We all have only 24 hours in a day, 7 days in a week... yadda, yadda, yadda. Here's a no-nonsense guide to time management - the process that will help you to keep balance even when you are extremely busy (which is probably most of the time) - along with a concise tips section to show you how to make a more effective schedule (who has time to read an entire article?).

**What is time management?**

Time management is a fairly straightforward concept. It's the process of arranging and controlling how you spend your time in or out of work.

**Why is it necessary?**

By controlling your time you can cut out non-essential activities and achieve more, thus enhancing your career and getting more out of life.

It can also make your job more enjoyable and rewarding, as time management teaches you to be more productive and to say no to impossible workloads.

Time management is a highly important matter for most professionals as demands are placed upon any hard-working person with responsibility - demands that strain one's diary and one's character. If you are sometimes *too* busy, if you have deadlines that are impossible to meet, if you are disorganized and just can't seem to find the time to sort out your inbox, then time management can help you.

**How to manage your time**

Start by recording how you spend your time currently. Simply use a planner or diary to note down your activities throughout the day in order to monitor where your time is going. At the end of the week, set aside some time to review your schedule. Now, how much time was wasted? This is where you need to be strict. Consciously cutting out unproductive conversations, numerous tea/coffee breaks, or any of the other little time wasters in your schedule takes some will power but it is worth it. Of course, you still need human contact and a cup of joe every now and again, but being aware of how much time your are spending on those things will help you to control your activities.

***Appointments:*** Unnecessary appointments may also have wasted your time. How many regular meetings do you have with colleagues? Again, you should be strict here, but how many of those were actually necessary or productive? Controlling your appointments is a vital step in time management.

***Colleagues:*** Well-meaning colleagues can be a further source of wasted time. In the spirit of camaraderie, you should want to help your colleagues if there is a problem that needs your attention. If the task is not something directly related to your position, then perhaps refer them to someone who would be in a better position to help. Water cooler gossip is another source of time wastage. Pointless, or even friendly, conversations can easily fill your schedule if you don't employ strict time management.

***Workload:*** Take another look at your schedule. How much time is spent on work that someone else could/should be doing? Menial tasks, such as photocopying, stamping letters, or filing work, are often duties of clerical or secretarial staff. Even if you have been doing these tasks for years, training or requesting that someone else takes on this duty (where appropriate) will save you much time in the long run (although you may have to spend some time to monitor and teach someone how to do it at first).

***Managers:*** It's unfortunate that sometimes one's superiors contribute to wasted time. Within the proper bounds of respect and good humour, helping your manager to see how they are unnecessarily taking up your time can help to ease the strain on your schedule. Poorly defined tasks and unclear communication is a key source of time wastage. If your manager doesn't define duties clearly then you will end up going back to them with questions. Try to get clarity from the start.

***Being prepared:*** Being well prepared for essential meetings and appointments will help you to save time. How many times have you attended meetings without a clear idea of what it is about, or without having read the necessary documentation beforehand? It's probably a safe bet that those very same meetings were unproductive (which probably led to a follow up meeting). If, on the other hand, you take the time to prepare for each scheduled appointment then it will be a success. Decisions can be made and actions assigned only if you have clear thoughts on the issue and are aware of what's going on.

***Deadlines:*** Of all the things that are knocking your balance, deadlines are probably having the biggest effect. And it is probably the most difficult thing for you to change. Organising your projects in terms of priority and not just the closeness of the deadline will help you to keep a balance.

What if the deadline is just downright impossible, though? In that case, you should reason with your superiors to get the deadline extended. Failing that, forcefully requesting more resources to achieve the task will make the deadline more practical. You could also consider getting the Deliverable altered so as to be more achievable, even if the due date doesn't change. Your only remaining weapon is just to make it clear from the start that the deadline is impossible, although as a dedicated worker you will of course put your all into it.

***Communications:*** Being organized in terms of communications is also vital. Paperwork can easily get out of hand. A simple and effective system is necessary here. You only need two folders for paperwork - the ‘to do' folder, and the ‘to file' folder. Anything else can be thrown away. Taking immediate action when you receive paperwork is vital to being organized. Sort your paperwork into the appropriate folder and schedule time to deal with the folders regularly.

Emails can be equally cumbersome. Studies have shown that keeping email programs open is actually disruptive to efficiency. Rather, you should check emails regularly (five or six times a day) and deal with the incoming emails appropriately. Having separate folders in your inbox for different types of emails will keep you organized.

