

SERVICE IN ACTION

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION SERVICE

Time management

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Quick Facts

- All people have the same amount of time; it's how we use it that differs.
- There are three main types of time: clock time, biological time and psychological time.
- Clock time is the most familiar—office hours, starting times, dinner times, 24-hour days.
- Biological time is related to bodily processes and changes that occur either consciously or unconsciously—biorhythms, bodily cycles, hunger cycles, birth cycles.
- Psychological time refers to an awareness of the passage of time—when we are enjoying ourselves we are less aware of the passing of time; stress, worry or fear cause one to lose time.
- A good share of attitudes are counter to good time management.
- Eliminating time wasters will improve time management.

All people have the same amount of time. It is how they use it that is different. Effective use of time requires personal management. Being over-organized can be as much a problem as being disorganized.

Concepts of time are engrained early in our development. We often use time in relating to ourselves: "I'm a late bloomer;" "He's a burnt-out case;" "She has peaked early." Children very quickly tune out—"It's time to eat;" "It's time for bed."

Time management really is managing ourselves in relation to the clock rather than managing the clock. If you needed more time to do everything you want to do, how much more time would it take?

There are three main types of time: clock time, biological time and psychological time. Understanding each is important to understanding our relationship and inefficiency to time.

Clock Time

Clock time is perhaps the most familiar time to us. Examples are:

- Office hours (at least office opening and closing hours).
- Starting time for meetings (remember that you'll probably accomplish more if you also set the length of meetings).
- Dinner hours are usually set by clock time.
- Time consciousness—i.e. arrive 10 minutes early, on time, or 10 minutes late.

Americans are oriented to a 24-hour day. In one research study, two subjects who stayed in caves for two months lived longer lives—24.8 hours for one, 24.6 hours for the other.

Ask yourself:

- Do you really need seven to eight hours of sleep a day?
- Are you always hungry at 12 noon no matter what you ate nor how late you ate breakfast?

Do you always eat the evening meal at 5:30 or 6:00 p.m.? In many foreign countries it would be normal to eat at 8:00 or 9:00 p.m.

Biological Time

Biological time includes bodily processes and changes occurring either consciously or unconsciously.

Biorhythms

Perhaps you have heard of biorhythms. Biorhythms are calculated on three rhythms with your birthdate as the starting point. The three cycles are:

| | Length | Critical Days |
|-------------------------|---------|---------------|
| Physical | 23 days | 1 and 12 |
| Emotional (sensitivity) | 28 days | 1 and 15 |
| Intellectual | 33 days | 1 and 17 |

Your critical days occur when your rhythm changes from a plus to minus state, or vice versa. Each day before and after your critical day are considered semi-critical. Advocates of biorhythms claim that more accidents are likely to occur on those days when physical and emotional cycles are at critical points.

There are types of calculators available which figure biorhythms automatically or you may calculate your own.

A word of caution: before you put complete faith in biorhythms, remember that this is still in the theory stage. It does not appear to apply to all people at all times. There are still too many other influences such as body hormones, disease or illness, air pressure (especially with an approaching weather system) and other body stresses which can affect individual body rhythms.

Scientists (chronobiologists) are testing these theories and have found some evidence contrary to the popular biorhythm-by-birth theory in which body rhythms can and do vary according to new circumstances. For instance, your body must readjust when you jet across time zones (jet lag). This often takes several days.

Other biological cycles to adjust:

- There is a cycle of pain tolerance which may explain differences in pain at different times, as well as differences among people.
- Temperature fluctuations. A person's temperature usually is higher on the left side during sleep but often higher on the right side during the day. A person can learn to control (raise and lower) temperatures. Temperature control now is used effectively in treating migraine headaches.
- Bodily functions.
 - Menstrual cycle in women—usually 28- to 32-day cycle.
 - Fluctuations occur on a regular monthly basis in the levels of 17 ketosteroids in men.
 - Rapid eye movements during sleep occur every 90 to 100 minutes.
 - Beards tend to grow more quickly in autumn and early winter.

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To simplify technical terminology, trade names of products and equipment occasionally will be used. No endorsement of products named is intended nor is criticism implied of products not mentioned.

