



Organize your schedule – keep a log to find out where your time goes

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Finding time for family activities (AP Photo/Mike Fuentes)

Do you ever feel that no matter how hard you work – at home or at your job - you just can't find time to do what you would really like to do? Have other people's needs taken over your schedule? Does it seem like there's not enough time in the day? It's time to take a closer look at your schedule to find out how you're using your most precious resource – time. Use these six steps to find the time you need:

1. Keep a log for one month

Track how you're using your time in one-hour increments. If you're a pen-and-paper person, use a spiral notebook, daily planner, or a note pad. If prefer electronics, use a spreadsheet on your computer, the task list or calendar on your PDA or smart phone. Record all of your daily activities, and be as complete as possible. Be sure to include everything from sleeping and eating to dog walking and picking up the dry cleaning.

Sample logs are available at [Right Attitudes](#), [Crazy Lady Day Planning](#), and [Mind Tools](#).

2. Make an appointment with yourself

Record your activities every day. Otherwise, you will forget the little things that, added together, use a lot of time. If you can't make notes throughout the day, set aside 5-10 min each day to keep up your list. Help yourself feel like you've accomplished something by counting down the days until you complete your month-long log.

At the end of the month, make an appointment with yourself to spend a couple of hours on your time log. Read through everything that has kept you busy during the month. What surprises you? What pleases you? What disappoints you?

3. Create time categories

Now, put all of your activities in categories. Some examples:

- eating,
- sleeping,
- preparing meals,
- shopping (food vs clothing or other),
- running errands,
- visiting friends/relatives,
- participating in religious activities,
- participating in community activities,
- participating in exercise or sports activities,
- going to medical appointments,
- getting ready for work/school,
- traveling to and from work/school,
- watching TV,
- working/playing online,
- caring for pets/children/others, etc.

4. Look at how you're spending your time

Now, use your log to estimate how much time you spent on each category. Review the activities that are taking a lot of your time, as well as those that take just a little. Ask yourself:

- Where would you like to spend more time?
- Where would you like to spend less time?
- What would you add to your schedule?
- What would you remove completely?

5. Create a schedule that works for you

Answer these questions honestly, and you will gain some valuable insights for your decision-making: Start with your "remove completely" activities and think of ways you can make those tasks disappear from your schedule. If they can't disappear, how can you minimize them?

Then look at your "less time" activities in the same way. How can you minimize the time you spend on them in your schedule? Remember that your goal is to make time for the things you really want to do.

What are your "more time" activities? Can you now make more time for them after cutting back on other tasks? Have you found some time for one or more activities you would like to "add"?

6. Try your new schedule for one month

Make adjustments to your schedule based on your thinking in Step #5. Find opportunities to combine trips or tasks, get help from others, and off-load activities that are not productive, enjoyable, or healthy. Treat yourself to one or two of those activities you would like to spend more time doing or add in to your schedule. At the end of your trial month, fine-tune your schedule so that you are able to keep more of what you enjoy and do less of what is unhealthy, counter-productive, or doesn't make you happy.

The decisions you make using these six steps will contribute to your future health and happiness. Add ideas of your own by posting a comment, and click on the "subscribe" link above this article to receive notice of future Get Organized articles.

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