

Goal-Setting and Time Management

Goal-Setting and Time Management

PURPOSE: This course is a requirement for the Venturing Discovery Award; however, it can be taken, at any time, by Venturers whether they are working on the award or not. This course can be presented as a workshop for single or multiple crews or broken into shorter segments and presented at crew meetings or Venturing Forum/Roundtables. The small group approach used in this training can be adjusted to accommodate any number of participants. It is highly suggested that this course be taught by more experienced Venturers as well as adult volunteers participating in the program.

OVERVIEW: Finding a successful time management strategy depends on a person's personality, ability to self-motivate and level of self-discipline. This course introduces established methods for improving a Venturer's ability to effectively manage the events in his or her life in relation to time.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: Venturers will:

- Increase their awareness of time management strategies
- Implement self-selected strategies
- Predict external time wasters
- Examine how they spend their time
- Model how to set priorities
- Organize tasks by category
- Assess the importance of using a planning tool
- Perform work in a timely manner
- Schedule time appropriately

TIME: Approximately 3 ½ hours. This training can also be divided and presented as individual modules.

INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNIQUES: guided discussion, individual and group activities, demonstration, and small group discussion

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS:

- Flipchart and markers
- Blank paper
- Pens or pencils
- Large clear jar
- Medium-sized rocks (or golf balls)
- Gravel or pebbles (or marbles)
- Seeds (or beads)
- Sample planning tools, e.g., calendars, "To Do" lists, phone, diaries, work logs, etc. (optional)
- Separate sheets of 8 1/2" x 11" paper, labeled: ALWAYS, SOMETIMES, RARELY

- Tape
- Handouts from appendix
- Computer, with internet access connected to a projector

REFERENCES:

- Covey, Sean (1998). The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens. New York: Touchstone.
- Covey, Stephen R. (1989). The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. New York: Free Press.
- Covey, Stephen R., Merrill, A. Roger, & Merrill, Rebecca R. (1994). First Things First: To Live, to Love, to Learn, to Leave a Legacy. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Lakein, Alan (1989). How to Get Control of Your Time and Your Life. New York: Signet.
- Tracy, Brian (2001). Eat That Frog!: 21 Great Ways to Stop Procrastinating and Get More Done in Less Time. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

AGENDA	
Session	**Time**
Ice Breaker	10 minutes
Course Introduction	5 minutes
Tracking Your Time	40 minutes
Break	10 minutes
Setting Priorities	40 minutes
Break	10 minutes
Getting Organized	40 minutes
Break	10 minutes
Using Planning Tools	15 minutes
Beating Procrastination	15 minutes
Scheduling Your Time	10 minutes
Course Summary	5 minutes
Total Time	**3 ½ hours (210 minutes)**

ICE BREAKER – TIME ROBBERS (10 min)

Materials needed

- Individual signs labeled: ALWAYS, SOMETIMES, RARELY
- tape

Directions

1. Before the course begins, tape the signs along one wall of the room.
2. Explain that there are many activities we do during the day that fill our time, some of them are productive, others are not.
3. Tell participants that you will name an example of a "Time Robber"—an activity that is unproductive. Instruct them to move to the sign that represents how often this "Time Robber" affects them. Realize that participants will be moving with each example you give. Instruct participants to move in an orderly manner.
4. Explain that these are examples of distractions that can cut into the time when they should be doing something else.
5. Have Venturers who get distracted explain how the "Time Robber" affects their ability to get done what they need to do.
6. Close the activity by asking for suggestions on how to better handle time robbers.

Examples of Time Robbers: (Select a few or all of these items. You may also add additional examples that are not on the list.)

- Chatting or texting
- Unexpected visitors
- Doing tasks that others are capable of and willing to do
- Doing nothing while standing in line
- Doing nothing while riding on public transportation or as a passenger in a car
- Not planning ahead for meals
- Going to routinely scheduled meetings
- Checking e-mail when the alert prompts that you have a message
- Frequenting social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, Google+, Tumblr, etc.)
- Surfing the Internet
- Watching TV
- Hitting the snooze button on the alarm clock to get up at the last minute possible
- Shuffling toys, food, work, etc. from one table or area to another without putting anything away
- Not planning your day
- Running errands without thinking about optimizing your trip time

OPTIONAL METHOD OF PRESENTING THE ACTIVITY

Divide participants into 5 groups. Assign each group one of the following time wasters: phone/social media; meetings; e-mail; family obligations; and friends/visitors. (If you have fewer than 5 groups; assign more than one time waster to each group.) Have each group formulate solutions to manage their time waster and list them on a flipchart. If participants have internet access, have groups create a "word cloud" of their suggested solutions. Have each group select a spokesperson to share their list.

