

Time Management Techniques That Really Work

Practical strategies, techniques and methods, to get stuff done.

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Using the
Time Management Techniques
Workbook

We talk about managing time as if it were something we could control, but time keeps moving, whether we manage it or not. What we can manage is our attention, our energy, our choices.

Effective time management isn't about filling every hour. It's about creating a structure that supports the things that matter most - space for deep, meaningful work, for reflection, and for recovery.

The goal is to become intentional, not busier, to know where your hours go and to choose consciously that which deserves your best attention.

Helping people do less, but better

These are my reflections

.....

on ___ /___ /_____

Building on Solid Foundations

Over the last three lessons, you've built a foundation for managing yourself as well as your time.

In Lesson 1, you explored where your time really goes and uncovered the invisible "leaks" that quietly drain your attention.

In Lesson 2, you learned to prioritise what matters most — exploring different prioritisation tools to distinguish between what's urgent and what's genuinely important.

In Lesson 3, you discovered that energy management is as vital as time management. You recognised your natural rhythms and how to match the right kind of work to the right kind of energy.

Now, in Lesson 4, we bring these insights together.
This is where awareness becomes action. You'll learn practical strategies - simple, evidence-based planning techniques - to help you structure your days and weeks around what truly matters.

These are the tools that turn reflection into rhythm.



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1. Start with Priorities, Not Tasks

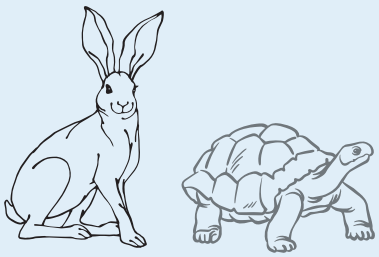
Most people start the day with a to-do list.
People who manage their time effectively start with a priority list.

Each week, identify the 3–5 priorities that matter most to your project, leadership, career development or personal wellbeing.
(See lesson “Prioritising What Matters Most” for prioritisation methods).
These are your “North Stars.” Everything else fits around them.

Use a single page for your weekly priorities. If it doesn’t fit, it’s too much.

Reflections

- Which tasks this week - this month - this term - truly advance your goals and which simply keep you busy? For most projects a consistent commitment to action over time is what creates real progress.



- What could you let go of, delegate or delay in order to advance higher priority projects?

Each day you could identify your most important priorities or
Bring more balance by choosing to
achieve 1 big thing, 3 medium things, and
5 small things each day.

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2. Deep Work, Shallow Work, and "Matters Arising"

Not all work requires the same kind of thinking space.
Successful researchers and leaders plan for three types of work:

- **Deep Work**: Creative, analytical, strategic tasks that need quiet focus. Sometimes you will be able to "drop into" this deeply focussed state even for a short while. At the outset, most people will need at least one, probably two x 90 minute blocks to do something worthwhile.

  Schedule deep work when your natural attention flow is more focussed. **Protect this time** as if it was an in person meeting with your most important manager or client.

  Even two or three deep work slots each week that you commit to and keep, will increase your productivity compared to keeping your fingers crossed that you won't be disturbed.

- **Shallow Work**: Administrative & maintenance tasks - they may not be as important to you but they keep many things moving. They don't need the same intense focus yet still need to be done. Block these activities together in times of the day when your energy is likely to be less focussed, maybe after lunch, during shorter time slots or at the end of a working day.

- **Matters Arising**: The unexpected - questions and issues that inevitably appear as the day or week unfolds. You might not know what it will be but if you don't leave space for it, you'll either end up working late of postponing something else on your schedule.

Aim for a week that's 80% planned and 20% flexible:
realistic, sustainable and kind to yourself.

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Reflections:

- How much of your current schedule protects deep work?

