

Time management: Tips to reduce stress and improve productivity

Effective time management is a primary means to a less stressful life. These practices can help you reduce your stress and reclaim your personal life.

Do you find yourself overwhelmed by the number of projects you have at home, school, and/or work or the depth of these projects? Do you feel the day flies by without your devoting the necessary attention to each assignment because other tasks keep intruding, or because you can't get it all organized?

You probably know that effective time management will help you get more done each day. It has important health benefits, too. By managing your time more wisely, you can minimize stress and improve your quality of life.

But how do you get back on track when organizational skills don't come naturally? To get started, choose one of these tips, try it for two to four weeks and see if it helps. If it does, consider adding another one. If not, try a different one.

- **Plan each day.** Planning your day can help you feel more in control of your life. Write a to-do list, putting the most important tasks at the top. Keep a schedule of your daily activities to minimize conflicts and last-minute rushes.
- **Prioritize your tasks.** Like many people, you may be spending the majority of your time on a small percentage of your tasks. Prioritizing will ensure you spend your time and energy on those that are truly important to you.
- **Say no to nonessential tasks.** Consider your goals and schedule before agreeing to take on additional work.
- **Delegate.** Take a look at your to-do list and consider what you can eliminate or pass on to someone else.
- **Take the time you need to do a quality job.** Doing work right the first time may take more time upfront, but errors usually result in time spent making corrections, which takes more time overall.
- **Break large, time-consuming tasks into smaller tasks.** Work on them a few minutes at a time until you get them all done.
- **Practice the 10-minute rule.** Work on a dreaded task for 10 minutes each day. Once you get started, you may find you can finish it.
- **Evaluate how you're spending your time.** Keep a diary of everything you do for three days to determine how you're spending your time. Look for time that can be used more wisely. For example, could you take a bus or train to work and use the commute to catch up on reading? If so, you could free up some time to exercise or spend with family or friends.

- **Get plenty of sleep and exercise.** Improved focus and concentration will help improve your efficiency so that you can complete your work in less time.
- **Take a time management course.** If your college or employer offers workshops/continuing education, take a time management class.
- **Take a break when needed.** Too much stress can derail your attempts at getting organized. When you need a break, take one. Take a walk. Do some quick stretches at your workstation. Do some deep breathing exercises. Take a day of vacation.

Ask for help

If you're too overwhelmed to think about trying any of these tips, it's time to ask for help. Does your life feel totally out of control? If so, contact Counseling Services through the Health Center by phone at 304-876-5161, or complete a counseling request form through Ram Pulse at: <https://shepherd.campuslabs.com/engage/submitter/form/collectsubmitteridentity/13877831-289f-4fb0-baaf-2e0c420972c2>

Academic Success Coaches are available to help with all aspects of academic skill building and readiness. Schedule an appointment through the Student Success Center at: <https://www.shepherd.edu/studentssuccess>