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Information Sheet

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Time Management - A Practical Guide For Effective Living

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Time management is the practice of planning and directing your time deliberately so that you can become more effective, efficient, and productive. Good time management also supports healthier life balance, reduces stress, and helps you make progress toward your personal and professional goals. By mastering time, you become its commander—not its servant.

Effective time management requires two core components:

- Practical skills for prioritising, organising, and completing tasks efficiently.
- Affective–cognitive–behavioural skills to support motivation, focus, and follow-through.

Below are strategies to help you improve your time management skills and regain a sense of control and empowerment.

1. Create an Organised Environment

A clear workspace supports a clear mind.

- Maintain tidy, organised living and working areas.
- Keep objects accessible and logically arranged to minimise wasted time searching.
- Set up your workspace ergonomically for comfort and efficiency.

2. Prioritise, Triage and Assert Your Limits

- Be willing to say “no” when needed. Overcommitting leads to stress, frustration, and burnout.
- Communicate clearly what you can and cannot take on.
- Protect your energy by focusing on what genuinely matters.

3. Skill Others Up

- Support others without taking over.
- Teach people how to solve problems rather than becoming responsible for everything.

“Give a boy a fish and he eats for a day. Teach him to fish and he eats for a lifetime.”

4. Redirect When Appropriate

- Do not assume responsibility for tasks outside your role.
- Politely redirect enquiries to the correct person or resource.

Trying to be “everything for everyone” is inefficient and can prevent people from accessing the help they actually need.

5. Reduce Distractions

Interruptions erode productivity.

- Set designated times for emails and calls.
- Let phone calls go to voicemail when you are focused.
- Disable unnecessary notifications.
- Avoid responding instantly unless it is essential.

6. Establish Clear Boundaries

Work can easily bleed into personal life if boundaries are not actively maintained.

- Protect family and personal time.
- Switch off from work outside working hours.
- Create psychological separation between home and work environments.

Healthy boundaries improve emotional presence, reduce stress, and strengthen relationships.

7. Manage Others' Expectations

- Set clear expectations for when you will respond to communications.
- Use out-of-office messages or email signatures that specify your availability.
- Except in emergencies, communication should occur during working hours.

This protects your time and trains your brain to focus on one domain at a time.

8. Develop Healthy Habits

- Identify repetitive tasks and design efficient ways to complete them.
- Turn those efficient actions into habits to reduce decision fatigue.

9. Use Lists Wisely

- Externalise your tasks to reduce cognitive load.
- Keep a single list or digital system synced across devices.
- Review your list at the start and end of your workday.
- Organise tasks by priority, deadline, or category.

This keeps your mind clear and prevents work thoughts from intruding into personal time.

10. Live Intentionally

- Plan immediate, short-term, and long-term goals.
- Without direction, life becomes reactive instead of purposeful.
- Set clear objectives and take deliberate steps toward them.

11. Prioritise Using the Urgent–Important Matrix

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	High priority - Must do	Medium priority - Will do
Action	Respond immediately	Plan and schedule
Timeframe	Complete today	Complete within the week
Not Important	Interruptions	Time wasters
Action	Avoid or eliminate	Ignore or minimise
Timeframe	Deflect	Defer/delete

- Focus first on tasks that are both urgent and important.
- Complete important but not urgent tasks before they become crises.
- Identify non-important tasks and reduce or remove them.

12. Overcome Procrastination

- Do difficult or unpleasant tasks first, then reward yourself with tasks you enjoy.
- This reduces mental clutter and creates a sense of achievement.

13. Deconstruct Overwhelming Tasks

- Break large tasks into small, manageable steps.
 - Each completed step builds momentum and reduces the sense of being overwhelmed.
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14. Be Strategic About Meetings

Before attending a meeting, ask:

- Why am I attending?
- What do I need to achieve?

Only attend if your presence adds value or helps you achieve your objectives.

Request agenda adjustments so you attend only relevant sections.

15. Delegate Effectively

You cannot do everything. Delegate tasks where appropriate to empower others and prevent burnout.

Remember: if you burn out, you will be replaced—nobody is irreplaceable.

16. Simplify

- Find the simplest, most efficient method to complete a task.
 - Avoid overcomplicating or over-perfecting.
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17. Quick Wins

Complete small tasks first to build early momentum.

The Pareto Principle suggests that 80% of output often comes from 20% of effort—identify your “20%.”

18. Reflect on Achievements

- Regularly review what you have completed.
- Positive reflection increases motivation and helps maintain progress.

19. Sustain Your Well-Being

Self-care is fundamental to productivity.

- Prioritise sleep, nutrition, movement, and mental health.
 - Promote sustainable workplace habits and environments.
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20. Take Breaks

Rest is essential. Short breaks restore energy, improve focus, and increase overall efficiency.

21. Reward Yourself

Reinforce positive behaviour with meaningful rewards—tea, water, a walk, or enjoyable activities after work.

22. Use Caffeine Strategically

Moderate caffeine (coffee, tea, dark chocolate) can help you through energy dips, but avoid overreliance.

23. Maintain Life Balance

We work to live, not live to work.

Identify the life areas that matter most and invest time in them.

24. Practice Mindfulness

Mindfulness improves presence, reduces stress, and enhances focus.

Training your attention supports better time use and reduces ruminative thought patterns.

25. Allocate Time Wisely

Assign time limits to tasks and stick to them.

Perfectionism wastes time and often adds no meaningful value.

26. Use Systems and Technology

Identify systems that streamline tasks—spreadsheets, calendars, reminders, templates, automation tools.

27. Review Your Time Regularly

- Evaluate how you are spending time.
- Stop low-value activities and refine your routines.

28. Keep a Time Log

- Track how you use your time for several days.
 - This reveals patterns, inefficiencies, and opportunities for improvement.
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