

Ever heard someone complain that he or she had too much time on their hands? Thought not. That's why so many thousands of words are written about time management each year. To read every book or article on the subject would leave you with no time for anything else. So here's a list of the most common time management tips.

**Make "To Do" lists.** Good time managers make "To Do" lists a regular part of their lives. Keeping a list on paper works best because it's easy and portable. Some people also use time/project management software on their computers or handheld data organizers or they save messages for themselves on pocket-sized recorders.

**Get organized.** Locating lost tools or misplaced pieces of information to finish a project can take up precious time. To use time more wisely, organize your life and keep it that way. A number of books on organization skills are available. Keep in mind that implementing just one tip can save dozens of hours or more a year.

**Be assertive.** If you have too much to do, say so. If you could use someone else's help, ask for it. If you're asked to do something you don't have time for, speak up. Assertiveness is about honesty, and good time managers are honest with themselves and others.

**Prioritize.** Good time managers prioritize. Try using a rating system next to each item on your "To Do" list — five stars for the most important projects, one star for the least urgent. And, as you enter items on your list, write down when they should be finished.

**Handle each piece of paper only once.** This tip appears again and again because so much time is wasted shuffling papers from one pile to the next. There are four things you can do with each piece of paper you receive — act on it, file it, give it to someone else or throw it away. Decide which is best for each piece of paper you receive, keeping in mind that 95% of papers filed for more than one year are never used again.

**Don't panic.** When you have too much to do and too little time, don't panic. This only wastes precious time. Instead, take a deep breath and use any of these time management tips to help you focus your attention on what needs to be done.

**Eliminate distractions.** Good time managers create the environment they need to get the job done. If you need to have your calls held or if you need to work in an area free from interruption, do it. A few hours of uninterrupted work each day could go far in solving your time management problems.

**Make time for what's most important.** Ever heard the saying that no tombstone has ever read, "Wish I'd stayed late at the office more often"? Good time managers get the job done, but they also know when and how to make time for their families and themselves. Making time for yourself, your family and the things you enjoy lowers stress, re-energizes you and helps you tackle your workload.

**Guard your health.** Poor health can make you irritable, tired and less able to physically or mentally handle stress. So take care of yourself. Watch your diet. Exercise at a level approved by your doctor. Get plenty of rest, and talk to a healthcare professional when you have trouble sleeping.

**Practice good listening skills.** Here's a time waster: Doing a project wrong because you didn't understand the directions. When someone gives you directions, restate what you hear. This gives the person a chance to confirm or explain again what needs to be done. And don't hesitate to ask questions even if you think others already understand the directions.

**Finish one task before moving on.** If you go back and forth, working on several projects at once, you lose precious time reacquainting yourself with each project each time you start work on it. Save yourself time by finishing one project before moving on to another.

**Reward yourself for finishing tough projects.** The hardest tasks are those that we have to do but which are difficult or boring. Get over the drudgery of these tasks by promising yourself a reward after finishing a tough project. Without an incentive, you risk procrastinating and having to do the work in a crunch.

**Terminate non-productive activities.** Watching television or aimlessly surfing the Internet isn't a productive use of time. Good time managers create time by ridding their lives of these and other big time wasters.

**Plan ahead.** There are dangers in waiting until the last minute to work on a project. You could be so rushed for time that you forget an important step, or something else could come up. So that you're not cramped for time, plan ahead.

**Analyze how you use your time.** For a week or so, jot down in a daily log what you do throughout the day. Then, look back and analyze your daily logs for problems related to

how you spend your time. Your daily log may reveal time wasters that you might otherwise miss. It might also reveal other problems, like having too much on your plate or not having the right tools or resources.

**Break big projects into smaller ones.** Big projects can be intimidating. "How will I ever finish this?" you might ask yourself. Instead of becoming stuck or overwhelmed by the enormity of the task ahead of you, divide the project into smaller, achievable steps. Then tackle the project one step at a time.

**Work smarter, not harder.** Don't just barge headlong into a project. Plan your work by thinking about what you need to do and how you'll do it. Better to spend time planning a project than to waste time doing it wrong and having to do it over.

**Put waiting time to good use.** If you know you'll have a wait at the doctor's office or stand in a long line for something, take along a report or magazine you want to read and make good use of the time.

**Determine the time of day that you're most productive at certain tasks.** Some things seem to come easier to us at different times of the day. For instance, you may find writing easier in the morning because your mind is clear after a night's sleep, or you may find that prioritizing work is easier at the end of the day because you have the day behind you. Learn the best times to work on projects to make the most of your natural abilities.

## Help is available

Just talking about your problems sometimes leads to new solutions. If you or someone you know needs information, guidance or help, contact the resource and number listed below or look online for local professionals who can help.

Southwest Florida  
EAP

239-278-7435

Or

800-226-7930

[www.amplifiedlifework.com](http://www.amplifiedlifework.com)  
#H-6081 800-453-7733  
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