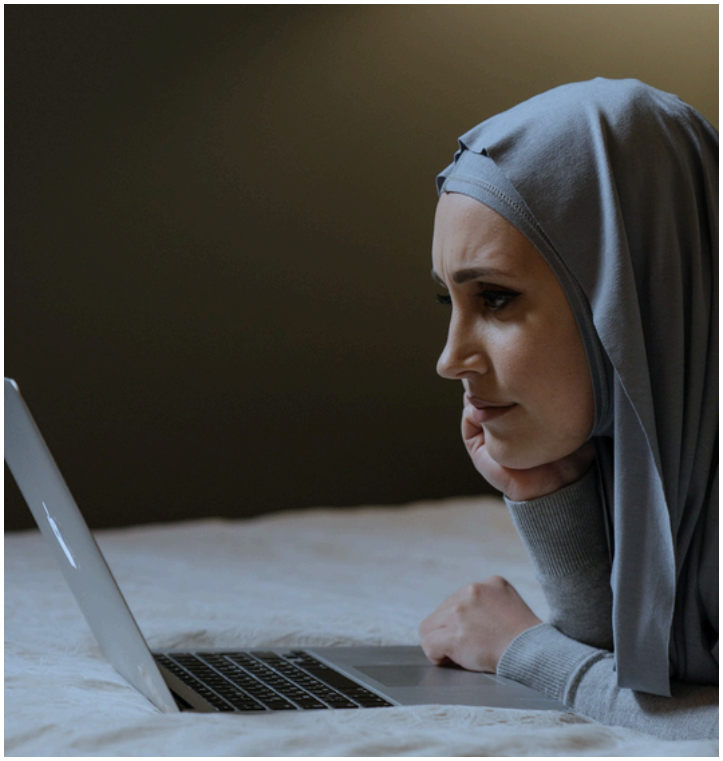
- What one change would give you more protected focus time?

Alternative Time Block Strategy
Theming your days for focus

Monday: Writing & analysis
Tuesday: Meetings & supervision
Wednesday: Admin & Service
Thursday: Network & development
Friday: Strategy & planning

This makes cognitive switching easier and reduces decision fatigue.

What would work for you?



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3. Eat the Recurring Frog

> Mark Twain famously advised:
> “If it’s your job to eat a frog,
> it’s best to do it first thing in the morning.”.

Your “frog” is the task you dread but know you must do.

A recurring frog is one that reappears on your list, day after day, week after week.

Eat it!

Do it first - stop letting it drain energy in the background.

If for any reason it still doesn’t get done, be honest - will it ever get done?
Will anybody notice if it’s never done?
Give yourself the gift of deleting it from your list.

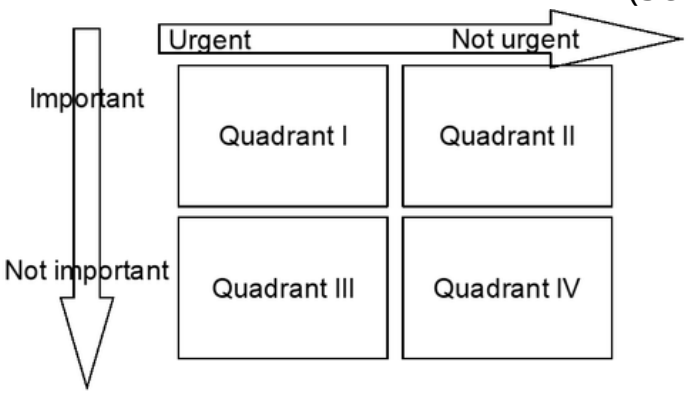


4. Stop when it's good enough

Perfectionism is often the enemy of good time management. Not everything needs to be your best work — especially if it's not your top priority.

Learn to recognise when priorities need your best work and when good enough will do.

(See lesson: "Prioritising What Matters").



"What difference would another hour make?"
If the answer is very little,
Stop .

For tasks in Quadrant 3 (urgent but not important),

- "Done" is often better than "perfect"
- "Instead of asking 'When will I finish?', ask 'How long will I give this?'"

