

# The Busy Professor

*Easy Steps to Getting Your Academic Life Under Control*

## STEPS

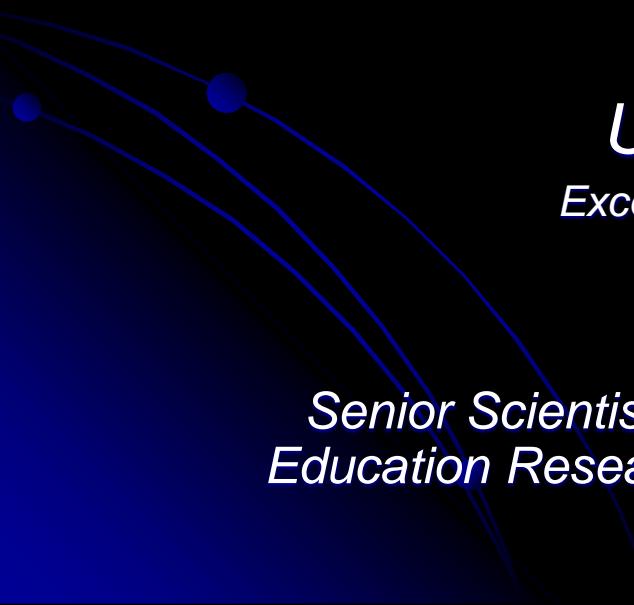
1. Rule your e-mail
2. Make To-Do lists that really matter
3. Create a highly-structured syllabus
4. Don't break your writing appointments
5. Automate everything (grading, investing, bills, social media, exercise)
6. Put 20-seconds between you and your vice
7. Pre-write letters, committee tasks, and grading comments
8. Every talk or poster becomes a paper
9. Use Smart Phone Apps to Build Your CV (Lift, HassleBot, Evernote)
10. Get a non-work life if you want to be more productive at work



Twitter Hashtag: #aaptefw

# Doing What Matters First

## *Time Management for Busy Professors*



Tim Slater

*University of Wyoming*

*Excellence in Higher Education Endowed  
Chair of Science Education*

*Senior Scientist, CAPER Center for Astronomy & Physics  
Education Research [caperteam.com](http://caperteam.com)    [timslaterwyo@gmail.com](mailto:timslaterwyo@gmail.com)*

- *The best thing about being a professor is the flexibility ... you can work any 80 hours a week you wish!*

Quote attributed most recently to Bob Hilborn

*Without talking to the person next to you...*

- You've been highly successful as a faculty member so far. Let's now dream a bit.... please list THREE job-related things you wish you were doing MORE of?

# *Figuring out what's most important*

- List three job-related things you wish you were doing MORE of?
- If you could do just **ONE** of those three things on your list really well that would help you progress professionally, which one is it and why?

# *Figuring out what's most important*

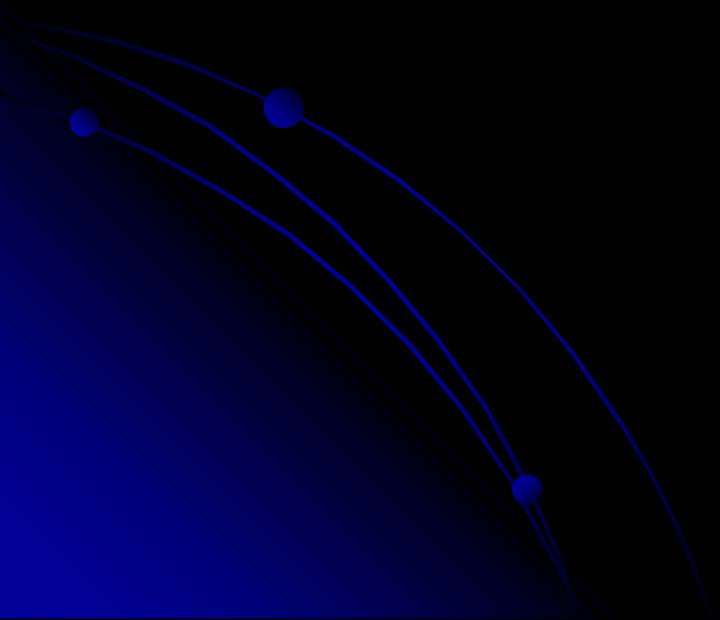
- What are three job-related things you wish you were doing MORE of?
- If you could do just ONE of those three things on your list really well that would help you be better professionally, which one is it and why?
- In a small group, ask volunteers to share ONE of the items. *Try not to offer solutions, but to focus on areas of improvement.*

