
5 MINUTE TEACHING DEVELOPMENT

Time Management in Academia

What is it?

We all struggle to “fit it all in”. Academic expectations include devotion to teaching, scholarship and service. Time management is a structured approach to take control of tasks and responsibilities to increase efficiency and productivity.

Why is it important?

Survival and success. The unstructured nature of academia creates a very challenging environment for efficient time management. Balancing requests with responsibilities can be daunting. Creating a balanced system to accommodate responsibilities can increase productivity and decrease stress.

How do I do it?

Top 6 Tips: The biggest bang for the buck

Start small. Tips that may provide significant gain:

- Triage: Establish a list of tasks and then set staged goals and deadlines. Triage the list and realign items frequently to catch less important tasks at the end of day. Schedule priorities in a calendar/planner like a meeting. Use electronic or paper format and stick to the schedule. Break big projects into chunks and schedule specific expectations.

-
- Manage Email: Limit the time to deal with email: 10 minutes/hour or twice/day. Stick to it. Don't keep it open all day. Turn off notifications. Divide the In-box into groups: Do (can resolve in ~2 minutes/message); Defer and Read later; Done/Archive; Delegate; Delete. For efficiency, manage the "Do" group in succession without interruption. Manage the "Delegate" via folders to maintain communication. For students, create a FAQ and post. Establish ground rules, including expectations of response (e.g. 8am to 5pm, within 72 hours, etc.)
 - Schedule Scholarship: Dedicate time for research, which becomes a weekly routine. Include time for reading, thinking, experiments, writing, networking, problem solving, and smaller tasks. Establish strategic deadlines for grant submissions, far enough in advance to allow edits/revisions. Collaborate when possible to maximize impact. Aim for a "banana split": 3 outcomes for 1 research project.
 - Saying "No" – Be Cautious and Selective: Maximize successful contributions. Evaluate: impact on research, service or teaching expectations; time investment required; schedule of deadlines or meetings; level of enjoyment in participating and select accordingly. Confirm with supervisor/mentor prior to declining to avoid missing a significant opportunity.
 - Teaching Preparation: Avoid working on a presentation "to perfection". Limit the time spent per slide and time invested per lecture. Use the syllabus to organize the course; create a lesson plan to organize topics; and align objectives with assessment and instructional strategies to increase effectiveness and decrease stress.
 - Maximize Office Hours: Often, 2-3 office hours/week are required. Maximize efficiency to be proactive and decrease email traffic. Suggestions: Time - select times when most students are available; Encouragement - repeat the invitation throughout the term, Location - hold office hours in a high traffic location (e.g. library, coffee shop or study room). Encourage students to come in groups or to create groups while there.

Quick Tips

- Tip 1: Triage and schedule tasks and projects. Chunk tasks together for efficiency
- Tip 2: Schedule time to manage email: divide and conquer
- Tip 3: Schedule time for scholarship, including reading and writing time
- Tip 4: Be selective when saying “no” to maximize positive impact
- Tip 5: Avoid preparing teaching “to perfection”: use lesson plans and alignment
- Tip 6: Maximize office hours via time selection, location and encouragement

More Information

Websites:

- Todoist.com
- Carlton College Science Education Resource Center. Task (Time) Management. Retrieved on February 23, 2015 from <http://serc.carleton.edu/NAGTWorkshops/earlycareer/balance/time.html>
- Torosyan, R. Time Management Reminders that Boost Efficiency, Peace of Mind. Retrieved February 20, 2015 from <http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/teaching-careers/time-management-reminders-that-boost-efficiency-peace-of-mind/>
- Kelly, R. Time-Saving Tips for Managing Your Email Inbox. Accessed on February 20, 2015 from <http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/teaching-careers/time-saving-tips-managing-email-inbox/>
- California State University Chancellor’s Doctoral Incentive Program. Finding Time for Research. Accessed on February 20, 2015 from <http://teachingcommons.cdlib.edu/cdip/facultyresearch/FindingTimeforResearch.html>

Book References

- Allen, D. (2002). *Getting things done: The art of stress-free productivity*. New York: Penguin Group.
- Covey, S. (1990). *The 7 habits of highly effective people*. New York: Fireside.
- Tracy, B. (2007). *Eat that frog!: 21 great ways to stop procrastinating and get more done in less time*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Journal Articles

- Ailamaki A, Gehrke J. Time Management for New Faculty. *SIGMOD Record*, 32(2): 102-106, June 2003.