

# Time management – how do you spend your time?



Time is our most precious commodity but most people waste it through procrastination or a lack of planning. This worksheet will help you to make the most of your time by helping you to examine how you spend your time and then to improve its management.

The time management quadrants – where do you spend your time?

## Quadrant 1

### Important / Urgent tasks

Doing tasks that are important and have become urgent?  
Is this because of an unforeseen crisis? Or is it the result of bad planning or procrastination?  
Keep time for unforeseen mishaps but be sure to plan ahead



## Quadrant 2

### Important / Not urgent tasks

Doing well defined tasks that you have thought about in advance and have planned to do in good time?

Good!



## Quadrant 3

### Not important / Urgent tasks

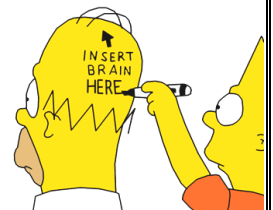
This is the 'Quadrant of Deception' where you may find yourself doing tasks for other people that are actually urgent for them but not for you. Learn when you are following others' priorities instead of your own.



## Quadrant 4

### Not important / Not urgent tasks

Mindlessly wasting time while all of your outstanding jobs are moving into Quadrant 1? Wake up and start defining your tasks and planning when to do them in good time!



Adapted from Covey *et al* (1999) *First things first*, London: Simon and Schuster.

Have a quick think about where you spend most of your time. Do you need to improve? You can probably find examples for all of the quadrants, but let's be a little

more scientific about it. Follow the tasks below – it won't be easy but it will result managing your time much more efficiently.

**Task 1 What do you ACTUALLY do in a week?**

In order to really see where your time goes it is important to keep a fairly detailed log over the period of a week (make this a term time week). Make sure you fill the log in daily. Be honest and and accurate and record your activities to the hour including sleep. Mark in such things as time spent at school, doing activities, time with friends and family and survival time such as eating etc.

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
04.00							
05.00							
06.00							
07.00							
08.00							
09.00							
10.00							
11.00							
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22.00							
23.00							
24.00							
01.00							
02.00							
03.00							

## Task 2 In which quadrants did I spend my time?

Now that that you've filled in the grid are there any surprises? Revisit the time management quadrants (below) and think again about where you spend most of your time. Remember that some activities may go into more than one quadrant. The purpose of this exercises is to start to think about what you do too much of, too little of and why. It does not necessarily mean stopping an activity altogether, but perhaps cutting down or doing it at a more appropriate time.

Ideally we would hope that we spend our time in Quadrant 2, doing important tasks that have not yet become urgent and are therefore not too pressurising. However, in the real world, we will spend time in most of the quadrants at some point. For instance, we may encounter an unforeseen emergency which means we need to spend time in Quadrant 1. However if all of our time is spent in this quadrant then there is no time for dealing with emergencies. The trick is to maximise the time spent in Quadrant 2. Remember, no-one lives in a perfect world, but we can think about what we do in advance to make our lives easier.

### QUADRANT 1

Important and urgent tasks

Examples: doing assignments at the last minute? Doing things that were put off due to an unforeseen crisis?

### QUADRANT 2

Important and not urgent tasks

Examples: Well defined tasks such as notemaking or essay planning/writing done in good time? Reasonable time spent with friends/family?

### QUADRANT 3 Quadrant of deception

Not important but urgent

Doing favours for someone else? Someone demanding too much attention?

### QUADRANT 4

Not important and not urgent tasks

Example: can't picture where to start on an assignment? Taking too much leisure time?

Adapted from Covey *et al* (1999) *First things first*, London: Simon and Schuster.

Now that you have revisited the the quadrants, let's think about what can be done.

### Task 3 Getting the balance right

Have a look at the quadrants and think about what you do. Do you spend too much time in Quadrants 1, 3 or 4 ? Fill in the table below.

	Should do more	Should do less	Just right
<b>Study</b>			
<b>Survival</b>			
<b>Family</b>			
<b>Social life</b>			
<b>Relaxation</b>			
<b>Planning</b>			
<b>Things for others</b>			

Look at the 'should do less' column above. What am I doing too much of? Am I wasting time? Fill in the grid below with the specific time waster and think about what you can do about it. An example has been included to help you on your way.

Should do less of (time wasters)	What can I do about it?
<i>spending time watching television</i>	<i>restrict myself to only a certain amount of TV</i>
<i>spending time helping Mark with his assignments</i>	<i>will politely say no to Mark if it interferes with my study time</i>
<i>wasting time between</i>	<i>will ensure I have some handouts with me to do some reading/notemaking while I'm waiting</i>
<i>wasting time trying to read in the evening</i>	<i>might try reading in earlier time slots when more awake</i>

Should do less of (time wasters)	What can I do about it?

Now look at the 'could do more' column. What are you doing not enough of? Write in the specific things your could do more of such as sleep, relaxation, family, reading reasearch for assignments etc. and what you can do about them in the table below.

Should do more of	What can I do about it?

Hopefully these exercises have given you an idea of how you spend your time and how you might better spend it in the future. Now that you know what to do, you have to remember to keep planning ahead. Don't let things come to you and don't slip back into old ways. If things don't go the way you wanted them to, then try again.

## Some time management tips:

- Keep a visible long term plan such as a wall chart which has your deadlines, holidays and other immovable and important events on it and use it to make medium term/weekly and daily plans from it – see the fact sheet *Time management suggestions\**.
- Break down big tasks – such as assignments – into smaller more manageable jobs and think in advance about the appropriate times to do them. For more advice adaptable to all assignments, see the fact sheets *Stages of essay writing* and *Time management key points\**.
- Don't make a rigid timetable that you are bound to fail to keep. This can be dispiriting. Keep a daily list of jobs and be prepared to try again, perhaps in a different way, if you do not achieve something the first time.
- If you have any problems with this sheet or any other time management issues, seek advice from your teacher.

Good luck!

(Credit to Andy Gould, Division of Learning Enhancement, Access and Partnership: **University of Greenwich 2008** for this document.)