Guide participants to p.49 in the Handbook for Venturers. Have each group evaluate their list of time wasters and assess each to determine which tip might help them effectively manage their time.

COURSE INTRODUCTION (5 min)

Here's a riddle - You can't save it, you can't borrow it, you can't lend it, you can't leave it, you can't take it with you, you can only do two things with it – use it or lose it. What is it? The answer is TIME! You only have 24 hours, 1,440 minutes or 86,400 seconds each day. How you use that time depends on skills learned through self-analysis, planning, evaluation, and self-control.

What is Time Management?

Time management refers to a range of skills, tools, and techniques used to manage events in your life in relation to time. Time management is really a misnomer. We don't really manage time – we manage ourselves and our life events in relation to time.

We just looked at a few ways we waste our time. Now, we'll explore strategies that can help you more effectively manage events in your life in relation to time. Finding strategies that work best for **you** depend on your personality, culture, circumstances, and priorities, but you **must** look critically at yourself and perhaps confront some difficult issues.

Guide participants to p.49 in the Handbook for Venturers. Tell them that these Time Management guidelines will help them as they work through the next activity.

TRACKING YOUR TIME (40 min)

Strategy 1 Be Time-Aware – You cannot manage time well without being aware of how long things take and how you are using your time. Improve your time management skills by understanding how you use your time.

Introduction

Have the Venturers calculate how many minutes there are in a year and then, roughly, how many minutes they have been alive. (Answer – 525,600 minutes in year which averages out to 7,884,000 minutes for a 15 year-old).

Point out that how they use their time is one way they can help themselves reach their personal goals (including Venturing recognition goals!).

ACTIVITY – Where Does the Time Go?

Materials Needed:

- Chart paper and markers
- Appendix A, *How Do I Use My Time?* worksheet
- Appendix B, Daily Time Log Directions Handout

Instructions

1. Distribute the *How Do I Use My Time?* worksheet and explain that they are going to be working independently on all three sections of the worksheet, but will have time to discuss the sections with a partner.
2. Assign partners.
3. Instruct Venturers to complete the following:
    a. Part I of the worksheet addressing how they spent their time yesterday.
    b. Part II of the worksheet asking them to rate how well they manage their time in relationship to school, studying, and homework.
4. Stop at this point and collect data from the Venturers concerning Part I and Part II of the worksheet.
    a. How much time did they spend on the computer, communicating with friends, or watching TV? Have one of the Venturers determine an average.
    b. How much time did they physically spend with their friends? Have one of the Venturers determine an average.
    c. Ask the Venturers to turn and talk with a partner (or partners if there are an uneven number of participants) about where they **wish** they had spent their time when they look back from today's perspective.
5. Next, draw their attention to Part III of the worksheet. Ask the Venturers to work with their partner to determine the following:
    a. What activity is the most important and how much time should it take up during their day?
    b. What is next most important activity and how much time should it get?
    c. And finally, what is the least important activity and how much time will it get?
6. Encourage the Venturers to ask each other questions about their priorities and to expect that their answers may be different.
7. Answer code: Scale for PART II of the Time Analysis worksheet
    a. 12 – 15 Points Great: You have awesome study and time management skills.

b. 7 – 11 Points Okay: You have some good habits, but they can use a little improvement.

c. 6 or below Needs Improvement: You can use some help with your study habits.

8. Distribute the "*Using a Log to Determine How You Spend Your Time"* handout and explain that they can use this information to perform a more thorough analysis of their time on their own.
9. Suggest that this plan should be shared during the Advisor Conference. Conclude the session by asking what they have found most interesting or most meaningful about how Venturers in this group use their time.

SETTING PRIORITIES (40 min)

Strategy 2 – The key to prioritization is determining the most important thing to do to reach your goals.

DEMONSTRATION: Big Rocks in a Jar! (Adapted from Stephen R. Covey) (10 min)

Materials Needed:

- Large glass or clear plastic jar
- Medium-sized rocks
- Small pebbles
- Sand
- (Note: you can replace rocks, pebbles, and sand with golf balls, marbles, and small beads.)