# What is the consensus of the group?

- If you know what is most important, why aren't you doing it?
- Ok, if there is just not enough time
  - What steals your time?

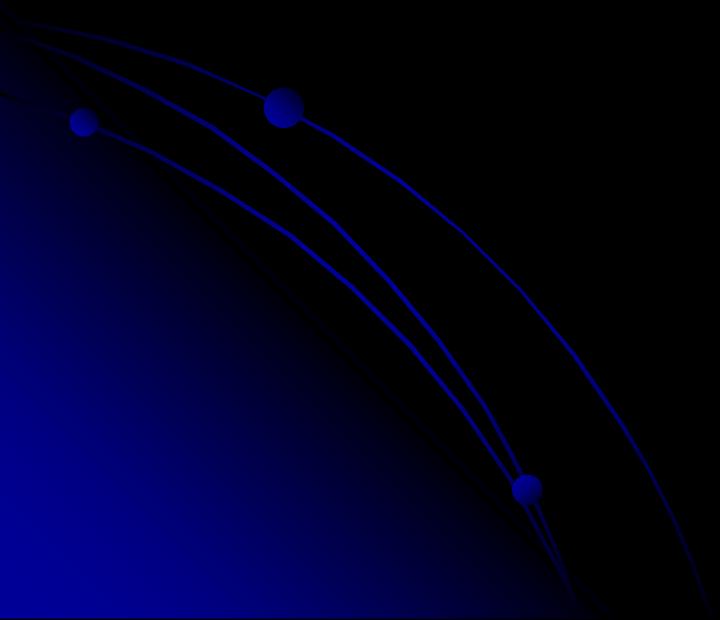
# The Omnivore's Dilemma

If you can buy just about anything you could ever want in a grocery store, what do you decide to eat for dinner tonight?



# The Academic's Dilemma

If you can do just about anything you could ever want to do during your work day, what do you decide to do today?

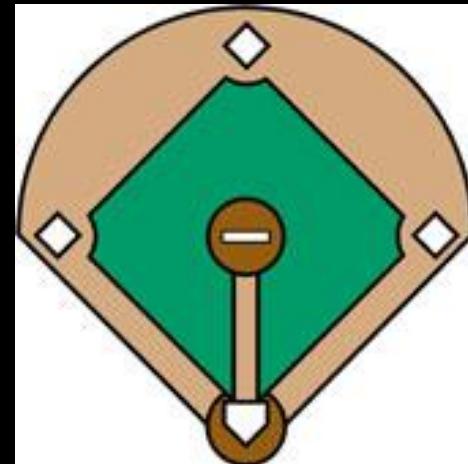


# Successful time management is about keeping the main thing the main thing

- You can do anything you want; but you can't do everything
  - Technology sometimes fools us into thinking you can
  - You can have >200 friends using FaceBook
  - You can submit multiple grant proposals several times a day with NSF *FastLane*
  - You can deliver by email all of your students a homework assignment in a single click without going to the photocopier

# Successful time management is about keeping the main thing the main thing

- You can do anything you want; but you can't do everything
- You have to identify what you really want
- *Life that frantically runs around touching all the bases doing a little of everything is a very unhappy life*



# CASE STUDY

*You've got to know before it happens...*

- Imagine a student comes to your office door for help on a HW problem...
- It's 415pm and you've got to hit submit on fastlane.nsf.gov by 5pm, what do you do?
- **BOTTOM LINE:** *If you don't know before it happens, you'll try to do both and do a lousy job of each*

