do these things, and your productivity and time management will improve dramatically.



8. Pick up the phone

Calling can often generate a quicker—and more accurate—response than emailing. If you need to know something immediately, voice-to-voice contact is superior to emails and messages.

9. Batch your tasks

Think of repetitive chores that eat tons of time daily and block out time to do them weekly or monthly. Angela Lee Diaz, founder of Omaha, Nebraska-based accessories company SHOLDIT, spent hours each week on blog posts. “It was my biggest clock-sucker, and I quickly realized I still couldn’t get it all done,” she says. Diaz’s solution: She sets aside three hours each month to churn out all content and schedule it in advance.

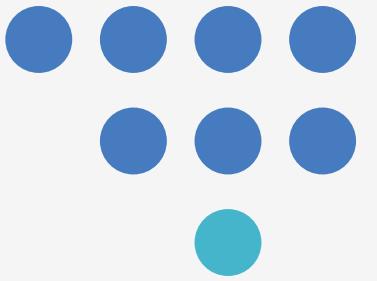
10. Reflect on how the day went

To determine if these new habits are paying off, spend a few minutes each evening reflecting on the day. Consider what you learned, how you used your 1,440 minutes and what you could have done differently. By analyzing what went well and what did not, you can identify productive and unproductive patterns in your behavior.



Helpful Apps and Tools

While time management tools can't give you extra hours in the day, many apps can make your life easier. This is especially the case when it comes to setting up a system and keeping track of multiple deadlines. Here are some of the best of the best when it comes to time management apps and tools:



Scoro

This work management platform helps users effectively manage their time and project deadlines. Its time-tracking feature helps you monitor your current and future sales pipeline, develop quotes and invoice customers.

[iOS](#) · [Android](#) · [Web browsers](#)



ClickUp

Here's another time-tracking software that helps individuals and teams collaborate. It offers time trackers, chat features, a dashboard with goal-setting options and notes to track your extensive to-do lists.

[iOS](#) · [Android](#) · [Web browsers](#)



Serene

This macOS-only app helps people plan their day by defining goals and creating to-do lists. It also helps block distractions from your phone, other apps and websites to keep you from mindlessly scrolling. Music and countdown timers help you maintain focus.

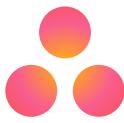
[macOS app](#)



Habitica

Habitica gamifies your personal productivity and habit tracking by offering rewards that make your progress more tangible.

[iOS](#) · [Android](#)



Asana

Asana is one of the more popular time management tools for bigger teams and organizations. It includes planners, project management, collaboration tools and even Gantt charts.

[iOS](#) · [Android](#) · [Web browsers](#)



Focus@Will

If you're the type of person who does their best work with some music to tune out background noise, check out the Focus@Will app. It plays different music developed in conjunction with neuroscience research to boost productivity.

[iOS](#) · [Android](#)



1Password

If you've ever wasted valuable minutes trying to remember a password, you'll understand how a password manager can help you save time. 1Password keeps your passwords secure and lets you safely store documents and notes.

[iOS](#) · [Android](#) · [Web browsers](#)



OmniFocus

If you struggle with shifting priorities throughout a busy day, OmniFocus can help you manage your tasks. As you add your tasks, due dates, notes and comments to the time management app, it lays out your week with priorities and shows you the best task to focus on next.

[iOS](#) · [Mac desktop](#) · [Web browsers](#)



Focus Keeper

Focus Keeper can be a great upgrade if you're a fan of using an old-fashioned kitchen timer to help you focus. It uses the popular Pomodoro time management technique to divide your time into 25-minute work blocks, followed by a 5-minute break.

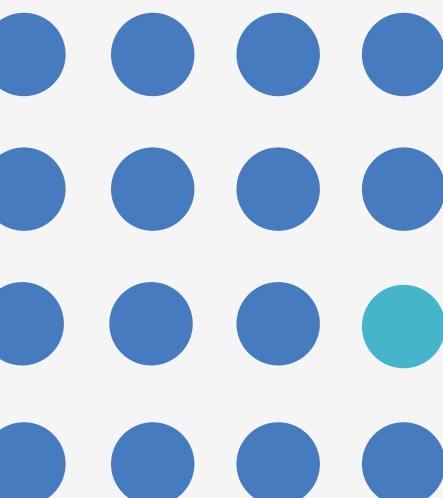
[iOS](#) · [Android](#) · [Desktop](#)



Forest

Selecting a timer in the Forest app is like planting a digital tree. It grows as you work and dies if you leave the app before your time is up.