Instructions

1. Show an empty jar to the participants and say "This jar represents your time."
2. Add rocks to the jar until you cannot add any more. "The rocks are the goals and commitments that are important to you." Ask those who believe the jar is full to stand.
3. Now add pebbles to the jar. "The pebbles represent things that you want to do, but **don't need** to do. They matter to you, but not as much as your goals and commitments. Notice that there is room for them in the jar as they fill in the gaps around the rocks.
4. Next add the sand until the jar appears to be full. "The sand represents all the small, unimportant time-taking tasks that are easy, and quick, to do."
5. Ask, "What is the point of this demonstration?" Venturers may say that no matter how full your schedule, you can always fit more into it. This would be **incorrect**.
6. Make the point that the **real** moral of this exercise is that you can make time for your big rocks, but **only** if you put them into the schedule **first** and then fit everything else around and between the rocks. It may be easier to pour the smaller things into the jar, but if they fill too much of the jar there will be less room for the big rocks.

7. Ask, “So what will you fill your jar with for the rest of the day?” Create a word cloud with their responses and post it to your crew’s website.

ACTIVITY: Time Management Matrix - Determining your Priorities (30 min)

Materials Needed

- Flipchart and markers
- Pen/pencil and paper
- Appendix C (for instructor only)

Instructions

1. Explain that managing your time effectively requires an understanding of the distinction between what is important and what is urgent.
2. Ask Venturers what the difference is between important and urgent. Guide them to the understanding that:
    a. Urgent means it requires immediate attention – it cannot be put off without creating problems. Urgency may affect others.
    b. Importance has to do with results. If something is important to you, it contributes to your mission, goals and/or values. It is important to understand that what is important to one person, may not be important to another. Importance is personal.
3. Introduce the matrix by explaining that we can divide tasks into four quadrants based on what is urgent and what is important.
4. Draw and label the matrix on a flipchart and explain:
    a. **Quadrant 1** (Urgent and Important) Where our priorities should be.
    b. **Quadrant 2** (Not Urgent, but Important) Items in this quadrant allow you to be proactive. You should spend most of your time working on items in this quadrant.
    c. **Quadrant 3** (Urgent but Not Important) These items could be someone else’s important items.
    d. **Quadrant 4** (Not Urgent and Not Important) These items are considered busy work. You may use these items as an escape.

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	I Urgent and Important	II Not Urgent, but Important
Not Important	III Urgent, but Not Important	IV Not Urgent and Not Important

5. Break into groups of 3-5 Venturers. Ask each group to identify three or more typical tasks and activities that fall into each quadrant.
6. Debrief by having Venturers discuss the following:
    a. Where they should spend most of their time (in the Important quadrants--Quadrants 1 and 2, and especially spend more time in long-term activities).
    b. Which quadrant(s) they should avoid (the not important ones, especially the one that is also not urgent).
7. Summarize with the following:
    a. The most important tasks **usually** are not the most urgent tasks. Yet we tend to let the urgent tasks dominate our lives.
    b. While activities that are both urgent and important must be done, Stephen Covey suggests that we spend less time on activities that are not important (regardless of their urgency) in order to gain time to focus on activities that are not urgent, but important.
    c. Focusing on these important activities allows you to gain greater control over your time and possibly reduce the number of important tasks that do become urgent.
8. Note: See Appendix D for additional information

GETTING ORGANIZED (40 min)

Strategy 3: Removing the clutter and getting organized are valuable tasks.

Here's an interesting fact - Time management experts say that we spend about 7 hours per week just looking for things or being distracted by clutter (Missouri Business Development Program, 2009).

Whenever you feel overwhelmed by too many things to do and too little time in which to do them, sit down, take a deep breath, and list all those tasks you need to accomplish.

There are three basic options for handling information:

- Act on it
- Delegate it
- Eliminate it

Act

Before you begin your tasks, you should assign priorities to them:

- A = highest importance and/or urgency
- B = medium importance and/or urgency
- C = lower importance and/or urgency

If you have more than one "A" priority - mark them A1, A2, A3, etc. Do the same for your B and C priorities.

Delegate

Ask yourself if the task is something you must do personally or if you can delegate this task to someone else who can do the job.

Eliminate

Some tasks may not need to be done at all. You should eliminate every single activity you possibly can, in order to free up your time. Some questions to ask yourself before you eliminate a task are:

- Do I really need it?
- How will it help me?
- Will it be useful when I need it again?
- Is it new or unique?
- Is it a necessary part of a project or special file (e.g., personnel file, client file, school record, tax related, etc.)
- Would it be difficult to replace?
- Could anything bad happen if I toss it?

