

Effective Ways To Improve Your Time Management Skills

by Del Suggs

There never, ever, seems to be enough time to do everything that needs to be done. Time management is a skill that many of us have to develop. Here are some ideas to help you improve your own time management.

Taking the time to improve your time management skills can lead to:

- The elimination of procrastination and avoidance-of-tasks
- Easier, quicker, evaluation of your work and abilities
- Less worrying about deadlines
- More productivity
- More relaxation time
- An overall increase in time

Time management is a skill that takes time to development and perfect. It also is a skill that is different for everyone. Your best bet is to try a variety of different approaches until something clicks in your brain and sticks in your routine.

Here are a handful of tips to consider:

1. Make Lists: Write as much down as you can. If you don't carry a planner or notebook already, start. I simply use a legal pad, so I'm not trapped into the boxes and forms that more formal Day Planners use.

A simple To Do List is often a huge help to anyone, and I

heartily recommend it. Your goal is to get everything down on paper so you can prioritize.

2. Make Use of Down Time: Using walking, driving, showering, or otherwise "dead" times to plan. Think about what your goals are for that day or the next. Which goals are most important? Prioritization is the key.

3. Reward Yourself: Whenever you accomplish something, especially the important things, make sure to take the time to reward yourself. *A Clockwork Orange* author Anthony Burgess' used the "Martini Method" to get things done. Burgess set a goal of 1,000 words per day. When he finished his word count, he'd relax with a martini and take the day off. Maybe a martini isn't the ideal reward for some of us, but the method stands useful.

4. Concentrate on One Thing: The human mind works more efficiently when it is focused. As we've seen before multitasking is actually a disadvantage to productivity. Focus on one thing and get it done. Take care not to bleed tasks into each other. At times, multitasking may seem like a more efficient route, but it is probably not. When you change tasks during multitasking, there is a lag in activity and focus as you mind comes back to the current task. You'll find you're more

productive if you do one thing at a time.

5. Avoid Procrastination: When trying to be more productive and trying to save time, procrastination should be avoided like nothing else. It is the ultimate productivity-killer.

6. Set Personal Deadlines: I love deadlines. A guaranteed way to alleviate some stress is to set your own earlier deadlines. Be realistic but demanding of yourself. Challenge yourself and, referring to tip 3, reward yourself for a meeting a difficult challenge. Not only will this save you time and make you more productive in the long run, but you will also have a buffer time with little to no penalties compared to those received for missing a real deadline. Of course, this tip has potential for abuse, so be sure to make your own penalties for missing your personal deadlines.

7. Delegate Responsibilities: It is not uncommon for people to take on more than they can handle. The overestimation of one's abilities, though not necessarily a bad thing, can often result in stress and more work for an individual. Don't feel bad about delegating tasks. Most people want to help.

8. Set up a Long Term Planner: In the everyday drab of life, we can often lose sight

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of our goals. Setting up a long term planner will help you envision your long term goals and rationalize your current objectives. Whenever you find yourself thinking “Why am I putting myself through this work right now?” Just take a look at your long term planner and you’ll be reminded of paying off your mortgage or saving up enough for your child’s college tuition. Revise this long term planner monthly to keep goals up-to-date.

9. Work in a Team: Although giving up responsibilities is a scary thought for some, it is an invaluable method to increase the average team productivity of all involved. Make sure the team goals are clear and make sure everyone knows who is responsible for given tasks. Make sure all lines of communication are always open. Give tasks to those who are best suited for them and things will get done faster.

10. Be Careful to Avoid Burnout: Burnout occurs when your body and mind can no longer keep up with the tasks you demand of them. Don’t try to force yourself to do the impossible. Delegate time for important tasks, but always be sure to leave time for relaxation and reflection. Review your recent accomplishments and make sure you feel good. Review and reflection is one of the best ways to gain confidence

and higher confidence means more productivity.

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