20 Quick Tips For Better Time Management

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http://www.lifehack.org/articles/lifehack/20-quick-tips-for-better-time-management.html

Are you usually punctual or late? Do you finish things within the time you stipulate? Do you hand in your reports/work on time? Are you able to accomplish what you want to do before deadlines? Are you a good time manager?

If your answer is "no" to any of the questions above, that means you're not managing your time as well as you want. Here are 20 tips on how to be a better time manager:

1. **Create a daily plan**. Plan your day before it unfolds. Do it in the morning or even better, the night before you sleep. The plan gives you a good overview of how the day will pan out. That way, you don't get caught off guard. Your job for the day is to stick to the plan as best as possible.

2. **Peg a time limit to each task**. Be clear that you need to finish X task by 10am, Y task by 3pm, and Z item by 5:30pm. This prevents your work from dragging on and eating into time reserved for other activities.

3. **Use a calendar**. Having a calendar is the most fundamental step to managing your daily activities. If you use outlook or lotus notes, calendar come as part of your mailing software. Google Calendar is great – I use it. It's even better if you can sync it to your mobile phone and other hardware you use – that way, you can access your schedule no matter where you are.

4. **Use an organizer**. Organizers help you to be on top of everything in life. It's your central tool to organize info, to-do lists, projects, and other miscellaneous items.

5. **Know your deadlines**. When do you need to finish your tasks? Mark the deadlines out clearly in your calendar and organizer so you know when you need to finish them.

6. **Learn to say "No"**. Don't take on more than you can handle. For the distractions that come in when you're doing other things, give a firm no. Or defer it to a later period.

7. **Target to be early**. When you target to be on time, you'll either be on time or late…but mostly, late. If you target to be early, you'll most likely be on time. For appointments, try for early. For your deadlines, submit them earlier than required.

8. **Time box your activities**. This means restricting your work to X amount of time. Read more about time boxing: #5 of 13 Strategies To Jumpstart Your Productivity.

9. **Have a clock visibly placed before you**. Sometimes we are so engrossed in our work that we lose track of time. Having a huge clock in front of you will keep you aware of the time at the moment.

10. **Set reminders 15 minutes before**. Most calendars have a reminder function. If you've an important meeting to attend, set that alarm 15 minutes before.

11. **Focus**. Are you multi-tasking so much that you're just not getting anything done? If so, focus on just one key task at one time. Close off all the applications you aren't using. Close off the tabs in your browser that are taking away your attention. Focus solely on what you're doing. You'll be more efficient that way.

12. **Block out distractions**. Distracted by instant messages, calls, or texts? When doing important work, I switch off my phone. Calls during this time are recorded and I contact them afterward. Same with texts, etc. This helps me concentrate.

13. **Track your time spent**. Egg Timer is a simple online countdown timer. You key in the amount of time you want it to track (example: "30 minutes", "1 hour") and it'll count down in the background. When the time is up, the timer will beep. Great way to be aware of your time spent.

14. **Don't fuss about unimportant details**. You're never get everything done in exactly the way you want. Trying to do so is being ineffective. Read more: Why Being A Perfectionist May Not Be So Perfect.

15. **Prioritize**. Since you can't do everything, learn to prioritize the important and let go of the rest. Apply the 80/20 principle which is a key principle in prioritization. Read more about 80/20 in #6 of 13 Strategies To Jumpstart Your Productivity.

16. **Delegate**. If things can be better done by others or are not so important, consider delegating. This takes a load off and lets you focus on key tasks.

17. **Batch similar tasks together**. For related work, batch them together. For example, my work can be categorized into these core groups: (1) writing (articles, my upcoming book) (2) coaching (3) workshop development (4) business development (5) administrative. I batch all the related tasks together so there's synergy. If I need to make calls, I allocate a time slot to make all my calls.

18. **Eliminate your time wasters**. What takes your time away your work? Facebook? Twitter? Email checking? Stop checking them so often. Make it hard to check them: remove them from browser quick links; stuff them in a hard to access bookmarks folder. Replace your browser bookmarks with important work-related sites. You may still check FB/Twitter, but you'll find you do so less than before.

19. **Cut off when you need to**. #1 reason why things overrun is because you don't cut off. Don't be afraid to intercept in meetings or draw a line to cut-off. Otherwise, you eat into the next item's time.

20. **Leave buffer time in-between**. Don't pack everything closely together. Leave a 5-10 minute buffer time in between tasks. This helps you wrap up the previous task and start off on the next one.