# Money Management Strategies

*This only works if you know what is most important*

- Awareness of how you spend your money
- Awareness of what steals your money
- Barriers to people stealing your money

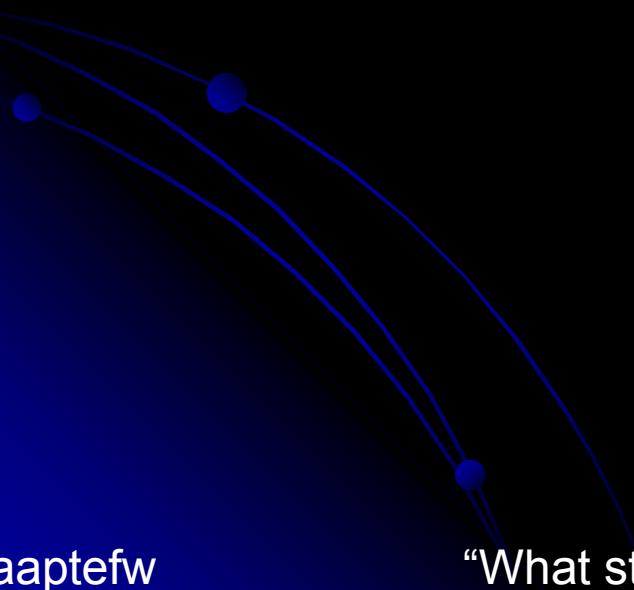


“What steals your time when you are trying to get work done?”

# Time Management Strategies

*This only works if you know what is most important*

- Awareness of how you spend your time
- Awareness of what steals your time
- Barriers to people stealing your time



“What steals your time when you are trying to get work done?”



# Time Management Strategies

*This only works if you know what is most important*

- Awareness of how you spend your time



"What steals your time when you are trying to get work done?"

# Time Management Strategies

*This only works if you know what is most important*

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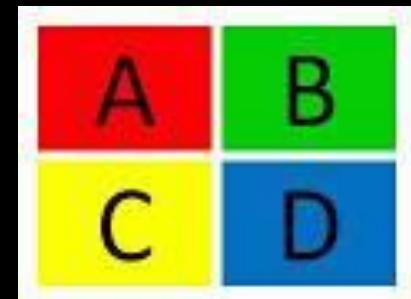


“What steals your time when you are trying to get work done?”

# *Voting Question*

**Which of these most disgustingly steals your time?**

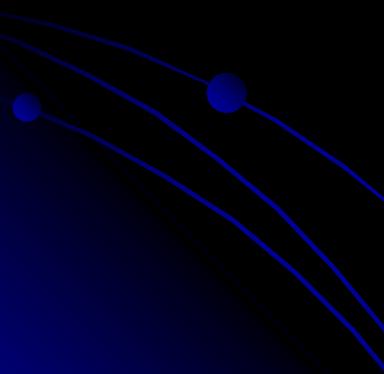
- A. Student requests, advisement & mentoring
- B. Commuting
- C. Administrative service AND email
- D. Internet distractions (Chrome, eBay, Amazon, CNN.com)
- E. Meetings



# Time Management Strategies

*This only works if you know what is most important*

- Awareness of how you spend your time
- Computers can multi-task, humans can't



# Given a stack of dishes in the sink

*Which should you do?*

(1) wash one and then

- rinse it, then
- wash another, then
- rinse it, then
- wash another ...

(2) scrub all the dishes  
first, then rinse them.

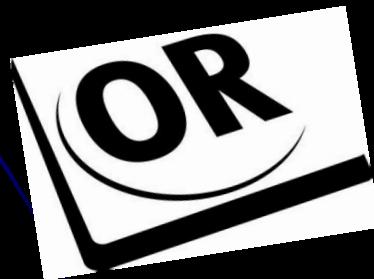


# At the observatory

## *Which should you do?*

(1) collect data on an object for 10 minutes and then

- spend the next 10 minutes doing the analysis, and then
- collect more data, then
- analyze it...