[iOS](#) · [Android](#)





HOW TO USE A TIME MANAGEMENT MATRIX TO INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY

To help you establish priorities and tackle your most important work first, consider using a time management chart or matrix. This tool organizes tasks across four quadrants of time management and establishes priorities.

A time management matrix is essentially a to-do list that lets you view your tasks in one place. It also helps you distinguish between important and urgent projects. It's separated into four quadrants:

1. urgent/important
2. urgent/not important
3. not urgent/important
4. not urgent/not important

This chart is sometimes called the "Eisenhower method." Why? It's connected to a principle often attributed to Eisenhower on distinguishing between what is urgent and what is important. It's also referred to as the "Covey time management matrix" since it was popularized by Stephen Covey in his book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*.

The four quadrants of time management—labeled urgent, not urgent, important and not important—look like this:

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	This quadrant contains urgent tasks you must respond to immediately, like a project deadline or emergency	This quadrant is for tasks related to your long-term goals, like strategizing, dividing a large project into smaller steps or personal development.
Not Important	This quadrant holds tasks that need to get done, like administrative work, but they don't necessarily need to be done by you.	This quadrant is for distractions and unnecessary tasks, like scrolling social media. Eliminate these items when possible or only do them for limited amounts of time.

Use a time management matrix to determine the priority of your to-do list tasks

The time management matrix helps you distinguish between urgent and important tasks. This is a great way to ensure you're working on the most effective items first.

Urgent tasks need to be done as soon as possible. However, urgent doesn't necessarily mean important. Answering a phone or responding to emails can often feel urgent, but they may distract you from the deeper work you want or need to do.

Important tasks, on the other hand, are vital to meeting long-term goals. While some important tasks may be job-related, they can also be personal. Think of training for a marathon or working toward a professional development milestone.

One of the great things about the time management matrix is you get to decide what to prioritize. While some tasks automatically go into the first quadrant, you generally have many tasks that go into the important but not urgent column.



How to create the four quadrants of a time management matrix

To create your time management chart, start by jotting down your to-do list. Then, on a separate piece of paper, create four sections (two rows of two columns). Label column one as “urgent” and column two as “not urgent,” and label row one as “important” and row two as “not important.” Review the tasks on your to-do list, consider whether they’re urgent or important and add them to the appropriate box.

Quadrant 1: Urgent and important

The first time management quadrant is for tasks that require immediate attention. These tasks may have a specific deadline or consequences for not completing them on time. These are tasks like paying bills or responding to a last-minute work situation.

Remember: These are the tasks you must accomplish, but they aren’t your only focus. Don’t overstuff the urgent and important box as you may overwhelm yourself and not accomplish anything.

Quadrant 3: Urgent but not important

The third quadrant includes tasks like making appointments or responding to emails. Tasks in this box could also be busy work or things you use to distract yourself from more important work. Watch out for projects that feel important but are taking you away from your larger goals.

While these tasks still need to be done, they may not be the best use of your time. If you can, delegate the items in this box so you can spend your time on more meaningful work.

Quadrant 2: Not urgent but important

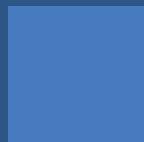
These tasks are more about long-term goals and strategies for the future. Use this box for tasks that require planning or multiple steps. This could include writing a book or developing a new marketing strategy.

The second quadrant takes the most discipline of all four boxes in the time management matrix. Because there are no formal deadlines, you may push these big long-term projects aside to focus on things with urgency. Resist the temptation to procrastinate, and make a little bit of progress each day. You will be much closer to accomplishing the big things on your list and preventing burnout by taking small, consistent steps.

Quadrant 4: Not urgent and not important

The final time management quadrant is for tasks that are essentially distractions. Some phone calls or meetings may fall into this category. Most commonly, things like scrolling through social media or watching TV fall here.

If you’re unsure about the amount of time you spend on not urgent/not important tasks, track your time using a spreadsheet for a few days or for a week. Be honest about writing down exactly how much time you’re spending on tasks in Quadrant 4. Everyone deserves a break and having a good work-life balance is vital. But don’t let things that are neither urgent nor important get in the way of your personal productivity.

