

## Effective Time Management, in Summary

Life in UC ANR can be hectic. Often times you might ask yourself “How can I prioritize my time and achieve my career goals while finding work-life balance?” Effective time management takes thought and practice, using strategies and applying specific, learned skills over time. A sample list of ideas and suggestions compiled from productivity self-help books and colleagues is below. Find what works for you, taking into account your personality. This may take some trial and error...and that’s ok! Learning the skill of time management is like learning any other skill, it takes practice and patience (and a certain amount of self-forgiveness).



### Organizing Your Time and Space – How to Best Utilize the Resources Available to You

- Identify your ‘prime time’; that is, your most productive hour(s) and maximize your use of that time. For many people, the first hours of the day may be their most productive.
- Anticipate what could go wrong and make back-up plans. Remember Murphy’s law? Stay positive; Murphy happens to everybody.
- Maximize office functionality. For example, face your desk and computer in the least distracting direction. Place the objects you use frequently within arm’s reach.
- Can’t find what you need? Clear and organize clutter.
- Consider using a calendar, electronic or paper, whichever works best for you.

Learning time management can be a trial and error process. Explore these tips to find your balance..

### Tips for Increasing Productivity

- If a task takes two minutes or less, do it immediately.
- Try to touch each action item only one time.
- Have a journal or important article to finish writing? Use your ‘prime time’ to write for 2-3 hours a day.
- Delegate when and where possible. Be clear about expectations and the latitude for decisions by those given responsibility.
- Schedule time on your calendar for important items. Don’t let them get bumped by lesser important items.
- Be decisive; that is, make a definite decision when the fact pattern and timing indicate you should. Indecision can be a form of procrastination. However, if you’re not sure about a course of action, gather enough information to be sure and then act.

### Managing Multiple Inputs – Meetings, Walk-ins, Phone Calls, Email, Social Media and Farm Calls (if relevant)

- Interruptions are part of the job; keep a positive attitude and plan time for them if possible.
- Group together multiple phone calls and organize them before you begin to make phone calls.
- Set aside specific times to read and return emails. File or delete emails as soon as you hit send.
- If social media is a distraction, find ways to limit access. Maybe set a timer or turn off notifications.
- Encourage family and friends not to text or call about routine matters while you are on the clock. Get them accustomed to receiving responses to texts during your lunch break or at the end of the workday.
- Phones are for the benefit of the owner, not the caller. Give your phone number to others if it will be of benefit in managing time and your relationship with that person. Otherwise, encourage others to contact you via e-mail.

- When possible, set a maximum time for conference calls. Always have an agenda and a note-taker.
- Close your door for quiet time occasionally. No door? Try headphones or a polite sign.

## Setting Objectives and Priorities

- Take a few minutes for planning each day, or at the close of the previous day, to be ready to immediately proceed the following morning.
- Set one major objective for each day. Write it down and achieve it.
- Break large tasks into smaller pieces and work on them successively.
- Set aside time to think about program priorities and ways of bringing creative approaches to your work.
- Make a “To Do” list and highlight or mark items based on priority level. Some people have long-term and short-term lists. In such a list, consider what is both urgent and important. However, lists don’t work well for everyone, so try to find a method that helps you
- Think about and discern between what is urgent and what is important. These are often not the same. The important has long-term and significant consequences, whereas the urgent cries out for attention right now. What tasks or topics are both urgent and important? Which tasks may be neither and can perhaps be ignored?
- Do what needs to be done, not what you feel like doing. However, if you can’t seem to get started, just do something to get going.
- Avoid over commitment; learn how and when to say ‘no’. Saying ‘no’ is a powerful tool; it may also be difficult to use.
- Set deadlines for yourself and others...and stick to them as much as possible.
- Maintain realistic expectations for goals and timelines. Most things take longer than one expects.
- If at first you are not successful, analyze, regroup, and try again. Remember Murphy’s law?

## Finding Balance

- Keep work and home as separate as is reasonably possible. While at work, focus on your occupation. While at home, dedicate yourself to the family and what’s important in that sphere. Try to leave personal or family issues at home and professional frustrations at the office. If you don’t feel refreshed and ready to work each morning when you get to the office, consider whether or not you are leaving work behind when you go home. Or, consider whether there may be other reasons why your morale at the office may not be what you wish. Seek advice and counsel freely.
- Consider leaving your computer at the office if you find it distracting from your personal life, and consider turning off a personal cell phone if you find it distracting while you are at the office.
- Working parents have unique challenges in how to mix work and home life. Establish routines and habits that support balance; just like walking a balance beam, this requires many little adjustments over the course of time...and sometimes you fall off.
- Dedicate yourself fully to the task at hand. While at work, work hard. While playing, play hard. If you are taking a nap, make it a good one. If you are gardening, don’t forget to smell the flowers.

## Want to learn more? There are many references available. Here are a few:

- The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, Stephen Covey
- Getting Things Done: the art of stress-free productivity, David Allen
- Managing Your Time, Ted W. Engstrom and R. Alec MacKenzie.
- Benjamin Franklin: An American Life, Walter Isaacson
- Essentialism: The Disciplined Pursuit of Less, Greg McKeown
- The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business, Charles Duhigg
- Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World, Cal Newport
- Free to Focus: A Total Productivity System to Achieve More by Doing Less, Michael Hyatt
- The Bullet Journal Method: Track the Past, Order the Present, Design the Future, Ryder Carroll
- The Checklist Manifesto: How to Get Things Right, Atul Gawande
- Eat that Frog: 21 Great Ways to Stop Procrastinating and Get More Done in Less Time, Brian Tracy