Where do you overdeliver unnecessarily?

What might change if you practised finishing at "good enough"?

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5. Align Tasks with Energy, Not Just Time

Do you beat yourself up for not putting in a “full days work”?

Four hours of sharp focus beats eight hours of tired effort.

Notice when you do your best thinking and plan accordingly.

- High energy → analytical, strategic, or creative work.
- Medium energy → meetings, discussions, collaboration.
- Low energy → admin, routine, clearing inboxes.

What times of day do you feel most effective?

How could you redesign your day around those rhythms?

Can you choose deep work rather than long work?

“You can’t work with full intensity indefinitely.
The capacity for deep focus is a limited resource, not a moral failing.”

Oliver Burkeman (Four Thousand Weeks)

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6. Close the Loop Each Day

End your day by reviewing what you've achieved and set up tomorrow for success.

Take 10 minutes at the end of each day to ask:

- What worked well today?
- What do I need to carry forward?
- What will make tomorrow easier?

The Hemingway Bridge

Ernest Hemingway stopped writing each day while he still knew what would happen next, so he could start easily the next morning.

You can use the same principle.

End your day with a small note to your future self:

- what's next,
- what matters
- where to begin.

It's a simple habit that replaces stress with momentum.

This simple ritual allows you to review what you've achieved, identify what remains and plan tomorrow with a new focus.

It helps your brain "switch off" and resets you for whatever comes next.

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7. Designing Your Ideal Week

Create a sketch of your ideal working week.

Use blocks to represent your time for:

- Deep work
- Meetings and collaboration
- Teaching or supervision
- Admin and service work
- “Shallow” or “bitty” work
- Rest and reflection



	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THR	FRI	SAT
7 - 9							
9 - 11							
11 - 13							
13 - 15							
15 - 17							
17 - 19							

- Compare this ideal plan with your real schedule.
- Where are the biggest gaps between your ideal and your actual week?
- You may not have complete control over how you spend your time - what one change would make the biggest positive difference?

What Does "Good Enough" Look Like for You?
There's always more to do - but more is not always better.

"Good Enough" means your use of time aligns with your priorities, your energy is used well, you have space left for life.

Reflections:

Great time management isn't about squeezing more in, it's about leaving room for what matters most. What do you want from the rest of your life?

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Final thoughts

Aligning your Vision + Mission + Purpose creates your “North Star”, a guide to help you prioritise and make decisions.
Consciously choosing priorities, aligning tasks with your available energy, consistently making progress towards those goals creates momentum that makes a difference.

What happens when you align your priorities with a wise use of time and energy?

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Closing reflection

Where Do You Find Rest and Renewal?

Managing time and energy isn't just about doing more efficiently — it's about making time for the things that are important. That includes our life at or in work roles and our wider life experiences.

Creating space to restore what's been spent should be a priority.

Rest and play aren't luxuries; they're vital parts of the rhythm of effective leadership and research. Your brain needs quiet time to integrate ideas, and your body needs downtime to recharge the energy that focus consumes.

Ask yourself:

- When, in your week, do you truly rest without guilt or multitasking?
- What restores your energy most effectively: sleep, solitude, movement, laughter, creativity, connection?
- How often do you make time for fun, the activities that bring joy without obvious purpose?

Sustainable productivity comes from recovery as much as from focus. It's in rest that insight and creativity grows.

What happens when you align your priorities with a wise use of time and energy?

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Reflections

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WANT MORE?



This workbook describes some of the most effective techniques for getting more of the right stuff done.

Many people, especially the researchers and academic leaders I work with, are pulled in many directions and, being busy, it's easy to lose sight of what matters most.

This reflection helps you step back from the daily demands of research, teaching and service to clarify how to get more of the most important stuff done.

I hope this content has been useful.
If you know you need more, do reach out to me.
I'd love to hear from you.

You can always explore the other resources on my website.

MargaretCollins.com/

Resources

Let me know how you get on!

Margaret

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