



Revolution
Learning and Development

A Guide to:

Effective Time Management

© Revolution Learning and Development Ltd

Visit us at:

UK: www.revolutionlearning.co.uk / ROI: www.revolutionlearning.ie /

EU: www.revolutionlearning.com

Time Management

Time management is a collection of tools and behaviours that, when used correctly, can increase the number of tasks that we can complete. This is often measured by how much quality work we get done in a set amount of time - often known as productivity.

In this guide to effective time management, we pull together some of the skills, behaviours and tools that you can use to better manage your time and become more productive.

The guide provides some quick time management tips and signposts to other resources that we have available to help you get the help and support that you need.

Time management isn't just about having the right tools and skills. Behaviour and attitude play a key part too as does the environment and culture of the organisation you work in.

No single tool or skill will give you instant results either. While there are some quick wins to be had, effective time management requires some work upfront so you can reap the rewards of your efforts later.

What's In This Guide?

Here is what you will find in this time management guide:

- [Time Management Attitude and Behaviour](#)
- [Time Management Tools](#)
- [Time Management Tips](#)
- [Your Next Actions](#)
- [Suggested Reading](#)

Attitude & Behaviour

In this first section of this time management guide, we investigate how attitude and behaviour affect how productive we are.

Many people who struggle with time management have the wrong attitude towards time and the tasks that they do. They see time as the enemy.

- Have you ever found yourself saying:
- I don't have enough time in the day
- I will never get all of this stuff done
- I have too much to do and not enough time to do it in

The above are all signs of a negative attitude towards time. Continuously saying these things will eventually lead to a rigid belief where you absolutely believe this to be true.

Once you have this belief, you will find it very difficult to start taking action on getting things done. Instead, you will find yourself looking at the things you need to do but taking little action or no action at all.

Time management requires much more of a positive attitude. This means that we think about taking action. We think about getting things started. We think about getting things done.



To understand the difference between positive and negative attitudes, take a look at our article [the Difference Between Positive and Negative Attitudes](#).

Time Management Tools

Once you begin to realise that attitude and behaviour play a key part in effective time management, you can then begin to select the tools to use to increase your productivity.

Time management tools are things that you can use to help organise, plan, schedule and prioritise.

The trick with time management tools is not to have too many of them. Using too many tools can lead to you spending more time thinking about which tool to use, rather than the tool driving action and therefore results.

Your time management tools should form part of your overall time management system and be carefully thought out so that they deliver the results that you want.



You can learn more about time management tools and building a time management system by attending our [time management training course](#).

On the following pages, you will find some time management tools for you to consider.

To-Do Lists

Having some form of a to-do list is a very important part of being productive, but only if they are used correctly. If not used in the right way, to-do lists can drive inactivity and overwhelming feeling when you see just how much you have to do.

Getting things out of your head and onto your list will mean nothing gets forgotten. It also allows for a clearer picture of exactly what you have to do and will help you to prioritise one task over another. Consider all of your points of task collection - flagged emails, messages, post-its etc. and if something needs an action, get it on your list (even if you have for example flagged an email).

Your to-do list doesn't have to be paper and pen. You could use an app such as [Todoist](#) to help with this. Remember, whatever works best for you.

Create yourself one big list and call this your master list. Then, bring things from the master list and create a daily list and keep this in front of you. Your daily list should only contain a list of tasks that you can comfortably get done in one day.

If something new comes in that needs to be done today, then something needs to come off your list and back to the master list to make room for it.

Try to keep your list in order of priority and work from top to bottom. You can find details on prioritisation later in this guide.

There are more ideas on planning your time in the article [How to Plan Your Time Effectively](#). In this article, you can see an example of a simple planning template that you can use.

Task Scheduler

Creating a schedule means you know exactly what you should be doing and when. It takes your to-do list or plan that you created and begins to help you see where everything fits together.

This can be done simply by using your calendar.

Take the tasks that you need to complete and allocate time in your calendar to do them. Box out the right amount of time for each task and try not to leave too many gaps in between.

Make sure you add in your breaks and lunchtime too. These are as important as the other tasks that you need to complete.

As new things come in, add them to your schedule. You will need to move things around where needed. If you have a full schedule but a new task that needs to fit in, before you say yes to it, ask yourself:

- Is this task more important than the tasks I already have?
- What would be the value of doing this new task?
- What would be the consequences of not doing this new task versus my existing tasks?
- Does it really need to be done in the timescale suggested?

It's important you don't just say yes to everything. Only take the tasks that are important and where you have time in your schedule to put them.



Learn more about scheduling your tasks by reading our article [How to Schedule Your Time Effectively](#).

An alternative way of scheduling your tasks is task grouping. Rather than scatter your tasks across your day/week/month, allocate time to a certain type of task. For example group together:

- Emails
- Calls
- Meetings
- Reports
- Admin

Then allocate the individual tasks you have to do into the times allocated for the type of tasks. This means you are not constantly shifting your mindset from one task type to another task type.

When you are in the calls frame of mind, you will find you will make more calls. When you are in the emails frame of mind, you will answer more emails and so on.

Prioritisation Criteria

To understand what you should be working on you need to prioritise your tasks. To do this, you should have criteria to help assess the tasks you have and will receive.

One of the best ways to do this is to look at 2 things:

- 1. Importance** - what value does the task return when it's done or what are the consequences of not completing the task
- 2. Urgency** - what is the deadline for the task or how often does it need to be done

An important point to note about importance is that this is the importance (so value return or consequences) to your organisation and not to you personally. If you prioritise on personal importance and, so does everyone else, it becomes impossible to work out priority as what's important to you might not be important to someone else.