Telephone calls can easily waste your time. Rather than waiting on hold, it is wise to find out an appropriate time to call someone, or even request that they call you. You could even schedule a specific time to call someone to avoid the problems of missed calls. You should also make sure that secretarial staff are aware of how to deal with calls. They should know when to refer the calls to your colleagues, and when it is appropriate to take a message rather than put the call through to you.

**Benefits**

Is managing your time really worth the hassle? Resoundingly, yes, it is. On a day-to-day level, it will make your routine more practical and organized. It will make your long-term view clearer, as you know that you are in control of upcoming projects and tasks. For your career, it will help you achieve your goals quicker.

It even has health benefits. It's scientifically proven that we get highly stressed when we don't achieve tasks and goals that we wanted to reach. Stress, in turn, is detrimental to sleep, digestion and mental activities. On the other hand, a balanced workload and controlled use of time will negate stress and make you more capable.

**Top Tips**

1. Make a record - how are you spending your time? What can be cut out? Also, always write down your ‘to do' list and organize it according to priority.
2. Managing communications - make effective telephone calls (don't stay on hold, leave clear messages etc.), keep a tidy inbox with multiple folders for different types of emails, don't let yourself be disturbed by colleagues if inappropriate.
3. Managing meetings - attend only meetings that it is necessary or advantageous to attend. Make sure you are prepared for it so that it achieves something (otherwise a follow-up meeting becomes a requisite - another timewaster).
4. Be organized - a tidy desk, a tidy to do list, and a tidy email inbox show a tidy and organized mind and person.
5. Prioritize - even if you have multiple projects on the go and numerous tasks to achieve, a clearly defined list of priorities will keep you on top of things and will help you to meet deadlines.
6. Delegate tasks - don't be afraid to pass duties onto other capable people. The time spent teaching someone else to do one of your tasks is soon made up for.
7. Say no - sometimes well-meaning colleagues, or people outside of your company, make demands on your time unnecessarily (meetings, conferences, solving other people's problems etc.). A polite ‘no' will help you to keep control of your time.
8. Maintain a record - a diary or planner will help you to keep an eye on where your time is going. If it is being spent badly, you can change things. Making a written note of how you spend your time is one of the key steps. Don't miss it out.

In the last week I’ve attended board meetings for three different companies. Two were out of town. In addition, I have spoken publicly five times and am right in the middle of reviewing the copy-edited manuscript for [my new book](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/159555503X/fwis-20).

That doesn’t even count the 669 e-mails I have received in the last week. (Yes, that’s the exact count as of 10 minutes ago. It only represents the ones that have come through to my private account.) No wonder I feel overwhelmed!

But I’ll bet your life is no different. The reality is all of us have more work than we can possibly do. When you add to this the demands of regular exercise, family, church, civic duties, and some semblance of a social life, it becomes impossible.

Here are six things you can do to cope. Trust me, I am preaching to myself!

1. **Acknowledge you can’t do it all.** The idea that you will eventually get caught up is a myth. It’s impossible. You have more work than you can reasonably expect to get done. And unfortunately, your workload is not static. Even now, while you are reading this post, your inbox is filling up with fresh new tasks.
2. **Accept the fact some things won’t get done at all.** This flows from the first item. You have to make peace with the fact that you must leave some things undone—for the sake of your own sanity.
3. **Practice workload triage.** On the battlefield, medics have to decide where to apply their limited resources. They can’t help everyone. According to [Dictionary.com](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/triage), *triage* is

the process of sorting victims, as of a battle or disaster, to determine medical priority in order to increase the number of survivors.”

Some patients will survive without medical care. Some won’t survive even if they have medical care. Triage means ignoring these two groups and focusing on those that will only survive with medical care.

You must know which things you can safely ignore and which things demand your intervention.

1. **Categorize your tasks by priority.** In my view, this is the one thing missing from David Allen’s system. It assumes all tasks are equal. Or to say it another way, you can only decide a task’s relative priority *in the moment.*This doesn’t work for me. I end up with scores of tasks I must review every day. My eyes glaze over, and I fall prey to what Charles Ummel calls the [*Tyranny of the Urgent*](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0830865926/fwis-20).

Instead, I like the Franklin-Covey method of assigning a priority tag to each task:

**A**—urgent and important  
**B**—important but not urgent  
**C**—urgent but not important  
**D**—not urgent or important

I personally categorize each task with one of these tags. At the beginning of each day, I focus on my A’s first. If I get those done, I move to the B’s, then the C’s.

1. **Practice intentional neglect.**Many people practice the opposite—unintentional neglect. They forget to do something or they are late in meeting their deadlines. They don’t like this behavior and neither do those who are counting on them.But this inevitably happens if you don’t practice *intentional neglect.* You must decide in advance you will not do category D tasks. They are neither urgent nor important. They are simply not worthy of your time or attention.

