

The Urgent/Important Matrix

Time Management Tool

BACKGROUND

Former US President Eisenhower used the so-called "Eisenhower Principle" to organize his tasks. He is quoted as saying, "What is important is seldom urgent and what is urgent is seldom important."

Dr Stephen Covey made these concepts mainstream, calling it "The Urgent/Important Matrix" in his famous book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*.

So, how do you spend your time? Are you constantly interrupted by others? Do you always seem to move from one crisis to another? Perhaps you're not prioritizing your time as well as you could?

Take a look at The Urgent Important Matrix below. Our time is obviously best spent in Quadrant 2: **Important but Non-Urgent** tasks. Let's first:

1. **Review the chart** and consider where you spend most of your time.
2. **What % of time do you spend in each quadrant?** Write the percentage next to each quadrant below, ensuring they add up to 100. **IMPORTANT:** Make sure this percentage is a gut-feeling—your first instant response.
3. **List specific examples** that are relevant to YOU for each quadrant on the blank lines below.

	URGENT	NON-URGENT
IMPORTANT	<p>CRISES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor and Major Crises • Pressing Problems • Deadlines • Meetings • Projects • _____ • _____ • _____ <p>Quadrant 1</p>	<p>GOALS & PLANNING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation & Prevention • Planning • Values Clarification • Building Relationships • Clarifying priorities • Goal Setting • _____ • _____ • _____ <p>Quadrant 2</p>
NOT IMPORTANT	<p>INTERRUPTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needless interruptions • Interruptions from Others • Unimportant Meetings • Unimportant Phone calls • Unimportant Mail/Email • Other People's Minor Issues • _____ • _____ • _____ <p>Quadrant 3</p>	<p>DISTRACTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trivia and "Busy" work • Some phone calls • Your own special time-wasters • "Escape" activities • Irrelevant email & Social Media • Excessive TV, Internet browsing • Excessive relaxing/sleeping • Self-critical thoughts • _____ • _____ <p>Quadrant 4</p>

Why not post this on your fridge, desk or somewhere you'll see it regularly to remind you?

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REVIEW TIME

1. So, which quadrant do you spend MOST time in? _____

Q1: Crises—If you're spending most of your time here, how are you dealing with stress?

Q2: Goals & Planning—Congratulations! How could you make sure you stay in this quadrant?

Q3: Interruptions—Spending most of your time here? You may need to find ways to say "No" to others.

Q4: Distractions—If you're spending most of your time here, you may ways to "No" to yourself!

2. How does that feel? _____

3. So, what's getting in the way of you managing your time better? Be specific: _____

4. Where do you sabotage yourself? _____

GET MOTIVATED

1. How could your life be different if you managed your time more effectively? What's in it for you?

List all the benefits to you of managing your time better including at home, in relationships and the workplace!

2. What COULD you do differently? *It's time to do some brainstorming so write all the ideas of things you could do.*

TIP: You don't have to action these, this is just to explore ideas and possibilities.

3. What is the KEY action that would support all the others? _____

4. The biggest thing I have learned about myself today is _____

COMMITMENT

Now it's time to identify 1-3 specific actions you will commit to. *Only choose actions you're 100% sure you'll complete—if necessary, make the action smaller until you can commit one hundred percent. Choose at least ONE action you'll complete within the next week.*

Action 1 _____ by when _____

Action 2 _____ by when _____

Action 3 _____ by when _____

☐ I am committed to achieving these actions Signed _____ Date _____