(2) spend the night taking as much data as you can (*doing some rough preliminary analysis while waiting*), then doing the analysis for all the data the next day.



# Given a stack of papers to grade

*Which should you do?*

(1) grade one paper and  
then

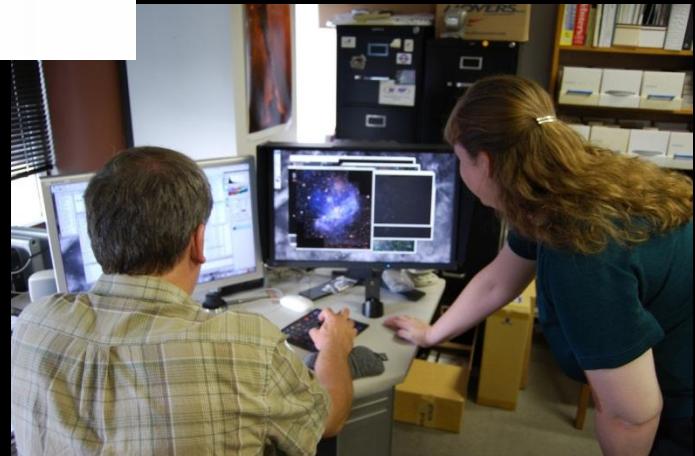
- respond to two emails,
  - then grade another paper,
  - two more emails, then
- ....



(2) turn off your email,  
grade your stack of  
papers with focus for an  
hour, then turn to your  
email and focus on it for  
an hour.



If one generally answers these all the same, what is the underlying operating principle?



# Time Management Strategies

*This only works if you know what is most important*

- Awareness of how you spend your time
- Computers can multi-task, humans can't

BEST ADVICE:  
Only Do ONE Thing at a Time !!!

# Time Management Strategies

*This only works if you know what is most important*

- Awareness of how you spend your time
- Computers can multi-task, humans can't
- **TRY IT:** Batch your work – do all of your email at one sitting, then turn it off
  - Make a separate email address for your teaching, tell students that is how to contact you, and that you only check it every other day.
  - Students are enthusiastically happy if they know you if and when you will respond.

# Time Management Strategies

*This only works if you know what is most important*

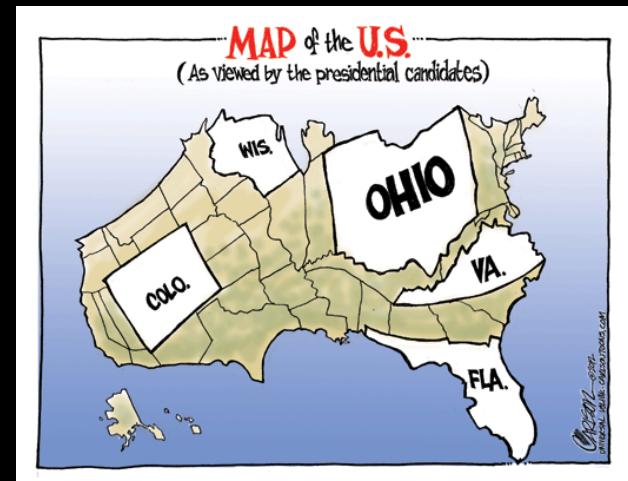
- Awareness of how you spend your time
- Computers can multi-task, humans can't
- Batch your work – do all of your email at one sitting, then turn it off
- **TRY IT:** Dedicate yourself to OHIO

O: Only

H: Handle

I: It

O: Once



# Time Management Strategies

*This only works if you know what is most important*

- Awareness of how you spend your time
- Computers can multi-task, humans can't
- Batch your work – do all of your email at one sitting, then turn it off
- Dedicate yourself to OHIO
- When I sit down to do my 100+ emails in my inbox at the end of the day, I
  - Delete it
  - Respond in less than 2 minutes
  - Archive it
  - Put in a "to deal with on Friday" directory/folder