“But,” you may ask, “what about tasks I don’t think are important but someone else does?” Great question. Let me give you an example.

When I was a CEO, my Board sometimes asked me to do something I thought was a waste of time. I didn’t regard it as important. But, because I served at their pleasure—and wanted to keep my job!—I re-categorized it in my mind as important. Sometimes, it is a simple matter of re-framing the task.

On the other hand, I recently received a lunch request from a man who is an acquaintance. He is looking for a job and wanted to discuss career possibilities in the publishing industry. This is no doubt important to him and possibly urgent. For me it is neither, so I declined.

The bottom line is you must learn to say “no” to the unimportant tasks, so you can say “yes” to the important tasks and actually get them done.

1. **Do the next most important thing next.** Multi-tasking is a myth. You really can’t do more than one thing at a time—at least more than one thing that requires focused attention. So get your list of priorities, do the most important thing first, then move to the next item and work down your list.

For today, I have six things I’d like to accomplish: one of them is an A, four are Bs, and one is a C. I’m starting at the top and working down the list.

***Question: How about you? How do you cope with feeling overwhelmed?***

Do More with Less: The 'New Normal' at Work

How to Handle a Heavier Workload and Still Get Ahead

Do More With Less: Handling a Heavier Workload

By Robert DiGiacomo

For anyone fortunate enough to have a job in this economic downturn, the empty cubicles around you likely mean more responsibilities -- and a greater daily workload -- to cover for positions that have been cut or won't be filled anytime soon.

If you're being asked to do the work of two -- or more -- workers, here are five ways to cope with the extra items on your list, without losing your cool or your sense of well-being.

1. Ask the Right Questions

Even if your work plate is full already, you really shouldn't say no when the boss approaches you with additional duties, advises executive coach Peggy Klaus. Instead, engage your supervisor in a dialogue about the specifics of the situation, by asking questions about how long the new assignment will last and what will be expected.

"When we're in this fear mode, we have a very difficult time asking for those parameters, and they're really important," says Klaus, author of [*The Hard Truth About Soft Skills*](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/asin/0061284149/monstercom). "It doesn't mean that you don't want to do [the work], or won't do it. But you need to have some structure around it."

2. Prioritize and Organize

Once you understand the scope of your expanded job description, ask your manager to help prioritize what must get done on a daily basis -- and which projects can be deferred -- and organize yourself accordingly, according to Paul Facella, CEO and president of Inside Management, a consulting firm.

"Clearly, in this situation, you have to prioritize -- you can't afford to waste time," says Facella, author of [*Everything I Know About Business I Learned at McDonald's*](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/asin/0071601414/monstercom).

3. Be Your Own Publicist

Be sure to speak up, as you identify ways to streamline your department's practices or improve the overall efficiency of company operations.

"It's certainly not the time to be quiet and shy about anything you're contributing that you believe will be more [cost-saving](http://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/tips-to-save-money) and efficient," Facella says. "Nobody wants a braggart, but the point is you keep [management] in the loop."

4. Learning from the Experience

Volunteering to take a course to boost certain [skills](http://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/assessing-your-skills) or gain a specialized [certification](http://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/salary-increase-certifications) can both ease your ability to complete unfamiliar chores and demonstrate your commitment to your company's stability. The new skills set also will help if you're part of the next round of job cuts.

"This economic environment clearly is going to be here for a few years," Facella says. "The more prepared you are, the better off you are."

5. Take a Break

As you find yourself logging much longer hours, you need to take more -- not fewer -- breaks. Every 90 minutes or so, you should at least get up from your desk and stretch. Or better yet, take a 10-minute walk, shoot some hoops or grab coffee with a friend.

"We tend to think we have to be chained to our desks for 11 hours a day," Klaus says. "It's a self-care issue. We have to get up and take a break."

Now, let’s look at this scenario: You are half way through a project with a looming deadline, then, you have to drop it and take on another task with a rocket urgent priority. Meanwhile, another priority task is nearly finalised, then an e-mail hits your inbox from another senior manager for you to ‘take care’ of something for him. And then you look up, your boss is standing in front of your desk, he asks for the status of another task. Before you could speak, your phone goes off; you have to deal with a query that is lurking in your inbox. Now, work is piling up as usual, there are several un-ending deadlines, expectations, attention…does this scenario sound familiar?

Well, there is no doubt that your boss expects you to complete your tasks, in other words, he wants you to basically do your job. You also have to think of your objectives for the year, your appraisal rating which indicates a raise if you meet and exceed expectations, meaning you’ve got to do something over and above your job.