Use a tool to help prioritise your tasks. Here is a list of prioritisation tools and links to the relevant articles for you to find out more:

- [The ABCDE Method of Prioritisation](#)
- [The 1-6 Method of Prioritisation](#)
- [The Action Priority Matrix](#)
- [The Eisenhower/Urgent-Important Matrix](#)

You could for example use the Eisenhower Matrix. This is one of the most well known time management tools. It's a simple idea and combines the importance and urgency criteria above and help you to put your tasks into a grid, or provides some labels for you to add to your list.

Or, you could try something simpler like using a scale of importance such as high, medium or low or a 1 to 6 scale. The key to making this work is being very clear about your criteria for each of the options on your scale.

Time and Task Measurement

Ever wondered where your time goes? Feel like you have been really busy but got nothing to show for it? You need to understand what is happening to your time.

Two ways to do this are to either complete a time in motion study or to complete an interruptions log.

A time in motion study is the more comprehensive but time heavy option here. To complete a time in motion study, you should document what you are doing and when you are doing it over the course of a week. Every minute should be accounted for, even when you are doing nothing. Then, analyse the results to see where your time is going. The downside to a time in motion study is we tend to actually perform better at managing our time when we are being measured, so the results may not reflect reality.

An interruptions log is a simpler way to do this. Rather than document what you are doing, document when someone or something takes you away from what you should be doing. For example, a call, someone approaching your desk, an email that's caught your attention etc. When this happens, jot it down.

Take a look at our article on [How to Create an Interruptions Log](#) to see how to do this and also see an example of a template that you can use to capture your data.

Delegation

Delegation is really important when it comes to managing your time. While it is often thought that not everyone can delegate, this is not necessarily the case. Delegation isn't exclusively a top-down process. Anyone can delegate to anyone if the task is important enough to be done.

Many people give reasons or excuses as to why they don't delegate. You can see some of these in our blog post [Delegation in Management - Why Leaders Need To Delegate and Why They Don't](#). One of the main reasons tends to be that it's quicker for me to do it myself. This normally means you are considering delegating the wrong things or the wrong types of tasks.

Delegation works when the task is a regular or repeatable task. When we try to delegate one-off tasks, then yes, it would probably be quicker for you to do it yourself.



Read our article [How to Delegate Effectively](#) to see how this works and to learn more about a process to follow to ensure effective and successful delegation.

Time Management Apps

If you prefer technology over pen and paper then there are plenty of apps out there to help with managing your time. Here is a selection of our favourites with links to where you can find them:

- [Todoist](#) - a simple to use to-do list app that will help you capture and organise your tasks and provide reminders of when they need to be done by
- [Microsoft Todo](#) - similar to Todoist but baked into the Office365 eco-system
- [Trello](#) - a neat way to organise your tasks and processes using a kanban view
- [Toodledo](#) - a simple to use task list

Many people also use apps such as OneNote or Evernote to capture their tasks.

Time Management Tips

Here is a simple list of top tips to help with managing your time. Many of them have been discussed above. Other are just simple and straightforward things you can do:

- **Capture all of your tasks in one place** - don't have tasks stored in multiple places
- **Break big tasks down** - if you have a big task, break it down into smaller tasks and add these to your list
- **Work for no more than an hour** - no task should take longer than an hour to complete. Take a 5-minute break in between tasks alongside your regular breaks and lunch break
- **Set clear daily goals** - be sure of what you want to achieve each day and set out to achieve it
- **Always have a deadline** - no task should be labelled 'when you have time'. This means it will just get left
- **Set clear priorities and stick to them** - base this on proper criteria, not just on who is shouting the loudest
- **Drink plenty of water** - keep hydrated to maintain levels of concentration
- **Do a sprint** - block out 45 mins your day and remove any distractions and get on with one task
- **Ask questions about all tasks** - don't just say yes. Ask questions to correctly understand its priority
- **Build a time management system** - formulate a system and stick to it
- **Manage your email time** - don't jump into your email when you see a notification. Set times in the day to look at your emails
- **Turn off your email notification** - turn off the notification to tell you that you have new messages. In fact, turn off all notifications. They become a real distraction.

Your Next Actions

Find out what your development areas are when it comes to managing your time by taking our time management skills assessment. You can complete this on the [Time Management Profile page](#). Your results will give you some indication of how well you currently manage your time and the areas that you may need to focus on.

Get help with managing your time by attending one of our time management training courses. We cover all of the points above in-depth and we can help you to build your own time management system to increase your levels of productivity.

We run our time management course as a scheduled open course at various locations and also as a live virtual online course. We can also deliver a course in-house just for your team or business.

Take a look at the information about our [time management training course](#) for more details, the schedule and how to get in touch.

Suggested Reading

Here are some books on effective time management that you might find useful:

- [Eat That Frog!](#) - Brian Tracy
- [Getting Things Done](#) - David Allen
- [Routine Machine](#) - John Lamerton
- [Productivity Ninja](#) - Graham Allcott
- [When](#) - Daniel Pink

About This Guide

This guide and its contents has been produced and remains the copyright of Revolution Learning and Development Ltd.

You may download and use this guide for your own use.

You may use parts of this guide in your own work proving a link to Revolution Learning and Development Ltd and the online page containing this guide is placed alongside the content.

You should link to <https://www.revolutionlearning.co.uk/guide/time-management-guide/> or place the following into your web page HTML:

```
<a href=https://www.revolutionlearning.co.uk/guide/time-management-guide/>Revolution Learning and Development Ltd – Time Management Guide</a>
```

No content in this guide should be republished in full or sold at any cost without the express written permission of Revolution Learning and Development Ltd.

We use services that look for duplicated content on the web and, where this is found, take the relevant actions to have this content reported and removed.