

Time Management Tricks



Feeling like there's never enough time in the day is a common point of stress.

We can feel like our "To Do" list will never be done, and there is never enough weekend to go around. While it can be a difficult shift to make, remember that we tend to find evidence for whatever we believe is true.

Begin finding evidence that there is as much time as you need, and that everything that needs to get done will be, with ease and grace. Notice that things take as much time as you have to give them, and you can flow from one activity to the next with exactly the time that you need. Mastery will allow you to include time for things that feed your soul, along with your agenda of work, meals, and exercise!

This is a mindshift that can be difficult to make, so appreciate your progress and forgive yourself when the stress of not having enough time starts to take hold.

Keep working at mastering your time, and the rewards will be worth the effort of instilling some new habits.

Here are some tricks to take back your time.

Direct Scheduling

Dump your To Do list.

Or at least, stop letting it spiral out of control with zero accountability. Whether you're using an online calendar system or still jotting it down in a planner, make your agenda do the thinking for you. When something comes up, put it on your calendar, not on your list.

This can be a huge shift! You can start to recognize how long things take if you keep an eye on your calendar (reminders help a lot). If an item runs over, decide when you will come back to it. If something else comes up, reschedule whatever gets bumped so it doesn't get forgotten.

If you are also scheduling your important commitments (like exercise, personal development, time with family, etc) then you will be able to recognize when you are overcommitted and avoid agreeing to deadlines that are going to put you under pressure.

Reminders & Notifications

Technology should be helping us, not hurting us. Use the Reminder notifications on your phone or digital calendar to help you avoid putting things on your To Do list or chasing slips of paper. This goes hand in hand with direct scheduling but can be easier to update on the go, or if you have designated times in your week when you see to certain tasks.

Tell your iPhone to "add fruit the shopping list" and you'll find it on a Reminder with everything else on your Shopping list. (Don't have one? You just made one!)

Say "remind me next Friday at 9 am to follow up with Fred" and you'll receive an alert. "Remind me Thursday at 6pm to make cupcakes for work tomorrow." They'll love you for it.

Pomodoro Technique (Time Blocking)

Now that you have reminders, along with emails, texts, social media... It's time to tune that out. They'll wait, and you will get more done if you designate blocks of time that are committed to a specific purpose.

It will get easier as you learn how *you* operate best, but start out by designating 20 minutes for one purpose. Even a short period of time can be a powerful increment if our attention isn't divided.

Try 30 minutes to check email - set a timer on your phone. Then tune out email and all other notifications if the next thing on your list is 30 minutes of research on a new proposal, then one hour working on a draft. Take a break with 2 - 5 minutes in between each activity to stretch, move around or get water before moving on to the next task or coming back to resume what you were working on.

The magic is not watching the clock. With a reminder or timer telling you when to change focus, you can be completely immersed in something and give it the attention it deserves so that you can really enjoy making progress and staying on track.

Block Scheduling

While Time Blocking is great for helping you maximize your productivity by optimizing focus, Block Scheduling helps you sort tasks to certain days so you can "stay in the zone" if that's a way that fosters your productivity. It takes some organization to arrange, but it can be a powerful way to simplify your daily To Do list by answering the question "when should I get to that?"

The goal is to bring consistency to your schedule by planning certain types of activities on recurring days. Like "Sunday is laundry day" on a bigger scale. Perhaps after work you go to the gym on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and you spend the same time devoted to personal development (reading a new book or listening to a great podcast) every Tuesday and Thursday. You don't need to think about it once it's a part of your system, you know every day after work what you plan to do, and you do your best to remain consistent with it.

It starts with assessing how you use your time, so the [Time Tracker form](#) may be useful. Look for categories of activities and which days or times (morning vs. afternoon) you prefer to do them, and then group like activities together! Once you have this template in place, as tasks come up you can assign them to the day you tend to those tasks, and stop sorting your tasks every time you review your list.

It may look something like this:

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
8a-1p Family	8-9a Meditation + Personal Development	8-9a Meditation + Personal Development	8-9a Meditation + Personal Development	8-9a Meditation + Personal Development	8-9a Meditation + Personal Development	Play Day!
	9-10am email + Weekly plan	9-10am email + Follow ups	9-10am email + Follow ups	9-10am email + Follow ups	9-10am email + Follow ups	
	10a-12p Review analytics	10a-12p Marketing	10a-12p Lead follow up	10a-12p Client care	10a-12p Meetings	
1-4p Laundry & house cleaning	12:30-5p Progress on projects	12:30-5p Meetings	12:30-5p Progress on projects	12:30-5p Meetings	12:30-5p Strategy & Weekly wrap up	
4-6p Weekly Food + Family Dinner prep	5-6p Gym	5-6p Personal Development	5-6p Gym	5-6p Personal Development	5-6p Gym	
6-9p Dinner + Family time	6-9p Family time	6-9p Family time	6-9p Family time	6-9p Family time	6-9p Family time	

Eisenhower Principle (INU Box)

If you still work best seeing everything you want to tackle in one visual space, try this exercise.

The system that President Eisenhower purportedly used to organize his workload and priorities was popularized by Dr Stephen Covey in his book "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People".

I call it my INU Box. It shines a light on how important it is to spend our time on things that are important and *not just the ones that are urgent*.

- **Important** activities lead to us achieving our goals, both professional and personal.
- **Urgent** activities demand immediate attention, and often are a part of someone else's goals. They bump other priorities down the list because the consequences of not dealing with them are immediate, so they often take up our time and focus.

You can keep it on a digital document or update it on paper it when you set your priorities for the week. Make a box divided into 4 parts with the following titles:

Then sort the things you want to accomplish according to the description that fits best. You may find that priorities change when you notice that something actually *is* Urgent, or when something on the Important list keeps getting put off.

<u>Urgent + Important</u> • •	<u>Urgent + Not Important</u> • •
<u>Important + Not Urgent</u> • •	<u>Not Urgent + Not Important</u> • •

One way to tackle the Important + Not Urgent items that often get put off is to have a time each week when you get to address these items. Better yet, direct schedule them into your week or have a devoted container of time in your Block Schedule.

You may discover that some of the most powerful things you can do for yourself are in this category. Start making yourself a priority and enjoy the accomplishment of completing these items that tend to get crowded out by urgency of others.