

Time Management

Managing your time is about balancing your work, well-being, and values; it's about meeting goals and responsibilities while also honoring your human need for accomplishment, meaning, and rest. Consider your specific needs and how one or more of the following principles and strategies might transform your schedule and to-do list into an embodiment of what really matters.

Twelve Principles of Productivity

1. **Block It Out:** Devote chunks of time to specific classes and projects. Estimate how many hours per week you need for each, and block them in your weekly schedule.
2. **Prioritize, Prioritize, Prioritize:** Schedule the most important things first, then the next most important, and so on.
3. **Be Realistic:** Schedule tasks you're actually going to do, not the ones you wish you could do. Creating a schedule you can't keep is a set up for frustration.
4. **Make Time for Fun:** Treat fun as seriously as your work. Block out time for clubs, sports, recreation, and rejuvenation.
5. **One Task at a Time:** Don't multitask! Focus on one thing at a time. Switching back and forth between tasks costs valuable time and energy. You'll also be more engaged when diving deep into each task.
6. **Chop, Chop:** How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time. Slice up big projects into small, manageable tasks, and tackle them one by one.
7. **Make Good Habits Stick:** A good habit can save countless hours. Stick to your routine, and let your body fall into a rhythm. You'll have fewer hard decisions to make!
8. **Be Flexible:** Leave empty time slots for unexpected events or just plain old fun. Create a flexible, catch-all makeup time on one day of the week.
9. **Respond, Don't React:** When deciding when to diverge from your schedule, don't react on impulse. Pause, take a deep breath, and remember what's most important to you.
10. **Value Your Space:** Organize your space with intention. Designate specific spaces for work and study—beds are for sleeping only!—and use physical reminders to stay motivated.
11. **Ask for Help:** Don't forget to reach out to your friends for support! They can be study buddies, writing partners, or even accountability coaches.
12. **Make a To-Done List:** When particularly overwhelmed, boost your confidence by making a list of everything you've already finished. You'll be surprised to see just how much you get done.

Strategies for Motivation and Making Progress

MEPFED and WOPED

Move Every Project Forward Every Day (MEPFED) involves making progress on every project you're working on every day. Dedicate a certain amount of time to each project so they all move forward. This is especially effective when you apply the Granular Planning and Rule of Threes (see below). Work on One Project Each Day (WOPED) takes a different approach: dedicating time and energy to making significant progress on one project a day. This allows for greater focus and is sometimes necessary to meet deadlines, but is not recommended if you tend to get bored easily.

Pomodoro Technique

Break your workday into 25-minute intervals (called "Pomodoros") separated by 5-minute breaks. During each Pomodoro, you focus solely on one task, avoiding distractions and interruptions. After completing four Pomodoros, you take a 15-minute break. The technique helps you stay focused and productive while also preventing burnout.

Building a Reward System

Set up incentives to motivate you to complete tasks. This can be as simple as treating yourself to your favorite snack after completing a difficult task or as complex as setting up a point system with rewards for reaching certain milestones. Especially helpful for long-term projects.

Goal Commitment Contracts

Make an agreement with yourself (or with a friend or colleague) to hold yourself accountable for achieving a specific goal. The contract outlines the goal, the steps you will take to achieve it, and the consequences (positive or negative) that will result if you succeed or fail. Putting all this in writing makes us more likely to stay focused and motivated.

Granular Planning and the Rule of Threes

Granular planning involves breaking down larger tasks or projects into smaller, more manageable steps. The Rule of Threes involves setting no more than three major tasks or goals to accomplish each day and also breaking down each task into three smaller components. Both make it easier to stay on track and measure progress.

Time Audits

Track how you spend your time throughout the day or week to identify areas where you could use your time more effectively, then adjust your schedule and habits to be more efficient.

Batch Processing

Batch processing involves grouping similar tasks together and completing them all at once. For example, responding to emails or making phone calls in a single block of time instead of throughout the day can help you stay in a groove and increase efficiency.