

Free advice on time management

for new faculty and graduate students

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- As much as possible, work through students, and learn how to manage students. Construct your lab's culture so that student success and your success are achieved in parallel. For example, you might insist that graduate students write papers and publish them before writing their dissertation. You might insist that learned students help train new students, providing opportunities for your students to teach.
- Screen students interested in undergraduate research experiences carefully. Make sure that REU students demonstrate interest somehow before you commit. For example, you might insist that prospective REU students complete a long, relevant self-paced tutorial; or attend group meetings; or review the literature; etc. Don't give time-sensitive projects to undergraduates.
- Avoid faculty politics, especially if you find it emotionally challenging.
- Communicate via email, phone, or visiting as appropriate.
- Find a pace of work that suits you. Protect the time when you are most creative and reserve that time for creative work. For example, if reading is relaxing, you can read in the evenings. If you write well in the morning, work at home or in a cafe in the morning.
- Be careful to distinguish "urgent" versus "important" matters. Do not let the "urgent" displace the truly "important," but do not let simple "urgent" tasks accumulate. Do "important" things when you are "strong." Do "urgent" things when you are "weak." Primary relationships are "important."
- Remember that to a large extent faculty write their own job description. As far as it depends on you, teach courses you like to teach, learn what types of service you enjoy, etc.
- Understand your department's expectations with regard to research and teaching. You are your own person, but it is wise to understand exactly how you will be evaluated.
- As quickly as possible, learn to whom you are allowed to say "no."
- Learn to recognize when you are "spinning your wheels" and take a break or change tasks when you notice this.
- When writing long documents do the following in order:
 - Review literature and think about what you want to write
 - Outline your document
 - Stock the sections
 - Quickly work your way through entire document from start to finish
 - Make final decision about organization of the paper
 - Do final editing

It is inefficient to edit your writing before the overall structure and content of the document is clear.

- Avoid perfectionism. Except when it comes to editing grant proposal and papers.