Time management is the way you plan and control how you spend your time to achieve your required tasks and goals. Several important time management skills have been included below.

## 1) Goal-setting

Setting goals is a great way to decide what you want to work towards. Goal setting has also been shown to increase motivation. The best types of goals are “S.M.A.R.T.” goals which stands for: specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely. This acronym can help you set personalized goals and make a plan to achieve them.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Specific** | What do I want to do? Describe exactly what you want to do. Being precise lets you make a plan to meet your goal. |
| **Measurable** | How much and how often will I do it? Decide how you will measure your goal such as number of times, duration, and frequency. Then, you can track your progress! |
| **Attainable** | How will I do it? Decide what you will do to reach your goal. Remember your attitudes, abilities, skills, and supports. |
| **Realistic** | Can I do it? Your goal should be hard, but not so hard you will not be able to achieve it. |
| **Timely** | When will I do it? Set a specific time period for you to work towards the goal. Decide when you want to start working on it and when you want it done by. |

### Example:

Weak goal: I want the family to eat healthier SMART goal: We will eat one new fruit or vegetable a week for the next month.

on

## 2) Organizing

Once you know what your goals are, you need to write a list of all the smaller tasks you will need to do to reach your goals. This is called a to-do list. The first step in making a to-do list is choosing the method. Choose a way that’s customizable and works for you. You may need to try a few to find the right fit. Popular ways are:

* Notebook
* Phone or computer apps (e.g., Google Tasks, Friday, Todoist, Asana, Any.do, Trello, Notion – all have free versions)
* Planning calendar– paper or online
* Excel task list
* Dry-erase board
* Sticky notes

Once you’ve chosen a method to try, list all of your tasks. Update your list at least once a week. Break down large tasks into smaller tasks that can be completed within two hours or less. This will help you schedule your tasks and motivate you to complete them.

After you have a list of all your tasks, you will need to schedule when you are going to do them. This is usually done in a calendar. There are many ways to keep a calendar. Here are some popular options:

* Printed calendar (<https://print-a-calendar.com/>)
* Google calendar (<https://calendar.google.com/calendar>)
* Calendar.com (<https://www.calendar.com/>)
* Your phone calendar (all smartphones have an included calendar program that can also be accessed online)
* Planner

## 3) Prioritizing

Prioritizing is deciding what the most important use of your time is. Here are two things you can try to help you prioritize.

### Urgent/Important List

Once you’ve made a to-do list, classify everything as either urgent or not urgent and important or not important. Important activities will help you achieve your goals. Urgent activities are ones that have to be done quickly, usually because of a deadline. Once you’ve categorized all your activities, you can decide what to do when:

* Important and urgent: Do these tasks right away.
* Important but not urgent: Decide when to do these tasks.
* Urgent but not important: See if someone else can do these tasks.
* Not urgent and not important: Set these aside to do later.

### Impact/Effort List

Diagram

Description automatically generatedAn impact/effort list is similar to the urgent/important list but is a different way of thinking about your tasks. Score all the items on your to-do list by impact (0 for no impact to 10 for maximum impact) and by effort involved (from, say, 0 for no real effort to 10 for a major effort). Then, you can categorize all your tasks. This box chart shows you the different categories.

This can help you decide what tasks to do when. If you only have 30 minutes before picking up the kids from school, try a quick win (low effort, high impact). Maybe this is putting in a load of laundry, so you don’t have to worry if everyone will have something clean to wear tomorrow. If you have all day to work on something, pick a major project!

## 4) Other Tips

***Figure out how you’re currently spending your time.***

If you want to improve your time management, you need to figure out where your time is currently going. Try tracking your daily activities for a week. This will help you figure out how much of your time is spent on less productive thoughts, conversations, and activities. You’ll also learn how long certain types of tasks take you. This exercise can also help you determine the time of day when you are most productive. Then, you’ll know when to work on projects requiring the most focus, effort, and creativity.

### Only do one thing at a time.

Sometimes when we have a lot to do, we try to do it all at once – this is called multitasking. Research has shown that multitasking isn’t effective! If you’re trying to juggle multiple tasks, you’ll likely end up being less productive. To fight the urge to multitask, ask yourself: What are your most common distractions? (Email, social media, electronics, etc.). Try to eliminate them, for example, by turning off any devices that you can. Consciously try to do only one task at a time. Multitasking may be a hard habit to break, but it’s worth it in the long run.

### Group similar tasks together.

Save yourself time and energy by trying to complete all of one type of to-do tasks before moving on to the next. For example, create separate chunks of time for answering emails, making phone calls, doing household chores, etc. This can eliminate distractions and save time spent switching tasks.

### Establish routines.

A set routine can also help you accomplish the things you need to do. Is your home quietest in the early morning? You may want to get in the habit of regularly using that time to study or read. The more often you do this, the less you’ll have to think about when you’ll accomplish the tasks you need to do each day.

## Adapted from:

Government of Canada. (2019). *Setting your financial goals*. Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada. <https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/bsf-osb.nsf/eng/br04004.html>

Purdue University Global. (2018). *Mastering Time Management for College Students*. Purdue Global. <https://www.purdueglobal.edu/blog/student-life/time-management-busy-college-students/>

University of Hull. (2022). *Introduction to university study: Priority matrices*. <https://libguides.hull.ac.uk/introduction/matrix>

Zhu, M., Yang, Y., & Hsee, C. K. (2018). The Mere Urgency Effect. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *45*(3), 673–690. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucy008>