

TIPS FOR MORE EFFECTIVE PERSONAL TIME MANAGEMENT

1. Spend time planning and organizing.

Using time to think and plan is time well spent. If you fail to take time for planning, you are, in effect, planning to fail. Organize in a way that makes sense to you. If you need color and pictures, use a lot on your calendar or planning book. Some people need to have papers filed away; others get their creative energy from their piles. So, forget the "should dos" and organize your way.

2. Set Goals.

Goals give your life, and the way you spend your time, direction. Set goals which are specific, measurable, realistic and achievable. Your optimum goals are those which cause you to "stretch" but not "break" as you strive for achievement. Goals can give creative people a much-needed sense of direction.

3. Prioritize.

Use the 80-20 Rule originally stated by the Italian economist Vilfredo Pareto who noted that 80 percent of the reward comes from 20 percent of the effort. The trick to prioritizing is to isolate and identify that valuable 20 percent. Once identified, prioritize time to concentrate your effort on those items with the greatest reward. Prioritize by color, number or letter — whichever method makes the most sense to you. Flagging items with a deadline is another idea for helping you stick to your priorities.

4. Use a to-do list.

Some people thrive on using a daily To Do list, which they construct either the last thing the previous day or first thing in the morning. Such people may combine a To Do list with a calendar or schedule. Others prefer a "running" To Do list, which is continuously being updated. Or, you may prefer a combination of the two previously described To Do lists. Whatever method works best for you. Don't be afraid to try a new system — you just might find one that works even better than your present one!

5. Be flexible.

Allow time for interruptions and distractions. Time management experts often suggest planning for just 50 percent or less of one's time. With only 50 percent of your time planned, you will have the flexibility to handle interruptions and unplanned "emergencies." When you expect to be interrupted,

schedule routine tasks. Save (or make) larger blocks of time for your priorities. When interrupted, ask Alan Lakein's crucial question, "What is the most important thing I can be doing with my time right now?" to help you get back on track fast.

6. Consider your biological prime time.

That's the time of day when you are at your best. Are you a "morning person," a "night owl," or a late afternoon "whiz?" Knowing when your best time is and planning to use that time of day for your priorities (if possible) is effective time management.

7. Do the right thing right.

Noted management expert Peter Drucker, says, "doing the right thing is more important than doing things right." Doing the right thing is effectiveness; doing things right is efficiency. Focus first on effectiveness (identifying what is the right thing to do), then concentrate on efficiency (doing it right).

8. Eliminate the urgent.

Urgent tasks have short-term consequences while important tasks are those with long-term, goal-related implications. Work towards reducing the urgent things you must do so you'll have time for your important priorities. Flagging or highlighting items on your To Do list or attaching a deadline to each item may help keep important items from becoming urgent emergencies.

9. Practice the art of intelligent neglect.

Eliminate from your life trivial tasks or those tasks that do not have long-term consequences for you. Can you delegate or eliminate any of your To Do list? Work on those tasks which you can do.

10. Avoid being a perfectionist.

In the Malaysian culture, only the gods are considered capable of producing anything perfect. Whenever something is made, a flaw is left on purpose so the gods will not be offended. Yes, some things need to be closer to perfect than others, but perfectionism, paying unnecessary attention to detail, can be a form of procrastination.

11. Conquer procrastination.

One technique to try is the "Swiss cheese" method described by Alan Lakein. When you are avoiding something, break it into smaller tasks and do just one of the smaller tasks or set a timer and work on

the big task for just 15 minutes. By doing a little at a time, eventually you'll reach a point where you'll want to finish.

12. Learn to say "No."

Such a small word — and so hard to say. Focusing on your goals may help. Blocking time for important, but often not scheduled, priorities such as family and friends can also help. But first you must be convinced that you and your priorities are important — that seems to be the hardest part in learning to say "no." Once convinced of their importance, saying "no" to the unimportant in life gets easier.

13. Reward yourself.

Even for small successes, celebrate achievement of goals. Promise yourself a reward for completing each task, or finishing the total job. Then keep your promise to yourself and indulge in your reward. Doing so will help you maintain the necessary balance in life between work and play. As Ann McGee-Cooper says, "If we learn to balance excellence in work with excellence in play, fun, and relaxation, our lives become happier, healthier, and a great deal more creative."

Resources

Drucker, Peter. The Effective Executive. New York: Harper & Row, 1966.

Lakein, Alan. How to Get Control of Your Time and Your Life. New York: Signet, 1974.