Efficiency is doing things the right way. Effectiveness is doing the right things. Your ability to plan and organize your work, in advance, so you are always working on your highest value tasks

determines your success as much as any other factor – Brian Tracy, CEO Brian Tracy International, specializing in training and development

ACTIVITY: Lighten your Backpack (30 min)

An easy way for remembering how to set priorities is to think of what we have just covered as the "A-B-C-D-E method". The following activity will help you practice the "A-B-C-D-E" method". Create a list of your goals and objectives and before you begin, place one of those letters in the margin before each of the tasks on your list.

Materials:

- Appendix E, A-B-C-D-E Method Handout
- Appendix F, Lighten Your Backpack Worksheet

Directions

1. Read the following scenario: You have been a member of your Venturing crew for almost a year. You are the activity chair for the upcoming camping trip scheduled four weeks from now. This is a popular crew adventure because it is held at a state park 40 miles away allowing crew members to choose between mountain biking or horseback riding. The stables have told you that they can only reserve 8 horses per group and that reservations are on a first-come basis. Mountain bikes are also available at the park for rent, if needed.
2. Break into groups of two or three.
3. Distribute the *A-B-C-D-E Method Handout* and *Backpack Activity Sheet* and ask Venturers to assign priorities to the items.
4. Explain that they will have 15 minutes to scan through every item on the list and assign priorities to each. Have them be prepared to discuss their rationale with the group.
5. Have Venturers evaluate whether there are other tasks related to the items listed. If so, have them identify and include those tasks.
6. After 15 minutes engage the group in a discussion of the following: Describe any items you could delegate. Were there any items that needed to be eliminated? Identify any additional tasks not listed that needed to be considered.
7. Ideas to take away from this exercise that will help you stay organized and on task:
    a. Take the time to be clear about your goals and objectives so that the priorities you set are moving you in the direction of something that is of real value to you.
    b. Remember that what counts is not the amount of time that you put in overall; rather, it's the amount of time that you spend working on high-priority tasks.
    c. Understand that the most important factor in setting priorities is your ability to make wise choices. You are always free to choose to engage in one activity or another.

USING PLANNING TOOLS (15 min)

Strategy 4 – Using a planning tool improves your productivity.

Keeping a reliable, easy-to-use record of upcoming events, meetings, and appointments is crucial for time management. There are many types of planning tools available, so find one that you enjoy using.

Materials: Examples of planning tools (optional)

DISCUSSION: Ask Venturers if they use planning tools. Lead a discussion on how a planning tool is used. (See appendix for suggestions.) You may also want to have the Venturers show examples of their favorite planning tools.

To Do … or Not To Do

Probably the most common planning tool is the "To Do" list for noting items that we want to complete and when they need to be completed. Items on our "to do" list may come from a variety of sources, such as teachers, coaches, family members, or from your own goals and activities. Most planning tools now incorporate the basic "to do" list.

Many of us feel a great sense of accomplishment when we can cross an item off our list. Some helpful points when using a "to do" list are:

- Check your list every day, usually at the beginning of the day.
- Cross off items immediately upon completion.
- At the end of the day, remember to transfer incomplete items.
- Assign priority rankings to items.
- Combine related tasks whenever feasible.

Here's a hint; you can make your "to do" lists more powerful if you assign a priority to each of the tasks, as learned in the previous section on organization. Remember A, B, C, D, and E?

BEATING PROCRASTINATION (15 min)

Strategy 5: Putting things off results in poor time management.

- Take a poll to determine the number of Venturers who put off tasks because they are overwhelming or unpleasant.
- Think about why you put off making decisions.

Share that often procrastinators just don't want to deal with the reality of a situation or the work it might create for them. Whatever the situation, procrastination hinders a person's ability to manage time.

Procrastination has other costs too:

- Health – procrastinators have more colds, flu, gastrointestinal problems, and insomnia
- Teamwork – procrastinators shift responsibilities onto others who become resentful

How to Stop Procrastinating

- Break the task down into smaller segments.
- Complete a preparatory task to help you get started—organize notes.
- Reward yourself for completing smaller tasks.

DISCUSSION: Ask Venturers to think of a time when they put off doing something that needed to be done. Break into groups of two or three and discuss ways they might avoid procrastinating in the future. Have groups share a few examples with the group. Ideas may include:

- Do the least enjoyable thing first. Study for your hardest class or do a chore you dislike and get it out of the way.
- Think small. Set small goals. Need to clean your room? Focus on one bookshelf or one corner at a time. Reward yourself as you finish each goal.
- Set a timer, and work on a chore or task for just 10 or 15 minutes at a time.
- Say, "I choose to" instead of "I have to." We often rebel when we feel we "should" do something.
- Jump in! Stop waiting for the right moment or talking about what you're going to do-- "Just do it!"
- Poke holes in the project by doing easy, quick tasks first
- Remove distractions.
- Remember to praise yourself about your progress.
- Aim for the exceptional but allow yourself to be pleased with good enough.
- Celebrate small accomplishments. Reward yourself for small steps as you work toward the final product.

