






So What?

Poor Mike is ready to tear his hair out. He was 20 minutes late to his meeting this morning because he couldn't find his presentation notes (which had somehow found their way into the back of his filing cabinet), missed the beginning of the meeting, and had to ask a coworker to bring him up to speed when he got there. Halfway through his presentation, he realized he had completely forgotten to bring the presentation notes. He wrote a note to the secretary to bring them to the meeting. The secretary said she would bring them to the meeting at 5:00. At the door of Mike's office, she asked, "Are your reports ready for me?" she asked. "What?" Mike answered in surprise. "They aren't due until next Friday, right?" Marilyn sighed and shook her head. "No, Mike, they're due *this* Friday, as in *today!*"

Does this story sound familiar to you? Maybe you're not as stressed out as Mike, but chances are your time-management skills could use improvement as well. As you graduate from high school or college and begin your career, your professional (as well as personal!) success hinges upon your ability to manage time wisely. Read on to learn more about what time management is, and how you can use it to keep up at work and still have enough time left over for a life.

Objectives

-  Describe the nature of time and time management.
-  Describe time-management principles.
-  Demonstrate time-management processes and techniques.

What Is Time Management?

What is time?

Sometimes the concept of "time" seems pretty abstract. You can't see time, or touch it, or hear it, or taste it. So how can you be expected to *manage* it?

It's important to start thinking of your time as a natural resource, just as you would think of your health, your energy, your intelligence, and your relationships with friends, family, and co-workers. None of these things is tangible, yet they can all be wasted or squandered if you don't take care of them properly.

Time is a very **valuable** resource. Perhaps at this point in your life, time seems to be passing very slowly. You're anxious to be finished with school, to start your career, to make more money, to get that promotion. It seems as if all those things are so far away right now. But if you talk to your parents or grandparents, they will tell you that "time flies." They will probably tell you it seems like only yesterday that they were the same age as you are. Learn to value and enjoy all the time that is yours *right now*.



Time is an absolutely **free** resource. You will never have to pay a single dime for the time you've been given, but on the flip side, you can never buy any more of it. If extra time were for sale, how many people do you think would pay to add more hours to their day? Would you?

Time is an **equally distributed** resource. For every day of your life, you have 24 hours—no more, no less. It doesn't matter how much money you have, how smart you are, or where you live—you get 24 hours. Time is the one natural resource that everyone has equal access to.

24 HOURS



- **Get enough sleep.** Getting the proper amount of rest is crucial for taking on the responsibilities and activities of the day ahead. If you're not getting enough sleep, you may need to actually plan more into your schedule.

- **Divide large projects into smaller parts.** Be realistic about how long it will take you to finish the first draft of that article or paint the Rodriguez's house. Then, set smaller deadlines for yourself along the way to make sure you're staying on task. And always leave yourself a few extra days in case something unexpected happens and you need a little more time to finish.
- **Make the most of your "down time."** You may not have a task scheduled for every minute of your workday. When you have free time, use it wisely. Get to that list of things you need to do but haven't had time for yet, such as catching up on filing or getting a head start on next month's presentation.



The role of organization in time management

Time management and organization are two skills that go hand in hand. If you think about it, time management is really just "organizing" your time. Being organized in other areas of your life will also help you manage your time more effectively.

The Gray Zone

Danielle considers herself a pretty good time manager. She's organized, punctual, and keeps her goals, objectives, and "to-do" lists up to date. But like anyone, Danielle sometimes falls behind or forgets to write down a deadline in her planner.

Yesterday afternoon, Danielle had planned to work on her presentation for today's meeting, but she was sidetracked by several phone calls she needed to take.



Now, it's 8:00 a.m., and Danielle has only one hour left to complete her presentation. Unfortunately, that hour is filled by an all-employee meeting in the conference room. While her supervisor tells her the new computer system appears to be taking longer than expected, she finishes the presentation. The conference room meeting will not be noticed.

SAMPLE PAGE

Danielle smiles—she's pretty sure that getting work for one meeting accomplished during another meeting is making great use of her time. It's multi-tasking! What do you think? Is Danielle managing her time wisely?