

time management

the ability to use one's time effectively or productively



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Time management isn't really about managing time at all – it's about managing yourself. We all have the same 24 hours each day, but how well we use them is completely down to us. The best time management techniques improve the ways you work, protect you against distraction and lock in your concentration. Here are the top four time management techniques that make the biggest difference.

Be intentional: Keep a to-do list A to-do list is one of the most *powerful* ways to become more productive. The best to-do lists include a variety of tasks: quick and urgent jobs that might be completed in 10 minutes and bigger, operational tasks that are a work in progress.

This keeps you intentional about what you work on. This applies to all positions and to all kinds of work industries. It lays out what you *must* complete, all tasks that pop up outside of it are secondary, and if your mind does wander, a quick glance at your list reminds you of what you *should* be doing.

Be prioritized: Rank your tasks If writing a to-do list is the first step towards better time management, prioritizing your tasks is the next. It guides you through the day's activities in order of importance, ensuring that the tasks that matter most are dealt with first. When ranking your tasks, you should always prioritize what's most important to you. Figure out which tasks and activities are high-value, which will have the most positive effect on you, your work, and your team.

The usefulness of prioritization cannot be overstated – without it, we often end up focusing on work that's pressing but not actually that important, simply because a deadline is looming. Prioritization is your most effective defense against the lure of urgent-yet-inconsequential tasks.

Be focused: manage distractions Despite our best intentions, we all get distracted. From social notifications to talkative colleagues – and the very human problem of procrastination – actually sitting down and getting things done is almost always harder than it should be. Given that it takes about 23 minutes to refocus after an interruption, the productive cost of our daily distractions quickly adds up. So you need to effectively manage your distractions in order to protect your flow and focus.

Be structured: Time block your work A structured schedule is crucial for actually delivering what you set yourself. It helps you protect space for your work and sets a healthy pressure to actually complete it. Time blocking is one of the most productive ways of doing this, as it prevents one task from overtaking your entire day and stops you from multi-tasking.

Many of us juggle multiple jobs at the same time, believing we'll get more done, but in fact the opposite is true; we are most productive when we focus on *one thing at a time*. Time blocking is a thoughtful approach to *budgeting* the set amount of hours you have each day between all the things you need to do. Set aside small periods of time for admin-style tasks like email, scheduling and returning calls, and larger periods for more detailed, in-depth or analytical work.