SCHEDULING YOUR TIME (10 min)

Strategy 6: Carefully scheduling your time can lead to having more time.

"There is always enough time for the important things. The busiest people are able to find time for what they want to do, not because they have any more time than others but because they think in terms of 'making' time by careful scheduling."

Alan Lakein, time management expert

The 80:20 Rule

- This is neatly summed up in the Pareto Principle, or the '80:20 Rule' http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pareto_principle . This argues that typically 80% of effort generates only 20% of results. The remaining 80% of results are achieved with only 20% of the effort. While the ratio is not always 80:20, this pattern recurs so frequently as to be the norm in many areas.

- By applying the time management tips and skills in this section you can optimize your effort to ensure that you concentrate as much of your time and energy as possible on the high payoff tasks. This ensures that you achieve the greatest benefit possible with the limited amount of time available to you.

OPTIONAL HANDOUT: Appendix G, Time Management Strategies

Note: this is an optional activity – you may want to discuss and/or distribute this article on how successful teens manage their time.

COURSE SUMMARY (5 min)

Practicing good time management skills results in higher levels of productivity, more energy, less stress, the ability to get things done, positive relationships, and increased self-esteem.

What we have learned…

1. Analyze where your time is spent
2. Distinguish what is important and urgent
3. Utilize tools to improve time management
4. Schedule!
5. Complete work in a timely manner
6. Control time wasters

Guide Venturers to conclude that time management skills can help them reach their goals. For example; suppose you want to raise your grade in math. You might schedule a set time each day for study or tutoring, rather than just saying, "I'll study harder."

FINAL ACTIVITY: Have Venturers choose a goal that they have had difficulty reaching. Help them formulate objectives for their goal in relation to managing their time for it. Each objective should be specific, measurable, realistic, and have a completion date.

Conclude with the following:

- Time management is really just a fancy way of describing balancing more than one responsibility at once. Like any other skill, it takes practice.
- The most difficult aspect of time management is holding yourself accountable for practicing the skills you've learned.
- Regularly assess your progress to be sure you are meeting the goals you defined within the timeframe you established.
- Frequently ask yourself, "What is the best use of my time right now?" Routinely check to see if you've kept the commitments you made to yourself and others.

Appendix

Appendix A – Worksheet: How Do I Use My Time? Page 14

Appendix B – Using a Log to Determine How You Spend Your Time Page 15

Appendix C – Urgent/Important Chart Page 16

Appendix D – Day Planner Page 17

Appendix E – The ABCDE Method for Setting Priorities Page 18

Appendix F – Backpack Activity Sheet Page 19

Appendix G – Time Management Strategies Page 20

Worksheet: HOW DO I USE MY TIME?

Part I. Evaluate the last 24 hours and calculate how many minutes you spent on each of the following activities. You may add other activities as needed.

_____ minutes sleeping

_____ minutes with my family

_____ minutes eating

_____ minutes watching TV

_____ minutes reading

_____ minutes communicating with friends (chat, text, Facebook, phone, in person, etc.)

_____ minutes on Venturing activities

_____ minutes playing or practicing sports

Part II. Now let's examine how you spend your time on schoolwork. Read each statement below. If your response to the statement *is always, give yourself a 3. If your answer is sometimes, give yourself a 2. If your answer is probably not, give yourself a 1.*

1. I have a dedicated time for studying each day. _____
2. I keep track of my assignments and regularly check for progress. _____
3. I always prepare any materials I may need before I begin to study. _____
4. I rarely get distracted when studying. _____
5. I undertake assignments in chunks to avoid last minute work. _____

Part III. Reflect on how you answered the questions above and fill out the chart below.

Things that I Could do only Sometimes, not Every Day	
Things that I Need to do Regularly Every Day	
Important Things that Need More Time	

Notes:

Using a Log to Determine How You Spend Your Time

Create and maintain a daily log of how you spend your time. You may be surprised at how much time you spend on various tasks or how much time is spent with phone calls and interruptions. The time log can provide you with a starting point for determining focus areas for improvement.

