



7 TIME MANAGEMENT TIPS FOR THE HOLIDAYS AND EVERY DAY

Like it or not, each December things get a little more hectic for many of us, and that's when it becomes especially important to practice strong time management skills. We culled through some of the best advice from experts on the subject—resources like MindTools, Harvard Business Review, Entrepreneur.com, and Lifehacker—and pulled together a list of seven tips to improve time management, just in time for the holidays.

Some apply to work, others are ideal for personal life, and all are applicable to that busy window between Thanksgiving and New Year's. It's not so much about saving a few minutes here and there, but rather getting the most productivity and enjoyment out of the time we do have.



- 1.** Ditch multitasking: Writing for the Harvard Business Review blog, Peter Bregman reports that multitasking is not all it's cracked up to be. It turns out that jumping from task to task can actually waste time, and multitaskers could be lowering their productivity by as much as 40%. Too much multitasking can even ding your IQ and harm your future ability to focus on those big, important tasks. So, for the best approach to managing time, resist the allure to jump around and stick to one thing at a time.
- 2.** Take a single view and prioritize: Whenever possible, look at all standing commitments together with all the new requests on your time. If there's obviously more than any human being can accomplish in a day, a weekend, a vacation, or the entire holiday season, then something's got to give. Instead of pondering how to get more items on to the calendar, a better way to manage time may be to start cutting from the bottom and taking things off. We want to do it all, but there are only 24 hours in the day, so if those things lagging at the bottom of the list won't hurt to miss, it may be time to let them go.
- 3.** Carve out 'me time': Whether it's a well-deserved break from it all, or time on the clock you plan to spend laser-focused on a key project, everybody needs some time to do exactly what they want to. Take it from Entrepreneur.com—once in a while, it's OK to put up the busy sign, re-write an away-message, or put on some headphones to spread the word that now is not the time you want to be disturbed. Temporarily unplugging from social media, IM, phone, and Web may also help get the most out of your time.
- 4.** Prepare for delays and downtime: This is different from multitasking. Who hasn't been stuck forever in the doctor's reception area, had a computer freeze up, or been left waiting for the answer to an important question? There will always be times like this, so why not take advantage by preparing ahead of time? Having your to-do list with you all the time is a good start. And consider adding those small, mundane chores to the list for occasions like this. Even using that time for a five-minute break is worthwhile, because taking time out to rest helps us re-focus and get more out of our remaining hours.



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5. Schedule and use a to-do list: It's important to be flexible both at work and at play, but if there's no plan in place in the beginning, then there's nothing to be flexible with. There's a difference between moving things around to make some reasonable schedule changes and just shooting from the hip. MindTools.com advises writing down the things you have to do, and for each one taking a moment to consider what type of task it is, describing the steps involved, deciding the optimal time to complete it, and determining its importance relative to the other items on the docket. Putting things in their proper place helps ensure that precious time will be well-spent.

6. Leave extra time: Speaking of scheduling ... Lifehacker suggests that sometimes adding a little padding to the calendar is necessary, especially during the holidays. Whether it's getting through the airport, waiting for the mall Santa, or baking all eight dozen cookies you agreed to, some things just take longer than we would like, and there's no way around it. So instead of robbing time from something else later, why not plan ahead for a few extra minutes to get through the family portrait or address all those holiday card envelopes? Or, there's always the alternative, which brings us to the last item on the list ...

7. Practice saying no, in a nice way: Etiquette expert Emily Post advises that honesty really is the best policy, so

if things are too busy to accept an invitation or request, explain that you'd like to say yes but can't right now. And instead of a hard 'no,' offer to reschedule at a mutually-convenient time in the future. This will show that you are considerate and want to spend time with the other person.

A lot of the ideas here are big-picture ones, not tactical items like simply buying a planner or downloading a shiny new app. But that doesn't mean the steps are large and impossible. Focusing on a single idea at a time and repeating each new habit will go a long way toward improving the way we choose to manage our time.

Source: healthways.com