**TRY IT**



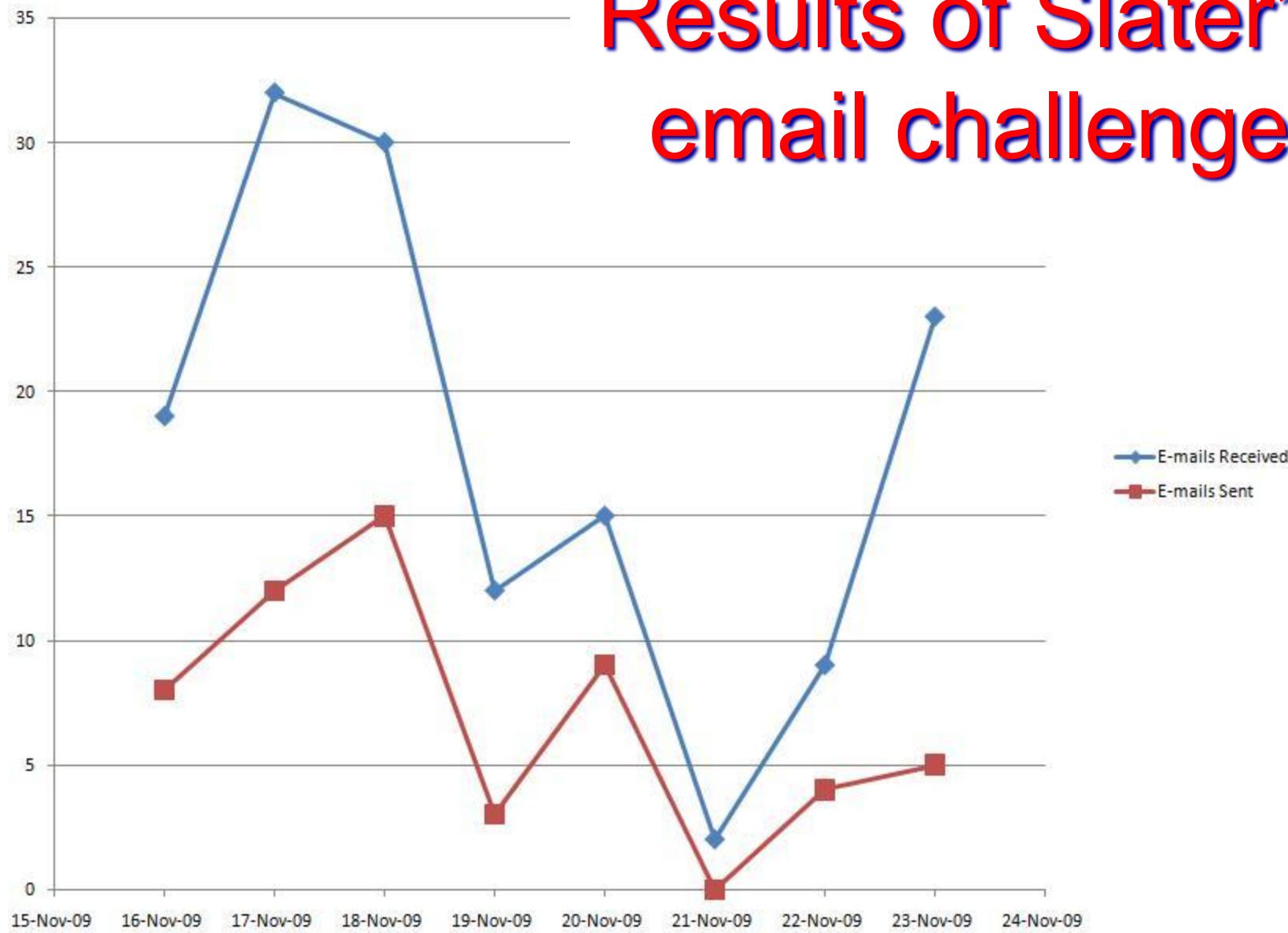
# Time Management Strategies

*This only works if you know what is most important*

- Awareness of how you spend your time
- Computers can multi-task, humans can't
  - *Level 0:* Email is on constantly and you notice every "receive"
  - *Level 1:* Turn off your email for at least one hour per day
  - *Level 2:* Don't access your email before noon
  - *Level 3:* Set your email to SEND/RECEIVE only once a day --- **TRY IT**



