

CSP E-Lesson 11, Fall 2008

Words of Wisdom: "When I overheard my boss call me "flaky" and "slow," I knew I had to do something fast. I started using weekly schedules and To Do lists. Now I don't know how I managed without them, and my boss brags about how 'organized' I am." *Beth Parker, 21, Accounting Assistant, Black Mountain, NC*



Tick Tock

Julie hunches over her textbook, reading frantically, as Ty and Cecily grab bus seats beside her.

"Don't tell me you're still studying for the test this morning!" Ty stares at Julie in disbelief.

"Pleeeeze, don't even talk to me. I have to concentrate. And, yes, I'm still studying. I was busy all week and I didn't have time to read all these chapters," Julie snaps at her friend without looking up from her book.

"Good luck, it took me all week to read the chapters," Cecily chimes in.

"I hope you concentrated on your class notes," Ty comments to Cecily, "Mr. Evans said 60 percent of the test will be from his talks in class."

Cecily turns pale, "I didn't get to my notes. I can't do everything!"

As Julie and her friends know, racing against the clock to accomplish tasks is stressful and not very effective. Studying is just one area where managing your time leads to success and peace of mind. How good are your time management skills?

	I'm always spot on	I need improvement
Are you punctual?	_____	_____
Do you prioritize tasks and concentrate on the most important ones?	_____	_____
Do you focus on your tasks or are you easily distracted?	_____	_____
Do you make time for healthy meals and enough sleep?	_____	_____

The Mystery of Disappearing Time

We all have only 24 hours a day. That's 86,400 seconds. And each of those seconds, once used, can never be used again. That's why managing time is one of the most important skills you can learn. Without adequate time, you can't complete your high-priority tasks or reach your ultimate goals. Without time for the things that are important to you, your life can be terribly frustrating.

Even though time can't be manufactured, you can "make" more time for yourself. For example, how much time do you spend waiting at bus stops, in lines, and on hold during phone calls? Besides waiting, we often have to do other no-brainer tasks like driving or riding to work, washing the dishes, making copies, paying bills, washing the car. During these times, our minds aren't really engaged, so that, too, is dead time.

One key to good time management is realizing that these scraps of time can be used effectively. For example, you can carry a small pad at all times to jot down ideas that occur to you about an upcoming task, or you can make notes about something you want to remember. If you save just seven minutes a day, by the end of a year, you'll have gained more than a typical work week of time.

"What I Did with My Time" Log

Where does your time go? You can solve the mystery of your disappearing time by keeping a "What I Did with My Time" log. You'll be surprised at how much time you spend on activities that aren't important.

When keeping a log, think about how each of your activities contributes to your goals, such as higher grades in school or better productivity on the job. Then assign a value to each activity based on how well it helps you achieve your goals. Zero represents the least valuable activity and five the most valuable.

For example, staring mindlessly at your work computer screen while daydreaming about something personal for 20 minutes is a zero! Texting your friends every 10 minutes might be, at best, a two if you send the texts on your personal time and the message is important. But a text to friends is always a zero if you send them on your work time. A difficult homework assignment has a value of five, and so does eating a healthy nutritious meal. Cleaning your room and organizing your desk at work are about a two, three, or four, depending on how much they interfere with your ability to reach your goals. Eating a greasy fast-food meal? A zero, maybe a one, if nothing else is available to eat.

The Mystery of Disappearing Time (Continued)

Keep a "What I Did with My Time" log for one week. At the end of the week, identify the following:

- Your 4's and 5's, the most valuable activities—where you want to concentrate your efforts.
- Your 0's and 1's, the time wasters—which you can cut out of your day.
- Your 2's and 3's, the activities you can limit.
- Your most productive hours of the day—the time of your peak energy and enthusiasm.

Following is a "What I Did with My Day" chart. Write a short description of each daily activity, note your energy and productivity level at the time (High/Medium/Low), and assign a 0-5 value to the activity.

"What I Did with My Day"		Day of Week _____		
Time of day	What I did	How Long I did it	How I felt	Numeric Value

"To Do" or "Not to Do"

Jackson is the best executive assistant Amanda Blake, food and beverage manager of Eden Resorts, has ever hired. She often finds herself bragging about him.