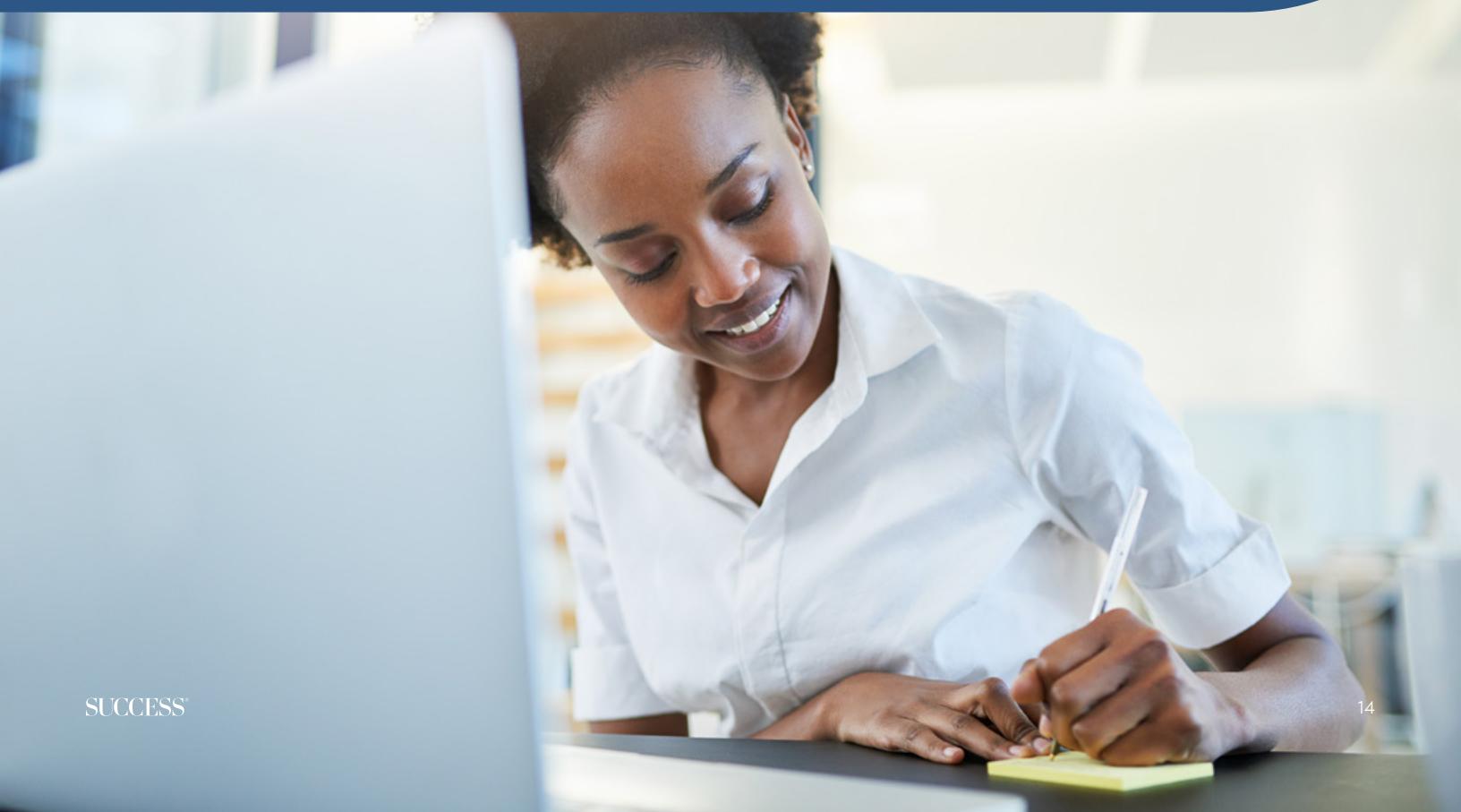


Tips to get the most out of the time management matrix

Although the matrix is a great time management tool, using one effectively can take some practice. Consider the following when creating and using your time management chart:

- Don't overstuff each quadrant. While a time management matrix can help you identify the priorities in your day, try to limit the tasks in each quadrant to 10 or fewer.
- Don't add a new task until you've crossed off an item.
- Include deadlines for each task to help you continue making progress. Even people familiar with using time management charts may ignore or move tasks from week to week.
- Set a daily goal for longer-term projects in Quadrant 2 to help you keep moving forward.
- Eliminate tasks wherever possible so you don't waste time on tasks that don't absolutely need to be done.
- Before you put something into Quadrant 1 or 2, ask yourself if the task needs to be done and if it needs to be done by you. Some tasks may be nonnegotiable, but try to limit those that are distractions from what you've identified as important.

