Time Management Tips: Eliminating Time Wasters

Time management tips are in high demand because so many of us do not know how to properly manage our time. If you ask a group of people to define “time management”, they will probably talk about getting it all done, crossing items off of a list, and being productive. However, the best time management tips do not involve cramming more and more into your day. The most valuable time management tips available will actually involve learning to focus your time on those activities that are meaningful to you.

Time Management Tip #1: Be Efficient and Effective

Efficiency means getting a lot done in a short time, but effectiveness happens when you also focus on activities that matter to you. You know how it is when chunk of your day is eaten up by a menial task (like checking email). You may get through hundreds of messages, even empty your in-box, yet still feel vaguely dissatisfied with your effort.

While you got a lot done, it didn’t feel as though you actually accomplished much – because it wasn’t a task near and dear to your heart. As the old saying goes, you can run as fast as you want, but if you’re going in the wrong direction, you still won’t end up where you intended.

Time Management Tip #2: Learn Where Your Time Goes

How much of your life is spent on “time wasters”? These are activities that do nothing to enhance your quality of life, and actually prevent you from accomplishing more important goals. You know you’ve been seduced by a time waster when you find yourself:

- watching TV shows you don’t really care about
- checking email over and over throughout the day
- surfing the internet or cruising chat rooms with no purpose in mind
- wandering around stores, just looking for bargains
- spending a few hours every day running errands
- shuffling the same papers back and forth on your desk

Time Management Tip #3: Draw the Line

The good news is that it's easy to change these mindless habits and take control of your time management. All it takes is a conscious choice to spend your time differently, and set a little advance planning:

- When you come home, leave the TV off and find a more meaningful way to decompress (go for a walk, read a book, play with your kids). Review the TV schedule once a week, find those shows you really care about, and record them to watch later without commercials
- Get into a routine of checking email no more than 3 times a day (morning, noon, and end of the day). Turn off the "you've got mail" alarm and program your system to only download emails on command
- If you lose track of the world while web-surfing, set a timer to go off in 15 or 20 minutes. Make yourself get up and turn off the computer when it dings
- For 30 days, shop only from a list. Only go to stores that carry the item you need, and if you don't actually need anything, don't go to the mall in the first place
- Set aside a single "errand day" each week and sit down with your family to plan your list. Put everything you need in one basket by the door, and plot your route in advance to avoid backtracking. If someone forgets an errand, either insist that it wait until the next errand day, or let them do it themselves
- Take 5 minutes to sort through incoming papers every day. Put "to-do" papers into a tickler/action file, and set aside time once a week to file and handle to-do's. Set up a spot for papers you're currently working on, and take 5 minutes to clear your desk before you leave each day

Time Management Tip #4: Make Time for Your Priorities

These are just suggestions – you may find other time management tips to help you deal with your specific time wasters. Just a few simple changes will free up hours of time in your schedule each week. Now be sure to put them to good use. Block off time in your schedule for those important projects and don't allow anything to interrupt you. If someone asks you to do something else during that time slot, let them know you can't because you already have another appointment (you do – with yourself!) And enjoy the satisfaction you get from spending your new philosophy on time management!

These time management tips can help you do more of what you want with your week. Imagine how great that is going to feel!

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