

Strategies for Effective Time Management

Time is a unique resource in that everyone is given an equal amount – a gift of 24 hours each day. How you invest that gift is a major factor in how you feel about your life. Think of time as one of the tools you have available to reach your goals. As with many tools, to use time effectively will require training (or retraining), determination and practice. Each of the methods below can assist you in getting closer to your goal of becoming more effective with your time:

1. **Assume ownership of your time.** Take ownership of your own time and do not allow others to make commitments of your time without your permission. It is not selfish to keep others from squandering your time. Give your time freely when you want, but do not make the mistake of undervaluing this resource, or feeling guilty when you do not allow others to waste it.
2. **Prioritize.** Continually check yourself to see that you are working on the most important things on any specific day. Helping your child through a problem may be more important than getting the dishes done or a load of laundry completed. Do not think of priorities only as jobs that need doing. As you remind yourself to do the most important tasks first, you will find yourself letting go of tasks that really did not need doing after all.
3. **Learn to say "no."** It is difficult to say no, and sometimes we feel guilty doing so. Try focusing on the important things that will get done because you used that two letter word to decline something which was not a priority.
4. **Delegate.** The word Delegating means assigning the responsibility for a task (not just the work) to someone else. That means you no longer have to do the job, nor do you have to remind someone else to do it. Being able to delegate some tasks frees some of your time for the jobs that only you can do. You may have to use your standard shifting skill when you delegate. As someone else learns to do a task, do not be tempted to take over if they are not doing it quite right. You have to learn that "done" may be "good enough."
5. **Break down large jobs into manageable pieces.** One of the sources of procrastination is that some tasks can seem too overwhelming to even begin. Learn to break down a large task into more manageable pieces and begin with a piece you know you can handle. The first step of major undertakings is often the most challenging. You will have a greater sense of satisfaction completing each individual portion of the task and this can keep you motivated to the end.
6. **Work on overcoming procrastination.** Once you recognize that you are procrastinating, the next step is to begin overcoming this time-wasting habit. When you see that you are procrastinating, determine exactly the first step for completing the task and then set a specific time in the future to begin.
7. **Reward yourself.** Celebrate when a major task is completed or a major challenge is met. One problem with a hectic life is that you can fail to notice the completion of a major piece of work. This failure leads to focusing on what is left instead of enjoying what has been completed. Set up a reward system for yourself that serves as both a motivator to get difficult tasks done and an acknowledgment that you are making effective use of your time.