A time management matrix can help you manage daily tasks or long-term goals. While the matrix can't do the work for you, it can help you develop a strategy to distinguish between urgent and important tasks. Try using a time management chart for a week to help you establish priorities and increase productivity.



5 TIME MANAGEMENT CHARACTERISTICS OF HIGHLY EFFICIENT PEOPLE

How do we maximize the precious minutes given to us each day? By learning to emulate the five characteristics of people who use time wisely:



1. They are purposeful.

People who use time wisely spend it on activities that advance their overall purpose in life. By dedicating time and energy toward their purpose, people can fully realize their potential.

We cannot reach peak performance without a peak purpose. Purpose enlivens all that we do. The two greatest days in a person's life are the day they are born and the day they discover why. Uncovering purpose helps to refine passion, focus efforts and sharpen commitments. The cumulative result is to amplify achievements.



2. They are committed to values.

People who understand the characteristics of time management underscore their values with the time they spend. By acting in accordance with their beliefs, they find fulfillment. Failure to identify values leads to a rudderless existence in which people drift through life, uncertain as to what they hold dear. Clarity of values is like a beacon of light, guiding the way through life's twists and turns.

When extended to an organization, values inspire a broader sense of purpose. They make work worthwhile. In an organization, if vision is the head and mission is the heart, then values are the soul. Values endow day-to-day operations and transactions with meaning.



3. They are attuned to their strengths.

People who use time wisely play to their strengths. By doing so, they are most effective. People don't pay for "average." If your skill level is a 2, don't waste lots of time trying to improve because you're unlikely to grow beyond a 4. However, if you're a 7 in an area, hone that skill, because when you become a 9, you've reached a rare level of expertise.

You are blessed with a unique set of skills and talents. Find them, refine them and let them carry toward success.



4. They are choosers of happiness.

People who use time the right way choose happiness by prioritizing relationships and recreation. While choosing happiness may seem simple and obvious, far too many people are trying to prove themselves and validate their worth. These people chase after power and prestige, and along the way, their relationships and free time wither away. In the end, any success they earn is a hollow and lonely achievement.

Family and friendships are two of the greatest facilitators of happiness. Prioritizing time to cultivate relationships is a hallmark of a healthy leader. Likewise, scheduling leisure combats stress and allows us to delight in the hobbies that bring us joy. In the end, happiness is an inside job. We are wise to surround ourselves with family, friends and fun. However, we ultimately determine our internal response to the people and circumstances in our lives.



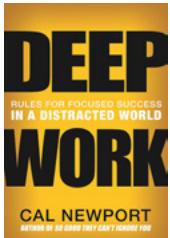
5. They are equippers.

People who use time properly equip others to compound their productivity. They realize the limitations of individual attainment and they build teams to expand their impact. By developing an inner circle of leaders and investing in them, wise people multiply their influence.

Equippers recognize that people carry on legacies, not trophies. They pour themselves into the lives of others and then watch the ripple effect of their leadership spread through their mentees. Equippers seek significance over the long term, which causes them to have a vested interest in the success of their successors.

As much as we would like to, we can't find more time—it's a finite and constantly diminishing resource. But we can learn the characteristics of time management in order to spend time wisely.

Best Productivity Books

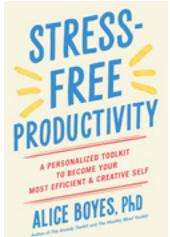


Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World

by Cal Newport

In Newport's *Deep Work*, readers learn how to find and cultivate a capacity for deep focus on important tasks. The book's first part makes a case for how we have lost the ability to focus on complex problems and allow too many things to distract us. The second part offers strategies to help increase your deep work while maintaining your busy schedule. Instead of saying that all distractions are bad, Newport focuses on incorporating intense focus by implementing four rules that transform habits.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

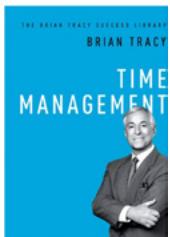


Stress-Free Productivity: A Personalized Toolkit to Become Your Most Efficient and Creative Self

by Alice Boyes, Ph.D.

If a one-size-fits-all approach to time management doesn't feel right, give *Stress-Free Productivity* a try. In it, Boyes argues that everyone has their unique productivity quirks that help them complete tasks. Boyes offers a framework to develop a personal system from the latest research on productivity and provides quizzes on productivity strengths.

