

7 TIPS FOR TIME MANAGEMENT

INTRODUCTION

Faculty life is full of diverse duties and responsibilities that can become overwhelmingly time-consuming. "Multitasking" just means reducing the attention and the quality of our focus on individual tasks. There is nothing you can do to get more time. Learning to control your time, however, may be a significant factor in your job success. Maybe your work life could benefit from the application of some time management tips specific to the faculty workload:

1. SCHEDULE YOUR TIME.

- Schedule every bit of your time. Don't go into the office in the morning without an accurate plan as to how you will spend your day.
 - Keep track of what you need to do. Use a calendar for daily commitments. Make a project chart for longer-term commitments with due dates. Planning in these ways leverages time through focus.
 - Try to leave at least one day in your schedule with no meetings.
 - Schedule structured time with your colleagues and graduate students.
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2. MANAGE DISTRACTIONS TO PROTECT YOUR UNINTERRUPTED TIME.

- Discover your preferred work environment. Yes, you teach in a classroom, your meetings are all over campus, you meet students in your office during office hours... But make sure you have a determined place for all other work where distractions are minimized.
 - Do not check your email or answer the phone during time set aside for a specific task such as writing, course planning, or thinking. Protect this time.
 - When an unscheduled visitor shows up, stand. It helps end the interruption faster.
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3. IDENTIFY AND MINIMIZE "TIME-ROBBERS".

In his book *The Time Trap*, Alec Mackenzie presents a list of 20 most common "time robbers" based on survey data. In recognizing your "time robbers," you are better prepared to control events by developing, adopting and implementing a time strategy. Here are some examples relevant to faculty life:

- Leaving tasks unfinished
 - Socializing
 - Telephone interruptions
 - Attempting too much
 - Drop-in visitors
 - Personal disorganization
 - Inability to say no
 - Procrastination
 - Meetings
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4. PRIORITIZE TASKS.

- List tasks and prioritize them. This allows you to reasonably say no to new commitments. Use a project chart to remind you of your priorities and their relative time commitments.
 - Delegate as much as possible. Choose tasks carefully so that time for instructions and amending work is limited.
 - Learn to say no. Only take on new projects that directly dovetail into something you're already working on.
 - Monitor all of your duties as a faculty member related to Teaching, Research and Service. Be aware of the time each activity takes and remember to keep them prioritized appropriately.
 - Maintain a list of accomplished tasks. It gives you satisfaction and also saves time when compiling annual reports.
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5. MANAGE YOUR ELECTRONIC LIFE.

- Keep your email in-box empty. Delete, answer or move messages to folders as you read them.
 - Transform email messages into tasks as appropriate and add them to your task list.
 - Monitor your time on the internet and social networking sites.
 - Back-up all your work with hardcopies and on thumb drives.
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6. CHOOSE YOUR TEACHING SCHEDULE.

- Limit the number of different classes you teach (number of preparations) to one or two per semester.
 - Arrange your teaching schedule such that your classes meet on the same days. This arrangement will allow for uninterrupted blocks of time on other days.
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7. CONTROL YOUR TEACHING PREPARATIONS.

- Create a master syllabus with boilerplate text and calendar dates and update it for each class.
 - Don't reinvent the wheel. Teach a course that has been taught before, either by you or by someone else, and start your preparation with existing materials. Use the textbook and its ancillary materials to your advantage.
 - Don't overprepare. Limit your teaching preparation time. There's only so much material you can fit into a 50- or 75-minute class. Monitor your prep-to-teach ratio and make sure you aren't spending eight hours preparing for every hour you teach! A 2:1 ratio is appropriate for familiar topics.
 - Use technology only when it adds value. You may enjoy learning new technology but monitor how much time you spend converting thoughts to floating boxes in PowerPoint.
 - Occasionally substitute other activities for prepared lectures - class discussion, review, group activity, guest speaker, video, etc. This allows for reduced preparation time.
 - Stagger your due dates. Collect major tests/assignments from different classes on different weeks so you don't have everything to grade at once.
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CONCLUSION

As part of our culture, we tend to separate work and life. Consider them related and:

- Set clear goals for life roles, including your work. Translate those goals into a plan.
- Do what is meaningful to you, in and outside of work. This should contribute to your ability to prioritize and not procrastinate. When your daily activities reflect your values, you experience personal fulfillment, less frustration and more energy.
- Accurately estimate how much time you need for everything you do. There is less chance of becoming overwhelmed or feeling guilty when you have assessed how to spend valuable time up front.

SOURCE: <http://sc.edu/cte/guide/timemanagement/index.shtml>