How long you keep the time log depends on the nature of your work. For most people, keeping the log for seven consecutive days (one week) will suffice; for others, it may require a month or two. Divide your day into chunks of 15-30 minutes (perhaps even smaller, if more appropriate for your schedule).

Record exactly how you spend your time – be specific. Log your time as you go, not at the end of the day. You may not be recording every 15 minutes, only every time you shift your attention.

Try **not** to change your behavior during this time, even if you see obvious areas where you can gain better control – similar to keeping a food diary when you are on a diet. Rather, strive to get a realistic picture of your typical schedule.

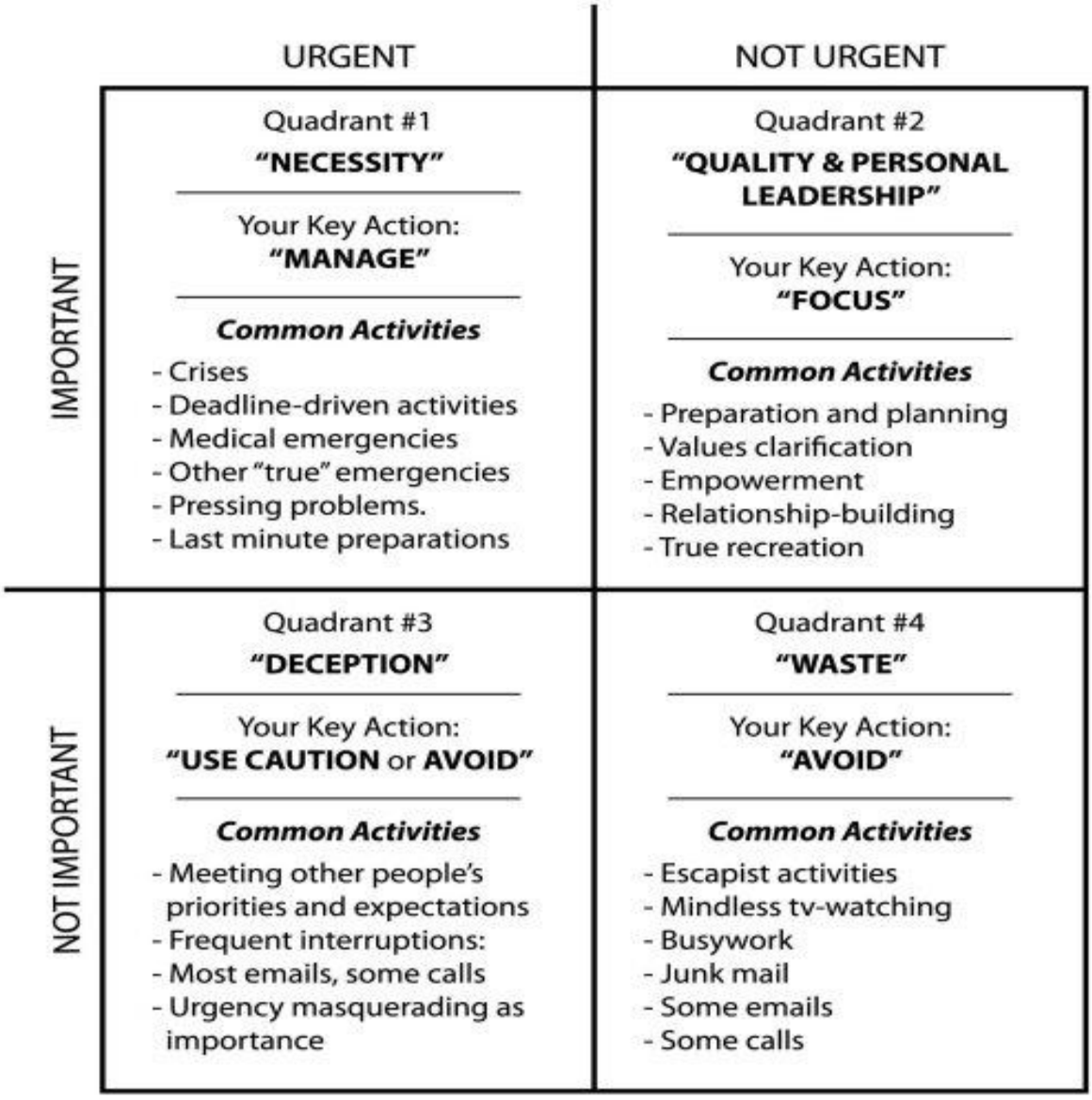
After completing the time log, assess your tasks and separate them into categories according to the nature of each. For example, you may use categories such as homework, meetings, social media, phone calls and texts, school, planning, exercising, sleeping, working, extra-curricular activities, sports, etc. Calculate the percentage of time spent on each category. This will provide you with a better picture of how you spend your time.