[Buy on Amazon](#)



Time Management

by Brian Tracy

In his book, Tracy focuses on practical time management tips to accomplish big tasks. Many people wish for just an extra hour or two in their day, but most of us don't believe it's possible to achieve. However, Tracy provides 21 strategies to help people find up to two hours daily. He provides tips like batching tasks, avoiding procrastination and identifying key result areas. At just 112 pages, it's a quick read to help you get a little more done each day.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Here are 10 of the best time management books, including both classics and current bestsellers. Each offers its own system of prioritization and structure.



Four Thousand Weeks: Time Management for Mortals

by Oliver Burkeman

The premise of *Four Thousand Weeks* is that if you live to 80, you'll have 4,000 weeks to accomplish your goals and priorities. We all know we have limited time, so Burkeman argues that we should focus more on how we will fill our 4,000 weeks with meaning. While the book focuses on a spiritual and philosophical approach to time management, it also offers tools for constructing a meaningful life.

[Buy on Amazon](#)



The One Thing: The Surprisingly Simple Truth Behind Extraordinary Results

by Gary Keller and Jay Papasan

Many think time management means widening their focus to do as much as possible. Keller and Papasan argue that successful people focus on one thing at a time. Once you establish your main priority, you can remove distractions that don't move you closer to your "one thing." The book covers tips on learning how to say no, building momentum, staying on track and finding what matters most. Discovering your "one thing" can help you find more time for what counts in life.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

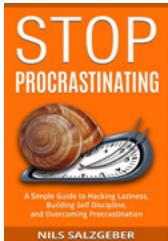


168 Hours: You Have More Time Than You Think

by Laura Vanderkam

Vanderkam is well-known for her time management strategies. Her first of several books, *168 Hours* is a classic for those looking to maximize their accomplishments. While everyone has the same 168 hours in a week, Vanderkam noticed that successful people use their time differently. Rather than let important tasks like exercise or family time go when life gets busy, they use their time well enough to fit everything within the day. By rearranging your schedule, you'll have more time for what matters most.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

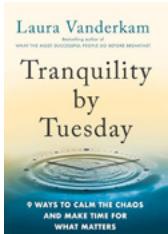


Stop Procrastinating: A Simple Guide to Hacking Laziness, Building Self Discipline, and Overcoming Procrastination

by Nils Salzgeber

Severe procrastinators may find this time management book helpful. Salzgeber helps people overcome procrastination and the guilt that can come with it. He contrasts procrastinators with non-procrastinators and offers over 20 strategies to get things done. If you've ever beaten yourself up for procrastinating too much, this book can help you find the motivation to complete necessary tasks.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

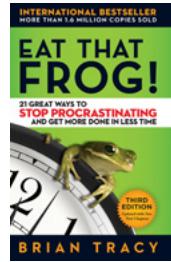


Tranquility by Tuesday: 9 Ways to Calm the Chaos and Make Time for What Matters

by Laura Vanderkam

If the last few years have taught us anything, it's that the world and life are unpredictable. In Vanderkam's book *Tranquility by Tuesday*, she argues that if you want something to happen, you must design your life to make it happen. While you can't predict every work crisis, child emergency or car repair, you can lay the groundwork to help you prioritize critical tasks. By developing a resilient—not perfect—schedule, you can prioritize what's essential and handle the chaos of everyday life.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

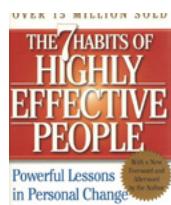


Eat That Frog! 21 Great Ways to Stop Procrastinating and Get More Done in Less Time

by Brian Tracy

Tracy's second time management book on the list focuses on reducing procrastination so you can get more done. The title comes from a quote often attributed to Mark Twain: "If it's your job to eat a frog, best do it first thing in the morning." Tackling your most significant problem or task (i.e., your "frog") first thing in the morning to get it out of the way can be a helpful strategy. Tracy provides techniques like breaking a task into smaller pieces and focusing on a single aspect to help you manage your daily "frogs."

[Buy on Amazon](#)



The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change

by Stephen R. Covey

A classic in personal development and time management, this book details essential daily habits. The seven habits include being proactive, putting first things first, beginning with the end in mind and sharpening the saw. With Covey's principles, readers can learn to handle change, take action and develop proactive responses. They can also become more effective in their personal and professional lives.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

20 TIME MANAGEMENT SKILLS AND STRATEGIES TO HELP YOU TACKLE YOUR TO-DO LIST

Would you like to get more value out of the hours you have in the day?
Check out these time management skills.

