

10 Tips to Free Up More of Your Time

Do you feel like you're always under the pump and pushing against time?

The following 10 techniques, when used, will help you increase your effectiveness and reduce your stress levels at the same time.

Best of all, by remembering to put these 10 simple skills into action, you'll be able to free up more time for you to spend doing what *you* enjoy doing each day.

1. Exercise self-discipline

A good way to notice where your time is really going is to track it for a week. Record each shift in your attention, no matter how brief, from the start to the finish of your day, and keep track of these as they occur. Note down the activity, time started and time finished. Once you've done this for a week, you'll be able to use this information to analyse your use of time and pinpoint where you've been undisciplined. You can then use your insights to do things more efficiently in future.

2. Identify the key activities that will generate your results

Many of us spend way too much time on unproductive, time-wasting activities. When we consciously choose to focus on the activities that will give us the results we want, and weed out the rest, our 'to do' lists become much shorter! What do you need to stop doing to create more space in your life?

3. Set goals

Get clear on what's important to you and set goals around these key areas of your business and personal life. Be realistic about what's possible and allocate timeframes around achieving each goal.

4. Plan and prioritise

Once you've identified your goals and key activities, prioritise them and create action plans for getting them done. By writing things down, prioritising and scheduling them, we significantly reduce the sense of overwhelm that we can feel by just working with a 'to do' list.

5. Avoid procrastination

There are many reasons why we procrastinate, including an 'all or nothing' mindset, where we don't take any action, for example, to improve our fitness, because we worry that we won't commit to exercising for 30 minutes, 5 days a week. Get started by breaking down your goal, or any large task, into much smaller steps, and commit to taking just one. For example, a 10-minute walk around the block before work or in your lunch hour a couple of times a week, is better than doing no exercise at all.

6. Hold effective meetings

Ensure you always have a written, prioritised agenda and that a copy is provided to each attendee in advance to allow them to prepare for the meeting. Also, set start and finish times and stick to them.

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7. Focus and concentrate

As well as sticking to a pre-determined action plan for the bulk of your day, another way to stay focused and concentrate, is to give whatever you're working on 100% of your attention. Be present. Don't multi-task. Rather than saving time, jumping from one activity to another can lead to confusion and overwhelm, as you start to leave a trail of incomplete tasks behind you.

8. Control interruptions

Create and exercise strong boundaries so that others will appreciate and respect the value of your time. Discourage unscheduled meetings or visitors by asking people to call you and make an appointment time with you, rather than interrupting you without warning. Allocate a few 'quiet periods' in your day or week when you don't allow any interruptions, and communicate these to your co-workers or team.

9. Get organised

Any time spent getting organised now, will save you time looking for things later. Create and use systems whenever possible, both in your work and personal life. Automate whatever you can, for example, regular monthly payments, so they'll happen without you. Use technology to activate reminders, use standard templates, checklists and scripts for regular tasks and processes.

10. Delegate/outsource

Even if you work on your own or in a small office, get clear on any tasks that you're currently performing that can be handled by someone else and note how much of your time could be saved each day or week by delegating or outsourcing them. Don't limit what you can delegate only to the things that you're not good at. Even if you're good at a task and like doing it, consider how much of your valuable time could be freed up for other, more important tasks, by having someone cheaper than you doing the task for you.

Take a few moments now and note how well, on a scale of 1 - 10, you're handling each of these ten areas. This will highlight for you exactly where you can start to claw back some time. By changing your approach in your low-scoring areas, you'll soon be able to free up more and more of your time.

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