McGee-Cooper, Ann. Time Management for Unmanageable People. Dallas, TX: Ann McGee-Cooper & Associates, 1983.

adapted from: nyu.edu/student

Time Management Secrets from 29 Straight 'A' Students

Adapted from an article written by Kevin Kruse's

What does it take to maintain straight A's while juggling various responsibilities and numerous activities?

Mr. Kruse recently had the chance to interview 29 straight 'A' students while researching his new book, *15 Secrets Successful People Know About Time Management*. He collected a wide range of advice and was reminded by his daughters that there is **no one way** to achieve productivity and success as a student.

However, what is clear from the word cloud analysis below is that there are consistent themes for students who achieve an 'A' grade.



Secret #1: Limit Social Media Use

The topic that most frequently came up in his interviews with students was the lure of social media. Almost everyone mentioned the siren call of Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook etc. Most of the students

mentioned that they use “access blocking” apps or browser plug-ins to literally turn-off access to distracting sites. The ones most frequently mentioned were [self-control](#) and [staying focused](#).

Caitlin Hale was a 4.0 student who now attends medical school. In an email, she explained:

Staying focused on schoolwork can be a pretty daunting task, especially with all of the social media apps pinging in the background. I use an app called Self Control, which lets me set the amount of time and specifically which apps I want to avoid—including Facebook and Instagram.

Victoria Shockley was a straight ‘A’ in high school and graduated summa cum laude from NC State University in only three years. She suggests:

Limit your time on social media until AFTER your work is finished. This is a big one - it's so easy to get distracted scrolling through our Facebook newsfeeds or checking out photos on Instagram. We can start chatting with a friend or surfing through Twitter and before we know it, half the night is gone.

Jane Ninivaggi takes it a step further. Her advice:

There is nothing wrong with social media, but it can take over a student’s life if they are not able to disconnect from it. During exam weeks, I delete Twitter and Instagram off my phone. I also make sure to leave my phone at home when there is something that I know I need to put all of my focus into.

Secret #2: Use a Calendar

There is the old saying, plan your work, then work your plan—and straight-A students plan with a calendar, not a to-do list. This theme was consistent with what was discovered from almost all of the ultra-productive people interviewed.

Coraima Medellin, a student at the University of Pennsylvania, shared the power of time-blocking enough hours per class.

Managing my time was something that I struggled with a lot when I first started at Penn...It's been suggested that for every hour of class lecture you attend, you should study for two to three hours... [I use] a weekly schedule that I put my work schedule and my class schedule in and then wrote the times that I

planned to study for each class. I found that it works when I have an exam or a huge paper coming up to keep me motivated and focused.

Jacqueline Kopicki color codes her different obligations:

I put everything in my calendar on my phone, and I color code my activities and appointments. For example, I will code athletics one color, the school musical practices another color and my assignments another color.

Krystie Seese, a graduate student at Post University, plans her schedule a week in advance. She said:

This process has yet to fail me. At the beginning of each week I plan what I will complete each day specifically. This helps alleviate the overwhelming feeling of seeing 10-12 assignments that need to be done. As I complete them, I check them off. Simple as that!

Secret #3: The Power of Priorities

High achieving students were very conscious of the limited number of minutes in each day, and also very astute in that they knew not all assignments are weighted the same. Investing more time into a high-value assignments, and working on what was due sooner were keys to their success.

Jason Khoo is part of the President Scholar Program at California State University Fullerton and on the Dean's List for the Mihaylo College of Business and Economics. His advice:

Maintaining good grades is having a good understanding of the construct of your grade. Most classes are weighted, and thus different assignments and tests have a larger impact on your grade. Know when the most important assignments, tests, and projects occur, then make sure at that time you are ready to work. I've seen many people who are excellent planners and never procrastinate only receive B's and C's. This is because they don't properly weigh their effort.

Nihar Suthar, an undergrad at Cornell University, stresses putting school work first.

Prioritize! I always prioritize the most important tasks that I have to get done for the day. The first on the list for me is always schoolwork, then writing (I write books), any athletic practices, and then hanging out

with friends. I find that if you prioritize, you will almost always be able to get all your work done and have extra time to spend with friends as well.

Joshua Eickmeier, an online hybrid MBA student at Carnegie Mellon University's Tepper School of Business noted:

You need to set your priorities early on and stick to them. I suggest that you maintain time with family and friends, but be quick to cut low-value activities like video games or TV shows. When you have to make more difficult choices, look at things from a long-term perspective. Don't waste time feeling guilty about your choices – think of them as effective compromises that will lead to your long-term success.

While there is no single path to excelling at academics, **limiting social media, setting proper priorities** and using **a calendar** is advice that can increase anyone's level of productivity and success.