1. Audit your time

The things we invest our time in are not all created equal. The Pareto principle states that 80% of our time produces 20% of our results—and vice versa: 20% of what we do produces 80% of our results. This means we have to gain extreme clarity on what our “20%” activities are.

What things are most predictive of you achieving your goal? What is most important to you?

In a sea of good things, it is easy to lose track of the great things. Furthermore, saying “yes” to a few great things can mean saying “no” to a lot of good things. Deciding which good things need to get pushed down the ladder to prioritize the great things is the hardest part of time management.

We need to reassess and audit how we are spending our time. While sorting our priorities is not an easy or quick process, the payoff in what you are able to accomplish as a result is incredibly rewarding.

2. Begin with the end in mind

Incorporate this time management skill into your daily habits: Identify the most important tasks you need to accomplish and the specific results you seek. Limit your list to no more than three to five items and schedule them based on rigor. Be careful not to assign equally taxing items on the same day. Allocate a specific period of time to accomplish each item, approaching them with a sense of urgency. When a competing interest arises, ask: Is this activity appropriate given what I need to accomplish today? Every once in a while, a dilemma may arise and take precedence, but that happens less frequently than you might think.

“I always end my day by planning the following day, and I always end the week by planning the following week,” says Andrew Kucheravy, CEO of Intechnic. “This allows me to focus on top priorities as soon as I start my day without having to remember what’s important or worrying about anything derailing me.”

3. Visualize your daily goals

When you wake up each morning, use the time management strategy of deciding then and there what you want to do with the day. What tasks do you want to accomplish? What activities do you want to enjoy? (It’s important to note that daily goals don’t necessarily have to be work related. Perhaps your goal that day is to spend time with your family or enjoy a day on the golf course.) Then, take a few minutes to visualize these tasks as already completed. How would you feel if they were already done? This sense of fulfillment will renew your drive to complete your tasks that day and not put them off any longer.

4. Learn from the experts

Success leaves tracks. If you want to experience success in any area, find out what other successful people in that area are doing. Then do the same things until you get the same results. Study the interviews, speeches, biographies and autobiographies of successful men and women. You’ll likely find they all have one quality in common: They are all described as being “extremely well organized.”

Becoming knowledgeable and experienced in using time management techniques will be of great value to you. So read the books and articles, listen to the audio and take the courses. Then, practice, practice, practice every day until you master those time management skills.

5. Determine which tasks to prioritize

Successful people are both effective and efficient. They do the right things, and they do them in the right way. They are constantly looking for ways to improve the quality and quantity of their output. Perhaps the best question you can memorize and repeat is: What is the most valuable use of my time right now?

Still not sure how to decide? Try this analogy: In life, everything you could potentially give your time to is either a rubber bouncy ball or a ball made of glass. When you drop the rubber bouncy ball, it will bounce and eventually find its way back to you. It will be fine and is not going to be damaged. However, when the glass ball hits the ground, it shatters—there is no putting it back together.

As you look at your priorities, filter them through the lens of what will bounce and what will shatter. You may find that your time-management decisions become much clearer.

6. Set deadlines

Some tasks will inherently come with a deadline. But for tasks that don't, you stand to benefit a lot by setting one of your own. Deadlines have a way of breaking procrastination and can motivate you even when you have no desire to complete the task. It's important, though, when you set deadlines for yourself that you actually stick to them. If you start ignoring the deadlines you set, soon they will have little value to your time management efforts.

7. Focus on one task at a time

Start with your top tasks. The natural tendency is to major in minors and clear up small things first. After all, small things are easier and often more fun than larger, more important things that represent the most valuable use of your time. However, focusing on your highest-value tasks is the starting point of getting your time under control.

The phrase "eat that frog" was made popular by author Brian Tracy. It's basically a time management technique that says you should tackle the most difficult and most important task on your to-do list first thing in the morning. "Crossing off the hardest and highest priority thing before doing anything else has made me more productive throughout the day," says John Turner, co-founder of SeedProd LLC.

8. Make a to-do list

One of the best time management strategies you can use is a to-do list. Something about writing out the tasks you have to complete on a piece of paper makes them feel more doable. It provides you with a visible, tangible way to see how much you still have to do and keep track of the things that you've already done. As an added bonus, marking an item off your to-do list is a feel-good reward in and of itself.

