



# 25 Practical Time Management Tips



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Regardless of how much we'd all like to have extra hours in our day to get things done, we're limited by what we have to work with. Instead of wishing for more time, there are ways to make the most of the hours available by practicing time management tips.



The majority of hard working people want to practice good time management and they start out well with this, but they forget to figure in the one biggest thing that sabotages time.

## Time Management for Interruptions

Interruptions are one of the biggest time thieves in your life. You may not have actually tallied how many minutes or hours have been stolen from your day by other people or situations barging into your day.

Here are some tips to help you eliminate or better deal with them:

- 1. Build time into every aspect of your day for those interruptions that we all experience.**



# 25 Practical Time Management Tips

You will never have a single day that's not interrupted by something unexpected. This is usually what throws people off course. It can break your concentration, making it harder for you to get the flow back.

If you're at work and someone pops in for "just a minute," you'll notice that it always turns into a lot longer. Before you know it, half an hour to an hour will have passed and you can't get that time back.

You want to allocate time for these interruptions by looking at your day and figuring out how much time you have to give these. For example, when someone walks into your office, you can say, "I'm working on a project so I can only spare five minutes."

At the end of five minutes, if the other person is still there, you say, "I'm sorry, but my time is up and I have to get back to this." If you respect your time, others will, too.

## **2. Plan your day the night before.**

This gives you a go-to launching place. You know what you have to start on first. It helps you to manage time if you have a map to follow – even if it's simply a list of what you must accomplish that day.

## **3. Plan your phone conversations.**

# 25 Practical Time Management Tips

This is a huge time waster. But if you plan your conversations before you make the call, this helps you stay in control of how long the conversation lasts. If someone calls you and you need to get off the phone, you just say that you have to go.

Most people don't want to risk sounding rude, so they'll remain on phone conversations that are taking up a lot of their time. If that sounds like you, there are several easy ways to end a phone conversation.

You can say that you're in a time crunch and have to go or that you need to take care of something. Usually, that will cause the other person to say goodbye and end the call.

It's okay to tell someone you can't talk at the moment and will have to get back to them. The second you start being someone else's sounding board for all of their problems, on an endless loop is when you get taken advantage of constantly.

## **4. Don't let technology interruptions disrupt your time management.**

When someone isn't dropping by your office or home, they're reaching out to you through technology like email or on social media. These can quickly take up hour after hour of your day because it's easy to get sucked into playing a game while you're handling something business or personal related online.

# 25 Practical Time Management Tips

If being on social media is a must for you, let it be a scheduled interruption. For example, you just write it on your planner that at lunch, you've scheduled ten minutes to be on social media.

Stick to that time just as if it were an appointment. If you have to, use an alarm on your smart phone or set an egg timer so that you're made aware of the end time of this distraction.

**5. Separate the interruptions between what must be dealt with and what doesn't have to be dealt with at that time.**

You don't have to make someone else's urgency your priority and you'll see this a lot when it comes to work things. Someone didn't get what they needed or didn't accomplish what they needed and all of a sudden, they want to drop it in your lap.

Or, they want you to stop everything you're doing to help them get out of a jam. There's something to be said for good teamwork, but if this is a recurring situation, it's time to put the brakes on bailing others out.

## Prioritizing Your Time

There are billions of people and billions of things that have to get done each day. But there's only one you and you can't do it all. So you have to prioritize what gets done and what gets moved to another day or delegated to others.

# 25 Practical Time Management Tips

**6. Look at your day's to-do list and begin your day by starting with the most important item on your list.**

There's a psychological reason you want to do it this way. When you do the important tasks first and finish them, it gives you a feel-good release of hormones and it makes you feel more energized and more like tackling other items on your list.

Plus, you get to see that you're making progress. If you start with the easiest task or the fastest task and put off the most important task, there's a chance you may not get to it by the time the day ends – and then anxiety sets in.

**7. Refuse opportunities that will take up too much of your time.**

You can't be involved in every activity and you can't attend every single meeting that you'd like to. You'll end up overworked and frazzled. If you work from home and there are several webinars you'd like to attend, but you're already struggling with time management, there's a way to decide which ones to choose.

You look at the ones that will give you the most benefit both personally and professionally. Sometimes there might be something you're interested in, but it's not conducive to a good time management schedule. That means you have to pass.

# 25 Practical Time Management Tips

## 8. Get your rest.

If you push yourself to go beyond what you should do by cutting back on sleep, this will eventually catch up to you. When you lose sleep, it can cause you to lose focus.

