

Quick Guide: Planning the Working Day

Ever do a to-do list and not achieve what's on it? Or does your to-do list just get longer and longer? Or perhaps you've given up on using one altogether! Before you can plan and organise your working day, it is necessary to think of what is to be done and set up some simple drills to help you do it more effectively. So here are the **top ten tips** for planning your working day.

1. **Always use an "action book"**. Have columns for "today's date", "task" and "deadline". If you are busy on the phone, or away from your desk, encourage other people to leave their requests in your book. This also saves interruptions.
2. **Know how much of your average day is proactive** (in control of) and how much is reactive (unforeseen requests and crises with no control over). If you don't know, considering doing a time log for two weeks to help you.
3. **Get your priorities and deadlines clear**, and keep them in mind when you plan your day.
4. **Learn to say "no" to jobs that are not yours**. Ask yourself if you are doing it because it's your responsibility, or because you feel you can't refuse to do it.
5. **Be strict with yourself** and only plan the proactive time that on average you have available. So if your average day is a 50/50 split, and you work an eight hour day, you can only plan four hours' worth of work! To try to plan any more than this means you will either stay late to achieve it all, or you will leave it till another day and run the risk of missing your deadlines
6. **Always write a to-do list the night before**. This way you will be able to enjoy your evening without worrying about "what am I supposed to be doing tomorrow?", and you can be productive as soon as you arrive in the morning.
7. **Be realistic about what you put on your to do list!** If its deadline isn't today why is it on today's to-do list? Sure, schedule in stages of a project or task to help you achieve the final result, but remember that if it's on today's list, then you are going to do it today.
8. **Are you a night owl or a lark?** Plan to do the tasks that need your energy and creativity when you are at your best.
9. **Don't do easy, nice jobs at the expense of important, more difficult ones**. Prioritise your day's deadlined tasks in order of importance!
10. **Group similar tasks to be done** (eg phone calls) at the same time. This makes the process of completing the tasks easier since you are in that mode. And do one job at a time!

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