

# Essential Time Management Strategies

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# Outline

- Record keeping
- Breaking down big tasks
- Prioritizing
- Work rhythms
- Bringing it together

# What kind of time management tool(s) do you use?

- How effective is it?
- What are the drawbacks?

# Record keeping

- Make a habit of recording all tasks that need to be done
- Find a format that works and stick to it
- Schedule first steps of big projects early
- Writing down tasks helps with planning and lessens anxiety, lets you reflect on your progress

# Activity

- In this session we'll try one method of designing a weekly schedule
- On your own list all next week's commitments and estimate the amount of time you will need for each
- Discuss your commitments with another person and add any of your partner's ideas to your own list if they also apply to you



# Breaking it down

What is it about  
*big tasks*  
that make them  
*big problems?*

What is it about  
*small tasks*  
that make them  
*no problem?*



# The *big tasks* in grad school

- Thesis / Dissertation
- Teaching / Teaching assistant work
- Coursework
- Comprehensives / Candidacies / Prospectus
- Research project / Research assistant work
- Journal articles / Conference papers

# 1. Manageable-ize

- Break it up
- Delegate and remove unessential steps
- Plan out milestones and prioritize
- Check off as you go
- Adjust as needed

# 1. Manageable-ize

Pick two or three *big tasks*

For each task,

- Break it up
- Delegate and remove unessential steps
- Plan out milestones and begin to prioritize

1. Manageable-ize
2. Stop worrying about the future!
3. Use the right tools

# 3. Use the right tools

- Pen and paper
- Calendar
- Apps

What kind of tools do you see yourself using?

# Prioritizing

# WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU'RE OVERWHELMED WITH WORK

STEP 1: MAKE A LIST OF ALL THE THINGS YOU HAVE TO DO.



STEP 2: CATEGORIZE THEM BASED ON THEIR IMPORTANCE.



STEP 3: REALIZE YOU JUST MADE IT WORSE.



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# Why prioritize?

- Your stress level diminishes (you don't endanger other drivers)
- You don't get insomnia
  - you are more productive
- You can enjoy your break time more
- You eliminate the “decision dilemma”—“What do I do next?”
- For every 1 minute you spend in planning, you will gain 10 in execution
  - 1 minute = 10 minutes. 10 minutes = 1 hour and 40 minutes
- The difference between being REACTIVE and PROACTIVE
  - when you don't plan, you end up responding to the day's trivial, time-consuming events as they occur



# Methods

- Scaling from 1-10
- ABC Analysis
- Steven Covey's Four Quadrants

# List of Tasks

- grocery shopping
- prepare slides for LTC workshop on Time Management
- prepare midterm exam questions for English 135
- prepare lesson plan for English 135 class
- dance class
- research Virginia Woolf and communication technology for MLA 2016 paper
- write 500 words for MLA paper
- meet with BM to discuss big data methodology for MLA paper

# Scaling from 1-10

- Number your list from 1 (very important) to 10 (unimportant)
- Use for a simple to-do-list
- Can be created quickly

# Scaling 1-10

- grocery shopping **8**
- prepare slides for LTC workshop on Time Management **1**
- prepare midterm exam questions for English 135 **3**
- prepare lesson plan for English 135 class **2**
- dance class **6**
- research Virginia Woolf and communication technology for MLA 2016 paper **5**
- write 500 words for MLA paper **4**
- meet with BM to discuss big data methodology for MLA paper **7**

# ABCDE Method

- A-level tasks (no more than 25% of your time)
  - critical things
  - things that will lead to significant consequences if not done on time — focusing on consequences creates an urgency factor
- B-level tasks
  - everything you have to do to meet your short- and long-term academic and career goals
  - activities that may have a mildly negative consequence if not completed on time
- C-level tasks
  - everything else — busy work, wants (as opposed to needs), nice to haves, and goofing off (95% of what you do online)
  - activities that have no penalty if not completed on time
- D-level tasks
  - Delegate — these are actions that someone else can take on
- E-level tasks
  - Tasks that could be Eliminated if necessary

# ABCDE Method

- grocery shopping **D**
- prepare slides for LTC workshop on Time Management **A**
- prepare midterm exam questions for English 135 **B**
- prepare lesson plan for English 135 class **A**
- dance class **C**
- research Virginia Woolf and communication technology for MLA 2016 paper **B**
- write 500 words for MLA paper **B**
- meet with BM to discuss big data methodology for MLA paper **C/E**

# Steven Covey's Four Quadrants

- Create a grid that classifies your tasks according to their level of urgency and importance
- Try to ensure important work is done before it becomes urgent

# Steven Covey's Four Quadrants

|                      | <i>Urgent</i>  | <i>Not Urgent</i>  |
|----------------------|--|--|
| <i>Important</i>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <i>slides for workshop</i></li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <i>lesson plan for English</i></li><li>- <i>research for MLA paper</i></li><li>- <i>prepare midterm exam questions</i></li></ul> |
| <i>Not Important</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <i>dance class</i></li></ul>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <i>grocery shopping</i></li><li>- <i>practice piano</i></li></ul>  |



# Activity: Prioritizing

- Using one of the three methods discussed, prioritize the tasks you've listed

# ABCDE Method

- A-level tasks (no more than 25% of your time)
  - critical things
  - things that will lead to significant consequences if not done on time — focusing on consequences creates an urgency factor
- B-level tasks
  - everything you have to do to meet your short- and long-term academic and career goals
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  - Delegate — these are actions that someone else can take on
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# Personal Work Rhythms

- Individual times of higher/lower efficiency (i.e. morning versus evening)
- *Activity:* identify your prime productive period(s), then share with another person and discuss:
  - How is your partner's work rhythm different from yours? Have you ever considered your natural work rhythm in your scheduling? Has this helped?
- When schedule allows, consider personal rhythm for maximum efficiency

# Taking Breaks

- How do you manage your breaks? What do you like to do?
- Breaks allow your brain to process and synthesize information
- Breaks help you maintain motivation, lessen stress, and boost productivity

# Taking Breaks

- Schedule regular breaks, i.e. 10 min. per hour of work, and stick to your schedule
- The longer you've been working, the longer the break should be
- Get away from the computer and move
- Good activities: exercise, socializing, switching to other tasks like grocery shopping or house cleaning

# Activity: Building a Schedule

On your schedule:

- add fixed time commitments (i.e. classes)
- mark your personal high and low productivity times
- insert your tasks, matching high-priority tasks to high productivity times and low priority/easier tasks to low productivity times
- briefly share with another person

# Disclaimer!

- We are not robots
- If you choose some of these strategies and use them most of the time, your efficiency will increase

# Review

- Record keeping
- Breaking down big tasks
- Prioritizing
- Work rhythms
- Bringing it together



# References

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