[Save](http://pinterest.com/pin/create/bookmarklet/?media=http://i1.wp.com/catherinescareercorner.com/wp-content/plugins/jquery-image-lazy-loading/images/grey.gif?zoom=2&resize=224%252C230&url=http://catherinescareercorner.com/2011/02/26/10-tips-to-help-you-deal-with-a-heavy-workload-at-work/&is_video=false&description=Animation%20of%203%20ball%20cascade%20%2C%20also%20known%20as%20a%20...)Not only can a heavy workload be tiring, it often drives you to work for longer hours than you would really like. This means that you spend the time that you would prefer to use for the things that you enjoy doing or gives life value working to you. It also means that you are working when you should really be resting. Worse than this, a very heavy habitual workload leaves you little time to deal with emergencies that come up unexpectedly. This adds to the feeling of being out of control which could be stressful.

How can you deal with your heavy workload and also be innovative and take the initiative to do some value adding projects? While there is no snappy magic to reduce your workload, the simple steps and tips below are some of the best ways to manage a heavy workload. They might not all be suitable for every situation, but if applied properly, they may help to alleviate some of the stress created by your heavy workload.

**1. Understand your organization’s and team’s strategy and culture**. You have to first remember that your role exists for a reason and this will ultimately be determined by the strategy of the team that you belong you to. This strategy is often expressed in a vision and in the mission statement. In some way, you should help the organization achieve its vision. If you are thinking this is not the case, you need to ask yourself how secure your role is. Make sure you understand and perform the tasks that are strategy driven well. The tasks that add value to the team, the company or the organisation are the tasks that you always should strive to complete first.

**2. Sit Back, Breathe and Relax.** Yes, it is a simple tip, sit back in a relaxed position, drop your shoulders slowly and inhale through your nose, counting to five in your head. Let the air out from your mouth, counting to eight in your head as it leaves your lungs. Repeat several times. Try and don’t be overwhelmed by the number of tasks or deadlines at hand. After all, you can’t do all of them at the same time, so why worry about all of them at once

**3. Think**. Compile a list of your tasks with allocated deadlines. Look and decide which ones you can complete independently and which are the ones you need help with? Separate the tasks based of timelines, stakeholders needs, ease of completion, dependencies and estimated time to complete.

**4. Reflect**. We all have different ways of working, and different styles and times when we are most productive. Think about when you tend to work best and use this time to do the most important or challenging tasks and then, complete the easier tasks when you find it more difficult to concentrate.

**5. People and Resources.** You must check that you have the staff support, resources, and the training that you need to do an excellent job of your allocated tasks. If you do not, network, ask questions, speak to relevant people and start working on obtaining them.

**6. Prioritize.** Once you have listed your tasks, set priorities based on the information you already have. According to priority, have a pipeline of your projects completed one by one, within the deadlines and other constraints. Re-order with your feasible but viable timelines.

**7.** **Communication.** If you feel that you are struggling to stay on top of your work, it may help to share your concerns with your manager or supervisor. Politely ask him for a work in progress meeting to communicate your workload and assure him that you are capable of handling all the projects but he has to look at shifting some of the deadlines for you and also clarify on your list what is absolutely important to focus on first. Avoid using the word, ‘can’t’ during the meeting, but you can say, ‘I can get the work done but I need to be given more time on few of the projects as I have documented,’ or ask him, ‘Would you mind if I do these projects in this order and to these timelines? This way, I can do a very good job and exceed your expectations’. If he agrees, be sure to exceed his expectations by your deliverables.

**8. Focus.** Think of breaking your day into sessions, of maybe two or three hours. Take regular walk breaks after each session. First thing in the morning, when you get to the office, begin your day with a plan and assign tasks to each session. As you know, there will be urgent things that come up all the time, so be prepared to re-prioritize on the drop of a hat.

**9. Execute.** Set up a mental box around yourself during each session. Nothing else should interfere, unless of course, there are emergencies. Concentrate and work like a person on mission. Everything else can wait.

**10. It is okay to say no, sometimes**. Agreed, it can be difficult in some situations, but saying “no” is sometimes the only way to manage a heavy workload. However, be mindful not to say no to important tasks and not say no all the time, but saying no when you genuinely feel and think you cannot do something is better than saying yes and not getting the job done well.

Successful workload management is therefore vitally important for your job satisfaction. Unfortunately, some managers aren’t always willing to see this. If you have a heavy workload at work, these 10 tips will help you to deal with the workload.

If you constantly have a heavy workload, what have you been doing to handle your workload? Let’s hear from you. Let’s hear from you, add your comments below.