"I depend on Jackson completely to organize my day." Amanda tells her friends over lunch. "I used to feel like a hamster in a wheel. I was always running from one meeting to another, juggling tasks, and I never felt like my work was under control. Now, thanks to Jackson, I get to have lunch with you and still accomplish everything I need to do today."




What is Jackson's secret for helping Amanda manage her time? One important chore Jackson does every day is create Amanda's "To-Do" list. The list is taken from her Weekly Task List that he prepares each Friday for the upcoming week. In the past, Amanda developed her own To-Do list with lots of random tasks in no particular order, and she tried to do them all. Jackson doesn't prepare an ordinary list like this. He analyzes each task and decides which ones are low priority and can be put off for a while or can be delegated to someone else. Follow Jackson as he creates a daily To-Do list for Amanda.

First, he reminds himself of Amanda's work goals:

- Increase banquet sales and profitability
- Maintain world class quality service and food
- Achieve superior customer satisfaction
- Build a professional and respected company image

Second, he lists all of the tasks in Amanda's day. Then he assigns each task a star rating. Some tasks are assigned a "D" for delegate. These are tasks that should be given to someone else to do.

Jackson's rating system:

-  3 stars are "Must Do" tasks
-  2 stars are important, but not urgent, tasks
-  1 star is a task to do when there is time
- D** Is for delegate

"To Do" or "Not to Do" (Continued)

Here is Amanda's daily task list for Monday. Think about her goals and assign one of Jackson's ratings to each of the tasks.

Task	Rating
Meet with a potential new client who is planning a wedding reception	_____
Count the rental chairs and linens delivered for today's banquet	_____
Review profit-and-loss reports for last month	_____
Read the food and beverage industry magazines	_____
Interview applicants for the position of dining room manager	_____
Meet with chef to discuss food vendor's costs	_____
Arrange a contribution to a community charity event	_____
Check food preparation equipment for cleanliness and safety	_____
Reprimand a food server for poor customer service skills	_____
Look at catalogues for dining room china and silverware	_____
Tour the facility and observe guest interactions with staff	_____
Proofread and approve a magazine ad before it goes to the publisher	_____
Review the chef's new menu suggestions	_____
Set up tables and chairs for a banquet	_____

After Jackson has rated the tasks, he re-arranges Amanda's To-Do tasks in order of importance. He shows the most important activities at the top of the list, lesser important tasks in the middle, and items to be delegated to someone else at the bottom.

Assume you are Jackson and, on the next page, rewrite Amanda's To-Do list according to the ratings you assigned each task. Place all items in the proper order.

"To Do" or "Not to Do" (Continued)

Amanda's To-Do List

Task	Rating
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
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Your Own Task List and To-Do List

As part of your own organizational system for school and work, you should begin with a weekly Task List and break it down into daily To-Do lists. On Wednesday, for example, you may have to return four phone calls, finish a report that's due on Thursday, talk to your teacher about an upcoming test, or consult the supervisor at your part-time job about your vacation plans. On Thursday, you may have to drive your car in for maintenance and take the first step on a project due next month. On Friday, you may have to write a weekly summary of activities for your boss, make arrangements for an upcoming weekend trip, and so on. Without making a list, you're likely to forget some of these items.

"To Do" or "Not to Do" (Continued)

Use Jackson's strategy for creating a Task List to organize your activities for the next week.

First, list three of your personal goals for next week:

- _____
- _____
- _____

Second, list, in no particular order, the tasks you need to do in the week ahead in order to reach your goals. Think about how each task will help you achieve your goals and assign each task a ranking from the stars on page 4. If a task is difficult or time consuming, break it into several smaller tasks.

My Task List for Next Week

Task	Rating
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
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"To Do" or "Not to Do" (Continued)

Third, rewrite your weekly Task List in order of importance. Place the highest rated tasks at the top of the list and the least important at the bottom. By rating your tasks, you can separate those that are truly important in your life from the time-consuming tasks at the bottom of the list that can be postponed if necessary. From the Task List, you're ready to move on to your next tool, a daily planner where you can enter your To-Do list.

