

Quick Guide: Effective Use of Time

We are unlikely ever to have sufficient time to do all the things we want or need to do. So it's vital therefore that we make the best use of the time we have available. And since time itself is not physically manageable, we have to learn to manage ourselves, our workloads, our priorities and our clutter. Here are the **top ten tips** to help you do this:

1. **Never let others solve their time problems by creating yours!** Make sure you know how and when to say "no", and always agree the next move.
2. **Get your priorities clear**, and keep them in mind. And always get – and give – realistic deadlines. You are more likely to achieve your deadlines if those you depend on are clear about theirs.
3. **Plan your day** (preferably the night before) and stick to the plan. If you have been looking ahead to possible problems you are less likely to have last minute crises preventing you from achieving the plan.
4. **Aim to achieve something** in every day. If at the end of a long day you feel you have worked your socks off but don't know what you've done, there is less motivation to do it all again tomorrow!
5. **Be realistic** with what you can achieve in one day. If you aren't sure, then consider doing a time log for two weeks so you know how long tasks take to do, and how you usually spend your time.
6. **Do your difficult or time consuming tasks first**, and when you are at your best. This achievement will motivate you to clear all the other little things too.
7. **Deal assertively and decisively with interruptions** (both face to face and at the telephone), perhaps scheduling in time to see people after your high priority task(s).
8. **Do you procrastinate?** If so, schedule in "worry time" for the end of each day, and tell yourself you'll get on and do it now, and won't worry about it until the allotted time. (By that time of course, it won't be on your "worry" agenda!)
9. **Cut the clutter!** Be kind to people but ruthless with paper – if everything is in its rightful place, you will be able to function without distractions, and be able to find everything quicker.
10. **If it comes in today**, prioritise and schedule it today, otherwise it won't be dealt with until tomorrow. Mañana!

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