# Results of Slater's email challenge



# CONFESSiON

*Yes, I fall off  
the wagon  
sometimes*

[www.hassleme.co.uk](http://www.hassleme.co.uk)



# HassleMe

*Because sometimes in life,  
you just need to be nagged...*

**Not eating enough fruit?** Forgot to feed the fish again?  
Need a little help keeping your New Year's resolutions?  
Tell us what to hassle you about, and we'll nag you via email at  
**semi-unpredictable intervals.**  
HassleMe is unique because you **never quite know** when  
your reminder will come along.

## Set up a hassle now!

Hassle me **roughly** every  days, reminding me to:

Send the emails to:

- We'll send you a confirmation email when you sign up.
- If you add more than one email address (separated by commas or semicolons) we'll pick one person at random for each hassle — good for offices!

Can we make the text of this hassle [publicly visible](#)?

Yes  No

[Set up this hassle now >>](#)

# CONFESSiON

*Yes, I fall off  
the wagon  
sometimes*

TRY IT

[www.hassleme.co.uk](http://www.hassleme.co.uk)

# HassleMe

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**Not eating enough fruit?** Forgot to feed the fish again?  
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HassleMe is unique because you **never quite know** when  
your reminder will come along.

**Set up a hassle now!**

Hassle me roughly every  days, reminding me to:

**What are you doing right  
now?**

**What are you NOT doing?**  
*How do you feel about it?*

Yes  No

[Set up this hassle now >>](#)

YOU NEED A SYSTEM TO  
CALL THINGS TO YOUR  
ATTENTION SO YOU CAN  
FORGET THEM

- *Your email inbox is an ineffective to do list*
  - How many of you have 1,000 emails in your inbox?

# You MUST know where you're going!!!

- **TRY IT:** Spend 10 minutes at your desk writing down what you can do today or tomorrow to make you feel productive.

What's the ONE thing I could do today that would make me feel productive ?

	For Today or Tomorrow	For Another Day
1		
2	✓	✓
		✓

# YOU NEED A SYSTEM TO CALL THINGS TO YOUR ATTENTION SO YOU CAN FORGET THEM

- *Your email inbox is an ineffective to do list*
  - How many of you have 1,000 emails in your inbox?
- *My calendar is my to-do list*  
*Successful time management is about keeping track and batching similar tasks*

Calendar - Microsoft Outlook

File Today Search address books Back Forward Day/Week/Month

Edit View Go Tools Actions Outlook Connector Help Type a question for help

Day Week Month Show work week Show full week

Search Calendar

15 Sunday 16 Monday 17 Tuesday 18 Wednesday 19 Thursday 20 Friday 21 Saturday

4:00  
5:00  
6:00 DONE  
7:00  
8:00  
9:00 Time Management Session at NFW  
10:00  
11:00  
12 pm ASTRO 101  
1:00 Weekly GTA Meeting  
2:00  
3:00  
4:00  
5:00 Flight BWI to Denver  
6:00  
7:00  
8:00  
9:00  
10:00  
11:00

Weekly Research Meeting  
Astro 101  
Office Hours  
Keynote Talk at Colorado AAPT Meeting in Denver  
Physics Colloquium  
TO DO LIST

Tasks: 0 Active tasks, 0 Completed tasks

Server Status

Calendar - Microsoft Outlook

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1:00 Weekly GTA Meeting  
2:00  
3:00 catch up on email from DC trip  
4:00  
5:00 Flight BWI to Denver  
6:00  
7:00  
8:00  
9:00  
10:00  
11:00

Weekly Research Meeting  
grade students assignments

Astro 101  
LPI teleconference

Office Hours

Keynote Talk at Colorado AAPT Meeting in Denver  
Physics Colloquium

TO DO LIST

- submit travel receipts
- set up Facebook page
- draft final exam
- get NSF budget approval
- review applic. files
- arrange travel to DC