- Medicinal cycle. There are certain times when medicines react with the body more dangerously. Alcoholics normally are the only ones who drink early in the morning when alcohol tends to be more toxic to the system. People with allergies tend to show the most resistance when tested in the morning. Results of allergy tests can be affected by the time when they are taken.
- Hunger cycle. This cycle usually occurs every three to four hours.
- Invisible cycles which may effect us.
 - Gravity.
 - Electromagnetic fields.
 - Light waves/day and night cycle.
 - Air pressure.
 - Sounds.
- Birth cycle.
 - More births occur between midnight and 6:00 a.m.
 - In the Western Hemisphere, more children are born in March than any other month.
- Two sides of the brain. At the Langley Porter Neuropsychiatric Institute in San Francisco, they have shown that humans have two separate hemispheres of the brain. The left hemisphere controls sequential activities like language, rational cognition and sense of time.

Psychological Time

Psychological time refers to an awareness of the passage of time. When we are enjoying ourselves, we are less aware of the passing of time.

- Unclear concepts: "Do it the first chance you have." (Your county director meant tomorrow; you thought next week was soon enough.)
- Stress, worry and fears cause one to lose time.
- Procrastination wastes time.
- If you're late, time passes quickly. If you are tenth in line at the bank or waiting for a red light, time seems like an eternity. By the way, the average stop light is only 24-32 seconds long.

Time management is really personal management. A good share of attitudes are counter to good time management. You may find it useful to get rid of such statements as: "I don't have the time." "I just can't say 'no' yet I must because I'm too busy already." "I just don't have time for my hobbies or my family any more."

Replace these with positive affirmations such as: "I will make time to ..." "It takes time and effort but I will try complimenting my co-workers." "Because it saves time in the long run, I'll do a better job of planning the next time." "I will look for ways to become more efficient." "I will plan time for family activities."

"Time is the scarcest resource and unless it is managed, nothing else can be managed."—Peter Drucker

Hints For Time Management:

1. Analyze your time for one week.
2. Try to eliminate some of your time wasters. Remember that a time waster for me may not be a time waster for someone else.
3. Learn to listen better. It has been estimated we spend 45 percent of our day listening to others. Listening and questioning what is not understood will save follow-up time.
4. Learn to read faster. It has been estimated that 80 percent of incoming mail can be handled by reading only once and an immediate decision made then to send it on to another person, make a reply or toss it out.
5. Keep meetings short. Most managers agree that meetings lasting over one hour decline markedly in effectiveness.
6. Set priorities for your time. Too often we spend a majority of our time on small or unimportant issues. Develop the habit of making "to do" lists.
7. Control the phone and control "chit-chat" in your office.
8. Get a scale and when the papers on your desk weigh more

than a pound, it is time to cut down paperwork. Delegate or eliminate part of it.

9. Clean out your files every two years except for certain correspondence or other legal documents which should be kept for seven years.
10. Learn to read faster by skimming and/or scanning. The average adult reads at 250 words per minute and can increase reading speed through practice.
11. Set deadlines for yourself on speech preparation or handout preparation and then make all attempts to keep the deadlines.
12. Use analysis forms, a pocket calendar or other devices to help you manage your time.
13. Do not procrastinate on difficult or distasteful items, i.e., reports, phone calls or home visits.
14. Make positive progress on at least one time goal every day.

Possible examples of time wasters by extension personnel.

Externally imposed

- Incomplete information requiring follow-up.
- Lack of delegation to secretary or others.
- Telephone interruptions and office callers who drop in without appointments.
- Mistakes.

Noise distractions.

Delayed information from others.

Problems of subordinates which need immediate attention.

No coordination—no teamwork.

Lack of priorities and objectives.

Meetings: scheduled and unscheduled.

Self-generated wasters

- Unrealistic time estimates.
- Fatigue.
- Delegate without authority so requires follow-up.
- Personal disorganization/stacked desk.
- Procrastination and indecisions.
- Negative attitudes toward tasks such as CEMIS, Plan of Work, reports.
- Failing to listen to co-workers or clientele.
- Personal attention to people.
- Unable to say no.
- Lack of adequate planning.
- "Open-door" policy.
- Blame someone else.
- Explaining to others when it is just as quick to do it yourself.
- Personal or outside activities.
- "Chit-chat" and/or longer breaks than necessary.
- Trying to involve everybody in decision making.

Additional Reading

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