Look for patterns:

- Spending too much time on routine tasks
- Devising ways to simplify tasks
- Spending too much time doing things that could be done more succinctly or streamlined
- Determining times during the day when you are busier
- Reorganizing your schedule so that you are able to work more consistently
- Noticing times when you are most and least productive
- Doing work that should be delegated
- Working on tasks that don’t even need to be done
- Determining the consequences if you don’t do a particular task
- Effective use of “down time”
- Time to think

Appendix C

Instructor Note: The below chart provides additional information about the quadrants.



Adapted from Stephen Covey's "First Things First" - Covey Leadership Center, Inc. © 2003

Day Planner

One of the most traditional forms of planning tools is the diary or planner. There are a number of types of planners to choose from, so find one that suits your purpose. You may want to see one day at a time or the entire week at a glance. You may opt for the standard diary to simply record events and appointments or a personal organizer with a diary, address book, task list, and notebook. You may prefer to use an electronic planner that stores details in digital form.

Remember - whichever form you use, you must use it consistently.

Here are a few tips for making your planning tool work for you:

- Take time to record appointments and events in your planner as they are made. Don't jot them down on another piece of paper to transfer to your planner at a later time.
- Include preparatory time in your planner if the activity will require travel or other types of preparation. Likewise, include follow-up time after the activity.
- Use color to denote different types of tasks or important tasks.
- Allow unscheduled time for unexpected situations that may arise.
- Pay attention to the type of tool that suits you best, including format (one or two page per day; weekly calendar; etc.), type of fastener, size, etc.
- Always carry your planner with you. If you can't, carry at least that day's calendar and task list.
- Keep your goals, projects, and other important lists in your planner.
- Regularly sync your electronic planner or refill your paper planner.
- Only schedule about 70% of your day. Remember to make an appointment with yourself.

The ABCDE Method for Setting Priorities

Brian Tracy, November 10, 2008 (author of *Eat the Frog*)

Setting Better Priorities

Once you have determined your major goals or objectives, use the A-B-C-D-E method for setting priorities on your list. Place one of those letters in the margin before each of the tasks on your list before you begin.

- "A" stands for "very important;" something you must do. There can be serious negative consequences if you don't do it.
- "B" stands for "important;" something you should do. This is not as important as your 'A' tasks. There are only minor negative consequences if it is not completed.
- "C" stands for things that are "nice to do;" but which are not as important as 'A' or 'B,' tasks. There are no negative consequences for not completing it.
- "D" stands for "delegate." You can assign this task to someone else who can do the job instead of you.
- "E" stands for "eliminate, whenever possible." You should eliminate every single activity you possibly can, to free up your time.

If you have more than one "A" task, you prioritize those tasks with A-1, A-2, A-3. And so on in front of each item. Do the same for your "B" and "C" tasks.

When you use the A-B-C-D-E method, you can very easily sort out what is important and unimportant. This then will focus your time and attention on those items on your list that are most essential for you to do.

Action Exercises

Here are three ideas that you can use, every day, to help you set priorities and to keep you working at your best:

- First, take the time to be clear about your goals and objectives so that the priorities you set are moving you in the direction of something that is of real value to you.
- Second, remember that what counts is not the amount of time that you put in overall; rather, it's the amount of time that you spend working on high-priority tasks.
- Third, understand that the most important factor in setting priorities is your ability to make wise choices. You are always free to choose to engage in one activity or another.

Resolve today to set clear priorities in every area of your life, and always choose the activities that will assure you the greatest health, happiness and prosperity in the long term.

Lighten Your Backpack Worksheet

You have been a member of your Venturing crew for almost a year. You are the activity chair for the upcoming camping trip scheduled four weeks from now. This is a popular crew adventure because it is at held at a state park 40 miles away allowing crew members to choose between mountain biking or horseback riding. The stables have told you that they can only reserve 8 horses per group and that reservations are on a first-come basis. Mountain bikes are also available at the park for rent, if needed.