Click to add appointment

jeep oil change  
purchase daughter birthday gift

Tasks: 0 Active tasks, 0 Completed tasks

Server Status

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11:00

TO DO LIST

Keynote Talk at Colorado AAPT Meeting in Denver

Office Hours

LPI teleconference

Kevin calls me

Physics Colloquium

draft final exam  
get NSF budget appr  
review applic. files  
arrange travel to DC  
review AJP manuscri  
draft NSF summary

call plumber  
AAS Strat Plan

Tasks: 0 Active tasks, 0 Completed tasks

Server Status

# **TRY IT: Every Monday Strategy**

*If you want to implement a new teaching strategy....*

- Every Monday, I will assign a JiTT
- Every Friday afternoon, I will deal with my backed up email.
- Every class day I will do ONE PI-Clicker Q
- Every Tuesday afternoon, I'll work somewhere outside my building
- One day each month, reconsider your list of NEXT 10 titles I'm going to write

# Do you want to write more?

## COMMON TRAIT

- People who write the most refereed articles, most grant applications, the most .....

**TRY IT: WRITE  
SOME EVERYDAY**

*Everyone's goals are different, but  
I write 1,000 words every day  
**BEFORE** I'm allowed to look at  
my email*



# TRY IT: The 20-second barrier

- Want to watch less TV?
  - take the batteries out of the remote control
- Want to check your email less often?
  - Remove the saved password OR the desktop short cut to Outlook so you have to click a few times to open your email
- Want fewer cell phone interruptions?
  - Power down your phone for 1-hour per day  
*(if it is urgent, someone will find you!)*



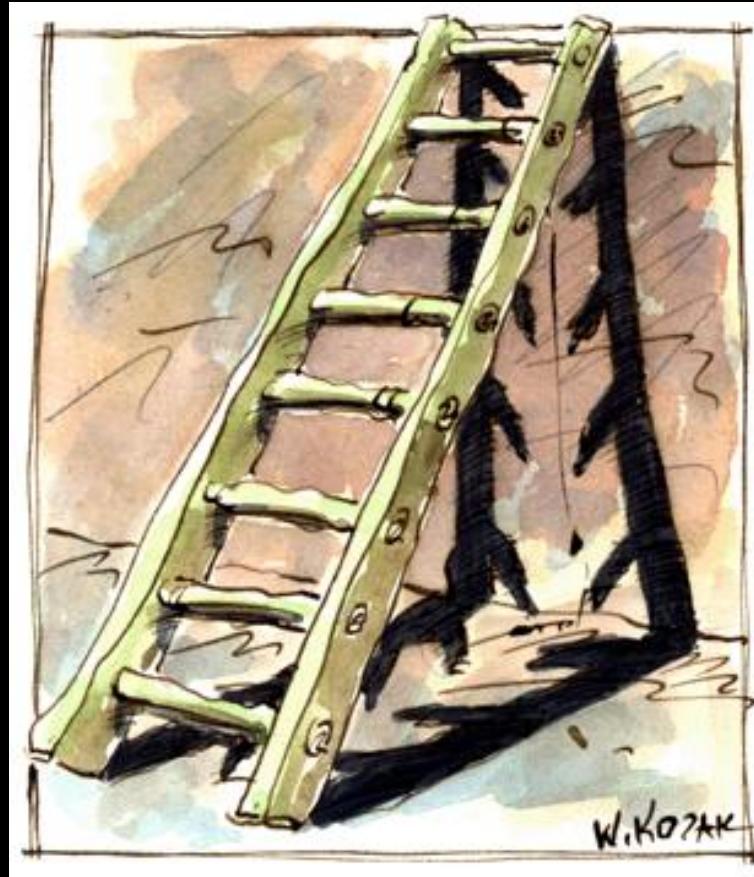
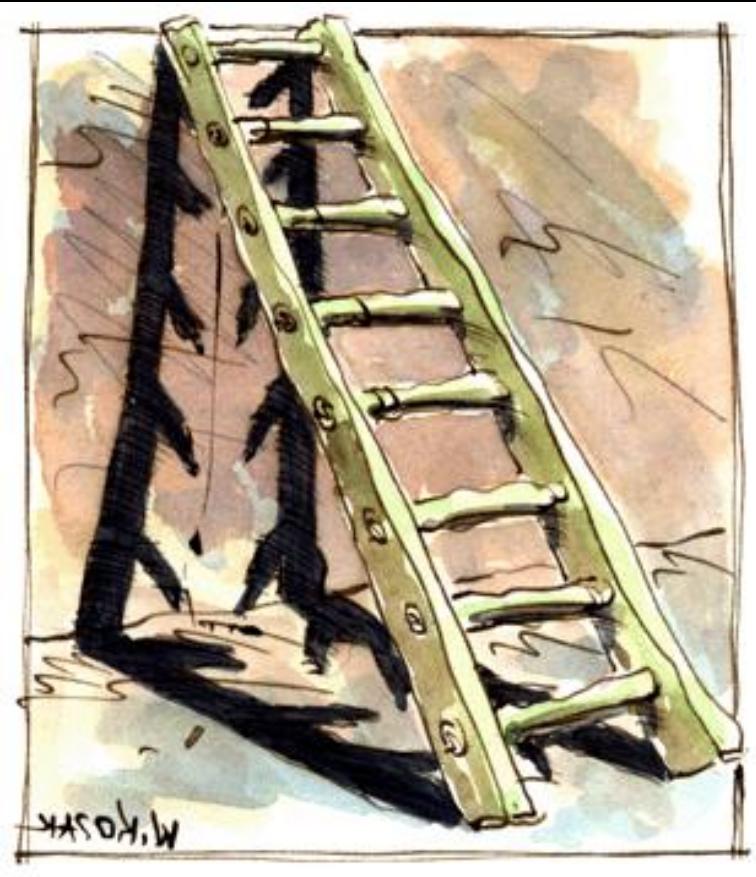
# Be *Smart* about Your Smart-Phone

