

Background

Time management tips

My tips for time management and busy schedules

Over the years I have tried to improve my time management skills and do my work more **efficiently**. I have developed **routines** and these help me a lot. Today, I'm going to share them with you. Everyone works differently and so you might not like some of them – that's OK. But maybe there are one or two you can use.

The power of lists

I always make a to-do list at the beginning of the day. At the top I write things I must do first. Then lower down the list, I write things I'd like to do today but they aren't urgent. ¹ _____. I try to reach the bottom of the list every day but this doesn't usually happen. Anyway, I can always put them on my list tomorrow.

Prioritize

As I said, on my list I put the most important *tasks first – I **prioritize** them. They aren't always the most enjoyable, but I like to do them first and early in the day. Then I can do more relaxing and interesting tasks later in the day, perhaps after lunch.

Get it right the first time

It's easy to work quickly through the first tasks, but if I don't do them well the first time, they usually return to my desk. When that happens, you have to start again and this uses up time. ² _____

Avoid distractions

I work on my computer a lot and I also use the Internet, so my **distractions**

include visiting websites like *Facebook*, *MySpace*, *Twitter*, other blogs, news pages ... the list never ends. I also like to work with music or listen to the radio, but I turn this down when I need to **concentrate** on something **complicated**. I try to keep my favourite distractions as a **reward** for finishing a larger, more important task.

Start!

Don't wait to start tasks you don't want to do. ³ _____. The best solution is to **START!** When you start, it's always easier and better, and remember the reward when you finish!

A big task is lots of little tasks

When I have a big project over many days, I like to separate it into lots of little projects and write these on my list.

Sleeping, eating, and exercising

After a good night's sleep I always work better. ⁴ _____. I also have an exercise routine. Usually this is after work, but I also do exercise during the day. For example, if I exercise at lunchtime, the afternoon at work is more effective.

Take breaks when you need them

This is really difficult to do when you have a long list and some deadlines. But when it gets really busy at work, you still need to make time for relaxation. ⁵ _____. Find a park away from the noise. Spend five minutes doing something relaxing, like making some tea and *chatting to a colleague – or even writing a blog! That's how I relax.

Glossary

**chatting* = talking informally with a friend

**task* = something you have to do at work

Exercises

1 Discuss as a class.

- 1 When you have lots of different jobs, which do you do first? How do you decide?

2 Read this list of tips for time management. Tick (✓) the tips you do.

- 1 Write everything on a list and do the most important task first.
- 2 Always do the most interesting tasks in the morning.
- 3 Do a good job so you won't need to repeat the task.
- 4 Never listen to music when you work.
- 5 Give yourself a reward when you finish a task.
- 6 Leave boring tasks for other people to do.
- 7 Always get lots of sleep and exercise.
- 8 Work at work or relax at home. Never mix them.

3 Now read the blog. Which tips in 2 does the writer agree with?

4 These sentences are missing from the text. Match a–e to gaps 1–5 in the text.

- a The longer you wait, the worse the task is.
- b A good breakfast is also essential.
- c As I do each task, I delete it.
- d Go for walk at lunchtime.
- e So get it right the first time.

5 Match the words in bold in the text to definitions 1–7.

- 1 something nice you receive for good work: _____
- 2 put in order of importance: _____
- 3 difficult with lots of different parts: _____
- 4 things that stop you giving attention to something: _____
- 5 a regular way of working: _____
- 6 quickly and in an effective way: _____
- 7 think carefully about something: _____

6 Complete these sentences with some of the words from 5.

- 1 Turn the music down. I can't _____ with all that noise!
- 2 There are too many _____ for people who use the Internet at work. For example, I often play games or chat to friends.
- 3 I like to _____ all my jobs each day, but it's hard to know what is most important.
- 4 At the end of a hard day, my _____ is a piece of chocolate!
- 5 This exercise is very _____. I don't understand it.

7 Look back at the text and choose three words that you could use in your day-to-day work.

8 Discuss as a class.

- 1 How good are you at time management? What could you improve on?
- 2 What tools do you use to help manage your time, e.g. a diary, a calendar on your computer, automatic reminders?
- 3 Do you write a blog? Would you like to? What about?