"For me, time management is all about lists. Every day, I have a list of items to accomplish. Some are personal. Some are professional. Some take priority (exercise, investor relations), some get pushed to tomorrow (compliance), some get pushed to next week (blogging)," says Grant Feek, a managing director at Cox Automotive. "Interestingly, I find that the more 'non-work' stuff I take on, the more organized and efficient I become overall."

"I set daily to-do lists and work on the highest priority and most time-sensitive items each day," adds Adam Mendler, keynote speaker and strategic adviser. "While not everything will get done, a lot will, and my time will largely be spent productively."

9. Stop multitasking

People like to think they are really good at multitasking, but very few of us actually are. Studies have shown that we are more likely to be less productive when we are trying to accomplish multiple tasks at once. By learning how to prioritize, you'll be able to get much more done than if you were multitasking. Not only are we less productive when we multitask, but it can also result in burnout. Instead of trying to get everything done at once, start checking things off your to-do list one task at a time. Focus all your attention on a single task until it is complete.

10. Confront and eliminate distractions

It may seem difficult to avoid the lure of people or technology when compared to "work," but remember that you're responsible for the choices you make. What's the best choice when it comes to time management techniques? Confront distractions. You already know your vices, where you're likely to fall down. Why not take away the enticement in advance? Recognize distractions for what they are. By mindlessly engaging with them, you lose precious time—time that could be better spent doing the things that matter most.

One of the best time management strategies for confronting distractions? Do a self-audit on where all your time is going. “The fewer times you are interrupted, the more productive you will be. Pay attention to those things that disrupt you—maybe you need to put your smartphone away or close out your email while you work on important tasks,” says Blair Thomas, co-founder of EMerchantBroker. “Broken flow can really impede progress. By recognizing what breaks your concentration, you can increase your productivity.”

Another time management technique to try? Limit how often you check and answer emails. “Not everyone is capable of doing this, but I’ve seen it work wonders for those who are a little too frequently on the trigger of their email. It’s pretty simple. You set aside two different times during the day to answer email: once at the start, the second at the end. Anything in between gets avoided unless it’s an emergency—but at that point, someone should be calling you,” suggests Nicole Munoz, a licensed psychotherapist.

11. Categorize projects and tackle related tasks together

“Switching between types of tasks is mentally draining. Instead, bundle related projects together and tackle them all at once,” says Firas Kittaneh, co-founder of Amerisleep. “For instance, start your day addressing customer service challenges. Then, move onto marketing campaigns. Afterwards, review new product opportunities. This will make it easier to finalize tasks when you don’t have to mentally toggle back and forth dozens of times each day.”

12. Use apps for support

There’s an app for just about anything, including tracking your time and productivity. Consider utilizing tech like Stephanie Wells, co-founder of Strategy11.

“With so many awesome productivity apps on the market, it’s completely changed how I manage my time for the better,” Wells says. “You no longer have to sit down and plan out your calendar for the week because productivity apps make it easy to set reminders, stay on track and get things done. Plus, with many of them, you can look back and see all that you’ve accomplished, which boosts motivation even more.”

13. Protect your time

You won’t complete any tasks, no matter what time management skills you use, if things keep interrupting you. “People in general can be distracting. If someone says they want two minutes of your time, it’s almost never two minutes! If I don’t have time to meet with someone for 10-15 minutes right on the spot, I usually have them schedule a time with me. It’s best to manage your day with enough wiggle room so that you can accomplish at least one to two things that you set out to do,” recommends Jennifer Barnes, CEO and founder of Optima Office.

“Work during your peak time, and protect that time from meetings or distractions,” adds Rachel Beider, CEO of PRESS Modern Massage and The Canopy NYC. “You’ll get so much more done this way.”

And consider developing a code for when you’re busy, so you can kindly tell colleagues to leave you alone. It’s a time management technique many in your company are likely to employ. “We have all been in a situation where we want to get back to work, but we can’t quite end conversations with our managers. So we internally developed a code that means, ‘Please don’t get offended, but I really need to tackle this task.’ This tactic has changed the way I manage my time because it means I can work on large projects without interruptions,” says Syed Balkhi, founder of WPBeginner and Awesome Motive, Inc.

14. Delegate more to boost your time management skills

“I learned from my experience that the entrepreneur’s to-do list will never end. You can prioritize your tasks, focus on more important things or set off the time for something particular, but at the end of the day, things just have to be done,” says Solomon Thimothy, co-founder of ClickX. “Unless you find a way to clone yourself, you need to develop trust for other people who can perform those tasks better, faster and cheaper than you.”

