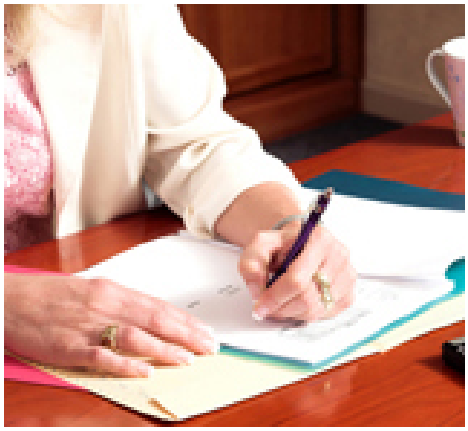
# Time Management Techniques: Managing Time And To-Do'S



Learning proper time management techniques will help you to control and use your time efficiently. The problem is deciding which time management techniques are going to work best for you. Talk to any Professional Organizer, and he or she will tell you that the best time management techniques instruct you on how to make room for the "want to's" as well as the "have to's". The problem is that many of us are in a state of extreme overwhelm and don't have enough energy left over for higher priorities in life. Fortunately, it's easy to regain control over the daily grind with a few good time management techniques. Let's start by examining the way you deal with routine to-do's.

**TIME MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUE # 1: Manage the incoming flood**

When you receive a piece of paper that requires some action on your part, what do you do first? Put it in a stack on your desk of miscellaneous "things to do" where it will sit for weeks or months, until you receive another piece of paper reminding you about that to-do that you forgot? If you just take a second to get organized when a new document first enters your life, you can almost guarantee that "to-do" will get done on time.

**TIME MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUE #2: Decide where to put things**

Start by sorting your to-do's according to the action required. Each day, take 5 minutes to go through the day's incoming mail / work papers / school papers / etc. – ask yourself what you need to do with each item, then file that document in the appropriate "action file", based on your answer. Your action files should sit out in a file box or rack, placed in plain view, wherever you go through your mail. It will include categories like:

- "to pay"
- "to file"
- "to contact"
- "to buy"
- "to read"
- "to enter in computer"
- "to reconcile"
- "to give to _____"

You can also put handwritten notes into your folders (ex: a list of people to call in the "to contact" file) if a to-do doesn't come with a corresponding piece of paper. Now each document has a set place to live until you tackle it, and you can easily see exactly what types of to-do's are on your plate.

**TIME MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUE # 3: Get it all done**

So how do you make sure that these action items actually get acted on? Don't wait until you have time. You must make time. Schedule a regular weekly appointment with yourself – maybe an hour or two, once or twice a week – and block off that slot for "admin time". During admin time, your goal is to go through each folder in order and try to complete every item inside. If you can't complete that item for some reason, put it back in the folder and tackle it during your next admin period. And if you finish one step (say, paying a bill), but then realize that you have another step to take with that paper (perhaps calling to correct a billing error), move it to the appropriate folder for that next step.

**TIME MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUE # 4: Deal with deadlines**

You will, occasionally, run into to-do's that have very strict deadlines – bills to pay, registering for a conference, sending in a permission slip for your kid's field trip, disputing a charge on your credit card, etc. As you sort through incoming paperwork, note any item that has a specific due date (especially if it is going to arrive before your next admin day), and record it in your calendar – along with a note of the folder in which that document is stored. These tasks are to be taken care of as part of your routine that day – treat them as a priority and get them done first thing in the morning, before you get busy or distracted.

**TIME MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUE #5: Relax!**

If you follow this system, you will have no reason to miss a deadline or pay a bill late – and you don't have to continually worry, "When will I get it all done", because you know that any to-do's will be taken care of during your next regular admin period.

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