

# Effective Time Management

<sup>1</sup>Effective time management involves three skills:

- I. Prioritization
- II. Scheduling
- III. Execution

## I. Prioritizing techniques

- First, make a to-do list for the day. Write down all the things you need to get done today, with no regard to the order.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- |    |     |
|----|-----|
| 1. | 6.  |
| 2. | 7.  |
| 3. | 8.  |
| 4. | 9.  |
| 5. | 10. |

- Next, three methods are suggested to help prioritize your things to do.
  1. The **ABC rank order method** involves assigning the letters A, B, or C to various tasks:
    - A = highest priority activities (must do immediately)
    - B = second-priority activities (not immediately, but you should do soon)
    - C = low-priority tasks or things you would like to do (can wait to do)

In this method of prioritization, assign tasks from your to-do list to the A, B, or C categories as appropriate to their priority. Once you have prioritized each task as A, B, or C, then complete the A tasks first, then B, and finally C.

| A | B | C |
|---|---|---|
|   |   |   |
|   |   |   |
|   |   |   |
|   |   |   |
|   |   |   |
|   |   |   |

*(Directions: In column A, list all the things that you must get done as soon as possible. In column C, list all the things that you would like to do but that are not essential. In column B, put everything else.)*

---

<sup>1</sup> Effective time management techniques taken from *Managing Stress* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.) Brian Luke Seaward, 2004.

2. The **Pareto principle** states that 20 percent of the tasks we do give us 80 percent of the rewards or satisfaction. Thus, with a list of ten things to do, this principle suggests that individuals should give their time and attention to the top two prioritized tasks in their list. (If one has done the ABC rank ordering, then these task would most likely be in the A category.)
  
3. Sometimes it is difficult to differentiate among responsibilities, all of which seem important. In this case, use the **important-versus-urgent matrix** to help you prioritize tasks. *Note that people tend to direct their energies toward box IV because these responsibilities look quick and easy. But attention and time should be focused on activities in box I, because they are both high in urgency and importance. Next, put time and attention to tasks in box II, then to box III, and finally to box IV.*

|                |                | <i>Importance</i>     |                        |
|----------------|----------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
|                |                | <i>Low Importance</i> | <i>High Importance</i> |
| <i>Urgency</i> | <i>High</i>    | III. a.               | I. a.                  |
|                | <i>Urgency</i> | b.                    | b.                     |
|                |                | c.                    | c.                     |
|                | <i>Low</i>     | IV. a.                | II. a.                 |
|                | <i>Urgency</i> | b.                    | b.                     |
|                |                | c.                    | c.                     |

Then, begin to work on your tasks in the following order:

- I. a. \_\_\_\_\_  
b. \_\_\_\_\_  
c. \_\_\_\_\_
- II. a. \_\_\_\_\_  
b. \_\_\_\_\_  
c. \_\_\_\_\_
- III. a. \_\_\_\_\_  
b. \_\_\_\_\_  
c. \_\_\_\_\_
- IV. a. \_\_\_\_\_  
b. \_\_\_\_\_  
c. \_\_\_\_\_

## II. Scheduling Techniques

- Once you have a solid idea of what needs to get done, there are several choices you can make about scheduling your responsibilities. If you have a few major projects to do, try the boxing method.

### **a. Boxing**

Divide your day into five parts: morning, noon hour, afternoon, dinner hour, and evening (or designate other parts of the day if these don't fit your particular daily routine). Then write down the significant tasks and assign them a block of time that is most suited to your schedule.

8a – 12p \_\_\_\_\_

12p – 1p \_\_\_\_\_

1p – 6p \_\_\_\_\_

6p – 7p \_\_\_\_\_

7p – 10 p \_\_\_\_\_

*Tip: To be effective you will want to take small breaks during these large blocks of time.*

### **b. Time Mapping.**

If you have many little things to do, try the time mapping schedule.

8:00 \_\_\_\_\_

8:30 \_\_\_\_\_

9:00 \_\_\_\_\_

9:30 \_\_\_\_\_

10:00 \_\_\_\_\_

10:30 \_\_\_\_\_

11:00 \_\_\_\_\_

11:30 \_\_\_\_\_

12:00 \_\_\_\_\_

12:30 \_\_\_\_\_

1:00 \_\_\_\_\_

1:30 \_\_\_\_\_

2:00 \_\_\_\_\_

2:30 \_\_\_\_\_

3:00 \_\_\_\_\_

3:30 \_\_\_\_\_

4:00 \_\_\_\_\_

4:30 \_\_\_\_\_

5:00 \_\_\_\_\_

5:30 \_\_\_\_\_

6:00 \_\_\_\_\_

6:30 \_\_\_\_\_

7:00 \_\_\_\_\_

7:30 \_\_\_\_\_

### **III. Execution Techniques**

Execution is the implementation of your prioritized schedule (what you have accomplished with the first two skills of prioritization and scheduling).

Here are some tips to help you execute your daily schedule:

- a. Assign a deadline (goal) for each task or project
- b. Break large projects down into smaller tasks, and assign a deadline for each task.
- c. Work on one section of the project or task at a time. Work until it is complete. Experts indicate that it is better to have one or two completed tasks than a handful of unfinished ones.
- d. Reward your accomplishments with small pleasures to motivate yourself to accomplish designated goals. Avoid immediate gratification—that is, reward yourself after satisfactory completion of each job, not before.

Sometimes it helps to list your goals and deadlines and also the rewards you can give yourself for completing the goal or meeting your deadline.

| <i>Goal/Deadline</i> | <i>Reward</i> |
|----------------------|---------------|
| 1.                   |               |
| 2.                   |               |
| 3.                   |               |
| 4.                   |               |
| 5.                   |               |
| 6.                   |               |
| 7.                   |               |
| 8.                   |               |
| 9.                   |               |
| 10.                  |               |

### **Some Time Management Advice from K-State Students**

- a. Schedule a morning class (or morning work hours) every day of the week so that you have to get up and going in the morning.
- b. When scheduling classes, work, and extra curricular activities, block out a time each day or most days during which you will get some physical activity, eat an unhurried nutritious meal, or do some healthy relaxation technique—*make the healthy lifestyle behavior a part of your daily schedule.*