## FREE APPS

**TRY IT**

- **Lift** – accountability, you log every time you do one of your goals and it reminds you if you haven't    (*e.g., compliment a co-worker*)
- **Evernote** – a catch-all box to catch all your napkin scribbled notes, research data brain dumps, grant proposal ideas  
    (*e.g., a time-management technique I don't want to forget!*)
- **Nudgemail** – email yourself reminders  
    (*e.g., send Chris' letter of recommendation on Tuesday*)

# Be sure to climb the right ladder



Pat is an assistant professor teaching 2 courses, one for majors (9 students) and one for non-majors (80 students)

Pat has 4 papers that are ever so close to getting out the door, a proposal due in a week which hasn't yet been started, a stack of ungraded mid-terms, and is three assignments behind in grading.

Each morning, there is often a student to two in Pat's office getting help. Each afternoon you walk by Pat's office, Pat is madly banging out emails; the ones you get are often in incomplete sentences. Pat is often late to meetings and class, bursting in apologetically, but out of breath.

Pat always responds to "how are you?" with "crazy busy." Everything seems like an interruption to Pat, so you don't speak much anymore. If you were Pat's chair, how would you advise Pat?

# *Some life-ready strategies*

- Prioritize your to-do list
- Batch your email
- Send email/texts less often
- Schedule your tasks
- Every Monday strategy
- 20-second barrier
- Use smart phone apps
- Write everyday

TRY IT

# Task

- Write **down three specific things** you are going to do in the next two weeks to enhance the way you manage your time so you can focus on what is important instead of what is in front of you

My greatest fear is that  
I'll look back on my life  
and not know what I've  
done with it –

*unknown*



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[thebusyprofessor.wordpress.com](http://thebusyprofessor.wordpress.com)



# The Busy Professor

*Easy Steps to Getting Your Academic Life Under Control*

## STEPS

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2. Make To-Do lists that really matter
3. Create a highly-structured syllabus
4. Don't break your writing appointments
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