

Time Management Approaches

There is no one way to approach managing time. It depends on multiple factors, including tools at your disposal, how the approach aligns with the way you like to work and get things done, ease of use, the degree of simplicity or complexity you enjoy, and speed of incorporating it. Below are brief descriptions of five approaches to better time management.

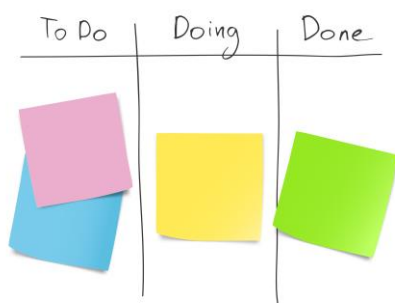
1. Personal Kanban (Agile) Approach

Developed/popularized by Jim Benson and Tonianne DeMaria Barry in their book, *Personal Kanban: Mapping Work | Navigating Life* (2011).

Summary: The term *Kanban* originated from the lean manufacturing world, specifically Toyota in the auto industry. The Personal Kanban method of time management has two rules:

- Visualize your work to see it at a glance and easily add to it, remove from it, and reorganize it as needed.
- Limit your work in progress (WIP)—the things you work on at the same time—to limit burnout and multitasking.

To follow these “rules,” develop a Kanban board that’s basically a bulletin or whiteboard with a chart that has three vertical columns: “Backlog/To Do,” “Doing (WIP),” and “Done.” Sticky notes are helpful for easily moving tasks around (one task per note).



“Doing” is all the work you are currently doing, ideally organized by priority. The “Backlog/To-Do” items are what you need to get done eventually. The “Done” items are important to see to keep you motivated and productive.

Link to learn more: <http://lifehacker.com/productivity-101-how-to-use-personal-kanban-to-visualize-1687948640>

2. The Pomodoro Technique

Developed/popularized by Francesco Cirillo in his book *The Pomodoro Technique* (2006).

Summary: To use the Pomodoro Technique, which was developed in the 1990s, all you need is a timer (the name comes from the type of timer Cirillo used—see photo below). The technique involves breaking work down into brief timed intervals (“Pomodoros”) followed by short breaks. It’s a cyclical system designed to train your brain to focus and concentrate for short periods of time with a five-step process:

HANDOUT 2, continued



1. Choose the work you want to accomplish.
2. Set a timer to 25 minutes (a “Pomodoro”).
3. Work until the timer rings.
4. Take a short break (5 minutes).
5. Take a longer break after completing four Pomodoros.

Link to learn more: <http://lifehacker.com/productivity-101-a-primer-to-the-pomodoro-technique-1598992730>

3. The Time Matrix

Developed/popularized by Stephen R. Covey in his book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (1998).

Summary: The Time Matrix filters incoming tasks, information, and requests to help you make decisions about how you use your time. It identifies activities that are important (lead to achievement of goals) and and urgent (demand immediate attention and often associated with achievement of someone else’s goals). It is organized into four quadrants:

Important	I. Urgent and Important <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Crises (“fires”)• Deadline-driven work	II. Not Urgent and Important <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Planning and prevention• Relationships
Not Important	III. Urgent and Not Important <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Other people’s urgencies• Interruptions (some email, calls)	IV. Not Urgent and Not Important <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Time wasters (surfing Internet)• Trivia and busy work
	Urgent	Not Urgent

As you filter and examine activities, you place them into one of the four quadrants to see where you could potentially waste time or are currently wasting time and determine the priorities to focus on, whether related to work or your personal life.

Link to learn more: <http://www.brefigroup.co.uk/acrobat/quadrnts.pdf>

4. Getting Things Done (GTD) Method

Developed/popularized by David Allen in his book *Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity* (2001).

Summary: This organizational system helps you focus on the work you need to do by using five “pillars”:

1. Capture everything you can think of—projects, recurring tasks, ideas, and so on—to get it out of your head and put it into your organizational tools (task list, calendar, notebook, apps like Evernote or Gmail Workflow, and so forth) that fit into your regular workflow.
2. Clarify the things you have to do by breaking them down into manageable actions. If it’s something quick, just do it. Delegate what you can.
3. Organize the actions into categories or buckets and prioritize them. Assign deadlines as much as possible and schedule time to follow up on the items.
4. Reflect on your list of actions. Reprioritize as needed. If something seems vague, break it down more into actionable pieces.
5. Engage and get to work on your actions within the prioritized buckets.

Link to learn more: <http://lifehacker.com/productivity-101-a-primer-to-the-getting-things-done-1551880955>

5. Action Method

Developed/popularized by *Behance* magazine founder Scott Belsky in *Making Ideas Happen* (2010).

Summary: The Action Method operates under the premise that everything is a project, whether for work or in our personal lives. It includes three components:

- **Action Steps:** The specific task that moves your project forward, such as “balancing the checkbook” under a project called “household management.” Or, “create slide deck” for a project called “Client X presentation.”
- **References:** Any information for reference that ties to your project, such as notes, websites, manuals, books, articles, and so on.
- **Backburner Items:** Ideas or things that you intend to take action on in the future.
- You then group together the steps, references, and backburner items in one location, such as a folder or notebook for each project and use your scheduling tools to organize action steps.

Link to learn more: <http://99u.com/articles/6679/action-method-i-breaking-projects-into-primary-elements>



HANDOUT 2, continued

Here are some tips to help you choose an approach to use (or a combination of approaches):

- What works well with your existing tools or daily flow of activities?
- What seems natural or “easy” to you?
- Which would give you the greatest likelihood of success?
- Which one sounds fun to try (at least initially)?

The key is to start with one and see what works best. You can always change to a new approach as your needs and circumstances change.

References:

- Allen, D. (2001). *Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity*. New York: Penguin.
- Belsky, S. (2010). *Making Ideas Happen*. New York: Penguin.
- Benson, J., and T. DeMaria Barry. (2011). *Personal Kanban: Mapping Work | Navigating Life*. Seattle, WA: Modus Cooperandi.
- Cirillo, F. (2006). *The Pomodoro Technique*. San Francisco: Creative Commons.
- Covey, S.R. (1989). *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. New York: Free Press.