This means you'll start doing sloppy work and you'll find yourself having to redo work – or you're sluggish to begin with. Not only that, but when you start giving up your needed rest, it weakens your immune system and you'll be more susceptible to catching whatever virus is going around.

You'll end up losing time rather than being a good manager of it. You might want to stay up later and wake up earlier to get more done, but being well rested means you become far more productive – and quality improves, too.

## 9. Take care of yourself in other ways, too.

Make sure that you get the exercise that you need because exercise is something that actually helps you with time management. It keeps your energy levels high.

Plus, taking a break from personal and work responsibilities gives your mind a chance to be refreshed and come back to the task with a fresh outlook. Increased focus helps with productivity and saves you time in the long run.

# 25 Practical Time Management Tips

## 10. Take time off.

There can be a tendency to work full speed ahead, whatever it takes, to get all of the things done that you need to get done. Many people give up time with friends and family to try to gain more time.

They bring work home on weekends or they work on a to-do list all weekend around the house in an effort to get things done. Some people haven't had a vacation in years – not because they can't afford it – but because they don't feel like they have the time.

But if you take time off, away from everything you need to do, you end up getting more done because your body as well as your mind needs time where it has absolutely nothing it “must” focus on.

## Let Go of Perfectionism

When someone is a perfectionist, the job has to be done perfectly. These types of high achievers can experience more stress than someone who is not a perfectionist. When it comes to time management, perfectionism will work against you.

## 11. Know that it's okay not to do it all.



# 25 Practical Time Management Tips

Forget about multi-tasking. Multi-tasking is synonymous with doing several jobs poorly all at once – and that's very frustrating to someone with perfectionist tendencies.

You don't have to accomplish everything in one day. Instead, concentrate on what's right in front of you that has to be done first. Get that finished and then move on with the next item.

## **12. Give everything you need to do a time limit.**

Whether you're a perfectionist or not, this is a good rule of thumb for anyone looking for better time management. Open-ended tasks have a tendency to pile up because there's no finish line.

So when you look at the whole picture of what has to be accomplished with the time you have, it can feel overwhelming. It's better to break the things you have to do down.

For example, if you have a project that has to be completed by a certain deadline, you need to divide that project up by how long it will take to get the work done.

# 25 Practical Time Management Tips

If the project will take 40 hours to complete and you have two weeks to get it done, you know you have to work on it 20 hours per week or 5 hours per day. And take into account interruptions and other obstacles that will get in the way.

## **13. Don't schedule anything back to back.**

You have to have some time – even if it's just a few minutes – where your mind can relax and get away. Mental exhaustion is often more draining than physical exhaustion.

Like your body, your brain can't go full speed ahead on something without needing a time out every so often. In between your to do list tasks, break and do something enjoyable – or do nothing at all.

## **14. Divide all of your tasks up in your personal and professional life by hours, days, months, seasons or year.**

For example, if you know that every fall the gutters on your home have to be cleaned from the leaves that fell, you'll want to put some time for that task on your schedule.

# 25 Practical Time Management Tips

If you know that every year, there's a Christmas party at work and you'll need to bring something as well as show up, put that on your calendar, too. If you own a business that has seasonal items, you'll want to schedule to take care of releasing those products, press releases or email newsletters ahead of time. You don't want to wait until December to talk about December projects.

**15. Look over your to-do list – you should have one for both home and office – and cut it down.**

Most people end up with poor time management because their to-do list has too many items on it. That's because we all like to achieve things and even the possibility of achieving things makes us feel good.

But people often set up tasks that they can't accomplish because there's not enough time. It's like setting yourself up for failure. Whittle the list down and if there's time left over, you'll feel a bonus that you got something "extra" done rather than failed to complete something imperative.

## Get Organized for Better Time Management

Everyone has areas of life where there's a lack of organization. Whether it's at home or the office, we misplace things and we can't find things when we need them because we're not organized.

# 25 Practical Time Management Tips

But getting organized is a big help with time management. Declutter your home and office before you attempt to tackle staying organized and managing your time better.

## **16. Forget the elaborate systems.**

Any system you use for organizing your life that takes a lot of time to keep up with is actually a waste of time. An organizational system should enhance your life, not detract from it.

You can use simple means such as an expandable folder to keep track of bills that need to be paid or projects that need to be completed. You can use a filing cabinet with hanging folders.