15. Try the Pomodoro technique

Francesco Cirillo developed this time management strategy in the late 1980s. “I learned about the Pomodoro technique a few years back... and I have been extremely impressed with the results,” says Bryce Welker, founder of Crush the CPA Exam and CEO of Crush Empire. “The idea behind it is to allot 25-minute chunks of time in which you only focus on one task. After each time chunk [called a pomodoro],

take a short break before resuming. I've gotten more work done in four pomodoros than some full work days!"

16. Avoid putting off tasks

As humans, we have this unfortunate tendency to spend more mental energy worrying about tasks we have to do than we spend actually doing them. When you put off tasks, they're always going to be in the back of your mind. It's difficult to enjoy leisure time when you're consciously or subconsciously thinking about the work you are putting off. To avoid wasting mental energy worrying about these unfinished to-dos, always complete tasks as they come up.

17. Reward yourself

When you complete a task, reward yourself! That doesn't mean you have to throw a huge celebration every time you check something off your to-do list. For many people, the reward for finishing a task is something as simple as going outside for fresh air or having a snack. Just make sure that whatever rewards you give yourself are restorative and don't take up too much of your time. For example, eating a box of donuts every time you finish a task probably isn't a good idea and neither is taking the next two hours off. When done right, though, small rewards can have a big effect.

18. Take time to relax

If you're like most people, no matter how much you do, there will always still be tasks that you could work on. Sometimes this feeling of never really being caught up can be overwhelming. You may find yourself trying to compensate by working even longer and harder. There will likely come a point when you will burn out. From that point forward, no matter how hard you try, the work you do is not going to be the same quality as it was before. Plus, the time it takes you to do it is going to increase. Even worse, burning yourself out certainly isn't healthy.

It's important to know when to take a step back and relax. For example, include breaks in your daily goals and reward yourself with short periods of relaxation. However you choose to integrate this technique, just know that taking time for yourself is just as important as completing your tasks.

19. Evaluate yourself

Evaluate your success by how many critical tasks remain outstanding by the week's end. Decide what percentage of tasks completed makes for a successful day or week for you. Perhaps it's 85% to 90%. Carry over any uncompleted tasks to the next week.

By taking a closer look at your performance, you can determine where you need to make adjustments in your time management techniques. Evaluation should occur at two critical benchmarks: daily and weekly. While everything is still fresh in your mind, do a quick assessment at the end of each day. Is there anything that sticks out? If so, consider the impact it's having on your time and performance. Is it positive or negative? Abandon whatever time management strategy isn't working and indulge whatever is.

At the end of the week, do a global assessment. Look for patterns and trends. Did you notice time periods that were easy to work within? How about repeated distractions? Whatever you find, go beyond observations. Use what you discover to help you successfully manage your time and maximize your results.

20. Know that 'balance' is a myth

When thinking about time management, use the lens of counterbalance. It's the reality of how achievers accomplish big things.

If you are always striving to find a perfect balance, then the only thing you will achieve is burnout. You have to find the ways you can counterbalance. Choosing to say yes to and prioritize one thing automatically requires saying no to something else. We can either fight that and drown or embrace it and thrive.

Remember there will never come a day when you arrive at the perfect balance. Time management is a lifelong process, and setting your priorities and allocating your time is only the beginning. You have to diligently check your hypothesis and see if you made the appropriate decision. If it wasn't the right decision, the beauty is that you can make another.

Learn how to manage your time with the management skills that work best for you. You'll find you are able to achieve things beyond your wildest dreams.



BOTTOM LINE

We've all got the same 24 hours in our day, and yet we're not all at the same point along the road to success and self-actualization. One of the biggest differences between those who feel like they're lagging behind and those who are well ahead is the way they manage their 24 hours.

As Miles Davis is widely credited with saying, "Time isn't the main thing. It's the only thing."

That's why it's so important to use the time management strategies outlined throughout this e-book. In the end, it'll help you make the most of every minute you have available.

After all, it isn't what you think about, talk about or intend to do that shapes the life you lead. It is what you actually do each day that determines your future. How you spend your time is how you use your life. As psychotherapist Charles Spezzano wrote in *What to Do Between Birth and Death*, "You don't really pay for things with money. You pay for them with time."

Make sure you're getting your money's worth.