_____Crew Officer Meeting, 1st Tuesday

_____Crew Meetings, 2nd and 3rd Tuesdays

_____Crew monthly adventure, 4th weekend of the month

_____Registration for PSAT due a week from Wednesday

_____History paper due this Friday

_____Outline for English paper due a week from Monday

_____Science project proposal due in two weeks

_____Schedule a haircut

_____Dental appointment a week from Thursday

_____Meal Planning for Crew Campout

_____Sale at sporting goods store in Westside Mall

_____Tryouts for school play

_____Babysit cousin next Saturday morning

_____Mow the lawn

_____Clean room

_____Write thank you notes for birthday presents

_____Reserve horses/bikes

_____Other

Time Management Strategies from Some Brilliant Teenage Prodigies

By Laura Vanderkam

These busy scientists may only be 17, but their ability to manage their time efficiently has helped them win some major props. Here's how you too can rock at managing your time better.

Every year, the Intel Science Talent Search brings 40 teenage scientists to Washington, D.C., to showcase their research. The projects are impressive. Eric Chen, for instance, just won the 2014 competition (and $100,000) with a project that used computer modeling to study endonuclease inhibitors, which can prevent viral replication. His work, Intel STS reports, "may lead to a new class of anti-flu medicines that could protect against a flu pandemic while new vaccines are being developed."

Zarin Rahman won seventh place for studying screen time and sleep among students, documenting that students who used devices late at night performed worse on various measures than their well-rested peers.

That's not bad for age 17. But what's equally impressive to me is how these young people manage their time. Their original research requires hours of work on top of normal high school commitments, and these young people undertake vast extra-curricular activities too. When I chatted with Rahman and Chen on the phone recently, I learned that Rahman edits her school yearbook. Chen fences and does more community service than the vast majority of us will ever get around to.

Yet it all fits in the 168 hours they (and we) have each week. Here are their strategies for taking on big projects in the midst of a busy life:

1. Plan.

168 hours is a lot of time. But if you don't figure out where those hours should go, you're relying on chance to get things done. "Every night before I go to bed I plan out my day," says Rahman. She figures out what time she needs to wake up, and plans the rest of the day in 30-to-60-minute increments. "By planning everything out, one, I know I'll do it, and two--I know I'll do it in a timely fashion." Having a schedule meant "... [keeping] myself sane through all the crazy things I had to get done."

2. Stick with what works.

Sure, there are a lot of apps out there. But don't automatically assume they'll make you more productive. Rahman experimented with using her cell phone to keep lists and schedules. "But I found that writing it down with pen and paper increases my commitment. Writing it down with pen and paper means I really have to do this. On a cellular device it's less real, less solidified to me."

3. Block in time for priorities.

If you want something big to happen, you need to dedicate time to it, "even if you don't know exactly what has to be done," says Rahman. In any given day, her research might have involved

reading something in the literature, or writing a paragraph in her report, but by blocking in half an hour or more, most nights, she knew she would make progress. Progress leads to results.

4. Remember that big projects are lots of little projects.

When we have a lot going on, it's easy to feel overwhelmed and give up. But breaking tasks down into doable chunks helps a lot. "I found, with school homework, if you have 50 exercise problems, you can do five problems here, five problems there," says Eric Chen. These small steps make a big assignment easier to finish.

5. Use bits of time.

Lab research not only takes time, it often takes an uncertain amount of time, with bursts of activity punctuating long, slow periods. Chen learned to adjust. "I'd say my philosophy is that your work is like a gas in that it will always expand to fill your available time," he says. The temptation, when realizing you have 10 minutes before the next burst of activity, is to say "10 minutes? I'm not going to be able to do much in that," but he learned that in 10 minutes, he could write a paragraph in an article. He could do five math problems. He could send out an email to fellow fencers. All that kept the to-do list from getting too long.

6. Reward yourself by making space for what matters most.

Chen fit his homework into small chunks of time in the lab because it left his weekends open for other projects. One recent project - Helping older Chinese Americans use their computers and curating resources for them--an undertaking that began after Chen's grandmother complained that she was taking two buses to go buy Chinese language newspapers. Chen realized, "Wait; can't she look up the news online?" Now she can--a result well worth his time.

7. Take smart breaks.

Even downtime can advance you toward your goals. Chen reports that he plays the piano as a hobby. "I don't have the time to commit to playing an hour every day, but when I'm tired of working I take a break and play the piano." While Rahman does admit to watching TV from time to time, she says that she usually takes breaks from homework to do tasks required for her extracurricular activities. "If I have a block where I've been studying for an hour, I'll take 15 minutes and browse through the yearbook pages," she says. Needless to say, she has the whole yearbook staff on a schedule of deadlines they're all working toward meeting--to get yet another big project done on time.