Don't overcomplicate your organization system. Invest in simple solutions and watch how it transforms the way you manage your time and act in a more productive manner.

## **17. Don't procrastinate.**

This is a big problem for a lot of people in all walks of life. We don't like to do the things we don't like to do. It's as simple as that. No one wants to do the hard jobs that seem boring.

# 25 Practical Time Management Tips

We don't want to do the job that's going to take us five hours to complete when the sun is shining and we'd rather kick back and go to the beach or spend time with friends.

When you get the most difficult tasks over with, they're done and you have that sense of satisfaction that it's now behind you. One of the biggest time management problems is with paperwork.

If you haven't switched to electronic file keeping, then it can be easy to get overwhelmed and disorganized just by the volume of documents. Since you don't want certain sensitive information stored online, you'll want to keep that at home.

When you get important paperwork, take care of it immediately. Put it where it needs to go. If there's something that requires you to make a phone call before you can put that paperwork away, put the paper in your desk inbox and make a note in your planner to schedule a time to make that call.

## **18. Group similar items together at home in order to save time.**

For example, when it comes to better home time management, if you have to run errands, group all of the errands that are within the same area together. Try to work it out so that you only have to deal with one errand day a month.



# 25 Practical Time Management Tips

Do the banking, post office needs and any medication pickups on the same day. Driving can be a big leak in your time management success – and since you need to pay attention to driving, you can't do much else except maybe listen to a podcast or something else you need to listen to.

## **19. Do the same at the office.**

You can do the same when it comes to work tasks. Things that have to be done every week can be grouped by days and according to difficulty and length of tasks.

If you know that you need to drop something off at someone's office and you have a meeting, you can drop the item off while you head to the meeting. This also helps prevent time wasted chatting when you have to be somewhere.

## **20. Have a calendar for both home and office.**

Keep it where you can see it every day. You can put it on the wall or on your desk. The ones with the large blocks that enable you to write appointments in them work best.

This way, you can see your day at a glance and your week and month as well. These larger calendars often work better for time management than the smaller ones you can keep tucked away.

# 25 Practical Time Management Tips

## Finding Opportunities to Improve Time Management

You can manage time better by finding lost time. Lost time is that which you didn't even realize you were wasting in the first place. It's almost like keeping change in a piggy bank and one day you realize it's totaled over \$100!

### **21. Don't waste the time that most people do.**

There are ways to find time that's often overlooked because people tend to think of time management as being large blocks of time available. But you can do a lot with just ten or fifteen minutes.

Don't waste the time you have while waiting in a doctor's office or while exercising. If you like to use a treadmill, you can get one that has a desk so that you can take care of something that has to be dealt with.

### **22. Realize that not everything that seems important is.**

It only seems that way. Look at your life and stop doing the things that aren't important that drain your time. If something isn't a matter of you being happy and succeeding personally or professionally, then it's not important.

### **23. Run ahead, not behind.**

# 25 Practical Time Management Tips

When you get behind schedule, it can make you feel a lot of pressure and it adds stress to your life. Try to get things done ahead of time because this gives you a buffer in time management.

## **24. Delegating is a great way to help with time management.**

Most people like to do things themselves because they know then that the job is done correctly. But if you do the things that others can do, it's draining your time. For example, some time drains are things like mowing the grass or cleaning the house, scheduling meetings, handling social media updates.

What you can do is to look at how much it costs you do the tasks that you do. If someone else can do them, then you're not only losing time – you're losing money.

If you earn \$200 per hour, then an hour of mowing the grass costs you \$200. But if you pay someone \$50 to mow the grass, then you saved an hour and \$150 because you gained time.

## **25. Deal with emails the right way.**

# 25 Practical Time Management Tips

Handling email causes more people to get off track than any other online task beside social media and online games. Manage your time wisely with email by setting aside a specific time to deal with email and setting a time limit on how long you'll take responding to the messages.

**If they're not important, don't save them to look at later because they'll only pile up in your inbox. If your life allows you to, hire an assistant to deal with handling your email.**

Most people have no idea how they really spend their time. Days are spent mindlessly floating along, reacting here and there, and you're never sure where the time has gone.

If your accomplishment list is short, or you're always running out of time now is the time to make a change. Take charge of your time and take charge of your life. You have the same 24/7 as everyone else.

The only difference is how you CHOOSE to use it.

# 25 Practical Time Management Tips

## Ready to take back your time?

Are you tired of being out of time?

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