

# Personal Development Resources

## Quick Guide to Better Time Management by using To-Do Lists

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**Do you often feel overwhelmed by the amount of work you have to do? Do you find yourself missing deadlines? Or do you sometimes just forget to do something important, so that people must chase you to get work done?**

All of these are symptoms of not keeping a proper "To-Do List". These are prioritized lists of all the tasks that you need to carry out. They list everything that you have to do, with the most important tasks at the top of the list, and the least important tasks at the bottom.

By keeping such a list, you make sure that your tasks are written down all in one place, so you don't forget anything important. And by prioritizing tasks, you plan the order in which you'll do them, so that you can tell what needs your immediate attention, and what you can leave until later.

To-do lists are essential if you're going to beat work overload. When you **don't** use them effectively, you'll appear unfocused and unreliable to the people around you.

When you **do** use them effectively, you'll be much better organized, and you'll be much more reliable. You'll experience less stress, safe in the knowledge that you haven't forgotten anything important. More than this, if you prioritize intelligently, you'll focus your time and energy on high-value activities, which will mean that you're more productive, and more valuable to your team.

Keeping a properly structured and thought-out list sounds simple enough. But it can be surprising how many people fail to use them at all, never mind use them effectively.

In fact, it's often when people start to use them effectively and sensibly that they make their first personal productivity breakthroughs and start making a success of their careers.



## Preparing a To-Do List

To prepare a To-Do-List, first design a grid like the one below, this can either be drawn freehand or ideally in MS Word.

Task	Priority (A-G) (A = Very Important, F = Unimportant)

Then follow these steps:



## Step 1

Write down all the tasks that you need to complete. If they're large tasks, break out the first action step, and write this down with the larger task. (Ideally, tasks or action steps should take no longer than 1-2 hours to complete.)



### Tip:

*You may find it easier to compile several lists (covering personal, study, and workplace, for example). Try different approaches and use the best for your own situation.*



## Step 2

Run through these tasks allocating priorities from A (very important, or very urgent) to G (unimportant, or not at all urgent).

If too many tasks have a high priority, run through the list again and demote the less important ones. Once you have done this, rewrite the list in priority order.



## Using Your To-Do List

To use your list, simply work your way through it in order, dealing with the A priority tasks first, then the Bs, then the Cs, and so on. As you complete tasks, tick them off or strike them through.

What you put on your list and how you use it will depend on your situation. For instance, if you're in an Adult Care role, a good way to motivate yourself is to keep your list relatively short and aim to complete it every day.

But if you're in a management role, or if tasks are large or dependent on too many other people, then it may be better to focus on a longer-term list, and "chip away" at it day-by-day.

Many people find it helpful to spend, say, 10 minutes at the end of the day, organizing tasks on their list for the next day.

## Key Points

**To be well organized at work, you need to be using to-do lists. By using them, you will ensure that:**

- You remember to carry out all necessary tasks.
- You tackle the most important jobs first, and don't waste time on trivial tasks.
- You don't get stressed by many unimportant jobs.

Start by listing all the tasks that you must carry out.

Mark the importance of the task next to it, with a priority from A (very important) to G (unimportant). Redraft the list into this order of importance. Then carry out the jobs at the top of the list first. These are the most important, most beneficial tasks to complete.

You can also use software-based approaches to manage your list. You can often access these from anywhere, and they can often be synced with your Smartphone.