My Task List for Next Week

Task	Rating
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Let Me Pencil You In

Do you have a regular calendar or planner where you can write due dates and list your priorities for each day? If not, you shouldn't be surprised when you forget important things. Celebrities, business executives, sports figures and all other working people who aim for success won't make a move without consulting their planner. Some schools, in fact, provide or require a planner for every student.

If you don't already have a basic planner or scheduler for organizing your days, now is the time to start one. You don't need anything elaborate, just a simple chart that contains the days of the week and the hours of the day. Start your schedule beginning with the time you wake up and follow these tips:

- Write in the "must do" things that don't change, such as your school schedule.
- Write in important dates and times, such as doctors' appointments, exams and social activities.
- Write in time for recreation, chores, exercise and studying.
- Leave some open time for the unexpected.
- Don't over commit yourself.
- Duh! It's a no-brainer, but make sure you leave enough time to eat healthy meals and get good sleep.

Here's an example of one student's early morning schedule:

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6:00 A.M.	Wake up Power walk, shower, eat breakfast						
7:00 A.M.	Catch bus					Wake up, Shower, eat	
7:30 A.M.	Math class		Study Hall	Math			
8:15 A.M.	Computer lab		Science	Science exam	Acct.	8:00 A.M. Swim meet	Wake up, Shower, eat
9:00 A.M.	PE Class	Spanish		English	Gov't.		

Let Me Pencil You In (Continued)

Use this chart or create your own weekly planner on your computer or in a notebook. Whatever style of calendar or planner you choose, here are some tips for maximizing your benefits.

- Use just *one* calendar for all your activities—work, school, home. Multiple calendars invite confusion.
- Keep your calendar with you wherever you go.
- Don't let your days get too crowded.
- Schedule quiet times and write them in the calendar.
- Highlight the most important entries, for instance, circle them or write them in capitals.
- If your calendar has room for notes, use it to record important ideas that occur to you. In this way, you'll have all such notes in one place, rather than scribbled on miscellaneous scraps of paper that could get lost.
- Check your calendar at the beginning of each week of see if it needs updating.

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
: A.M.							

What's Stopping You?

Do you turn off when people talk about To-Do lists and schedules? Does it make you tired just to think about them? Do you turn a three-week assignment into a last-minute crisis? Are you a "Tomorrow, tomorrow, I'll get it done tomorrow," person, which means putting off tasks until a later time? Believe it or not, people who don't take the time to manage their time work harder, suffer more stress and have less time for the activities they enjoy.

We all procrastinate in small ways. Maybe you've been promising yourself you'll get all of your friends' and relatives' telephone numbers into your cell phone file or that you'll create an online file of Homecoming pictures for your friends. If the task you're postponing is minor, there's no harm in letting it slide. Maybe you're doing something more important!

The problem comes when the task you put off is really significant. When your high-priority items get shorted because you leave them until the last minute, you're in trouble. You'll likely suffer extra anxiety and stress because of your delay, and often your performance will suffer as well.

It's important to recognize when you are procrastinating, why you are procrastinating, and find ways to motivate yourself. No one knows better than you what makes you delay, so you can get creative in overcoming your stumbling blocks.

Here are some reasons people give for procrastinating and putting things off. Make a suggestion for motivating yourself and overcoming each one of these excuses.

"Seeing a movie or watching TV will help me study for a test because I'll feel more relaxed afterward."

Suggestion: _____

"This project is too hard, so I'll wait and talk to someone else about how to do it."

Suggestion: _____

What's Stopping You? (Continued)

"I just don't feel like it, and there's plenty of time left."

Suggestion: _____

"I make a big show of working—piling my desk with the materials, carrying my books around, and so on, without actually doing much."

Suggestion: _____

"I'm overwhelmed and don't know where to begin."

Suggestion: _____

"I don't know how."

Suggestion: _____

"This isn't the right time."

Suggestion: _____

"I ignore tasks I don't want to do, hoping somehow I'll get out of doing them."

Suggestion: _____

"I manage to believe there's plenty of time left when there isn't."

Suggestion: _____
