

Bad time management

- ⇒ *My room and especially my desk are always a complete mess. What does a messy desk/room indicate?*
- ⇒ *Private time and study time always mingle with one another. Is this effective for your work behavior?*

Goals: Identify which time wasters are of your personal concern.

Content: Several time wasters are discussed.

User guide: Use this Skill Sheet in combination with SS G8 'Good time management' and SS G9 'Study planning: Week', and SS G10 'Study planning: Semester'.

Bad time management occurs when you cannot handle a number of 'time wasters'. This Skill Sheet helps you to identify your main 'time wasters'. Time wasters are *related* and are often cumulative. Identification should create the precondition under which you can work on tackling your time wasters in the most effective way possible (→G8, G9, G10).



Lack of time represents lack of priorities!

Try to identify which and to what extent these time wasters are applicable to you:

👉 (not at all), 🕒 (a little), 🕒 (a lot).

- 👉 🕒 🕒 No **goals/aims** or they are unclear; no set **priorities** or changing priorities. In practice, short term priorities will then *always* dominate your long term ones (creating timing problems later on to reach your longer term objectives).
- 👉 🕒 🕒 Unrealistic or no **taxation of time**. No **planning** effort. No intention to work on self-discipline. You are not capable of planning your (1) day, (2) week, and/or (3) semester due to a lack of systematically generated and analysed information, for instance on your reading and working pace. If you are not *systematic* in evaluating mistakes made in the past, you will not change your time consuming habits in the present easily.
- 👉 🕒 🕒 Trying to do too much at the same time (**fragmentation of activities**). You only focus on the details, instead of on big lines *as well as* on details.
- 👉 🕒 🕒 Not being **assertive**, not being able to say 'no' (implying that you do not have priorities and have your schedule set by other people; →G4 submissive). But also: not being able to ask for clarification of the organisation of things, which then create misunderstandings later on and therefore time-waste. And: not being capable of delegating.
- 👉 🕒 🕒 **Bad organisation of work, study and private life** and their interaction over time. If you find it difficult to make a clear distinction between work and private life, you will allow too many other people to waste your time. If you allow friends to come and visit you while you are studying or doing a research project, this will create major lapses in concentration. Consider studying as a 'job' (→G8). Make effective use of breaks.
- 👉 🕒 🕒 You are not capable of keeping an appropriate **diary**: for example, you note all your appointments in your diary, but you do not include time for study or preparation for groups and other work. Study time then easily becomes a marginal (rest) activity and de facto loses priority. This also relates to (not) noting the amount of time that you need to travel from one place to another.
- 👉 🕒 🕒 You always **postpone** things. The golden rule of the Personal Efficiency Programme (PEP) developed by the American Institute for Business Technology is: **DO IT NOW** (Financial Times, 4 March, 1992). When you apply this rule, you: (1) only deal with things once and so save time; (2) have fewer distractions and can concentrate better; (3) catch problems while they are small and (4) you will not have to worry about wasting time explaining to people why you have not done something.

👉 🕒 🗨️ You lack **personal efficiency** in the organisation of your files (→A8) your diary and/or your desk. A messy desk is not necessarily a sign of hard work. An advisory bureau (Priority Management) came to the conclusion that many people waste up to three hours a week finding things on their desk. (De Volkskrant, 28 December 1994). Disorganised desks not only create time problems, but also additional stress (→D6).

- Two tips are included in the Personal Efficiency Programme (PEP) philosophy that you could 'do now' are worthwhile noting:
- *Clear out all your drawers and files.* Ask yourself: have I ever used it and do I really expect to use it? If I throw it away, and unexpectedly need it, will I be able to get another copy?
 - *Set up three trays on your desk: In, Out and Pending.* Plan how and when you are going to deal with incoming and outgoing messages. Decide what can be put in the Pending tray and for how long.

👉 🕒 🗨️ You are not capable of **preventing problems** from appearing. For example, you have to spend time on a quality inspections afterwards because the quality of the input was too low. Or you have to alleviate mistakes or solve problems created by others. Effective time management requires prevention of mistakes, making suitable appointments with other members involved in group activities, and good rules and procedures *before* you start a project. It also requires that you are well informed about the organisation of a class, a project, and also of a book or other sources (→D4). This saves you an immense amount of time!

👉 🕒 🗨️ You have no insight into your '**most productive hours**' during the day; for example, it is not realistic to plan serious brain activity straight after a heavy meal.

👉 🕒 🗨️ You lack a number of **practical capabilities** and are not interested in developing them: e.g. typing at sufficient speed, language, word-processing, library search abilities. It is not always possible (nor advisable) to rely on divisions of labour with others (→G2). You will lose valuable time on compensating low quality input for your own work and the inevitable and repeated mistakes due to your own low performance (and understanding) in these practical skills.

Ask yourself:

Do I manage my time or do I let time manage me?



Could this be your statement?

I know that I have time, but I don't know where to find it at the moment...

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