

# Prioritizing Your Tasks in Pursuit of Your Goals

To get more done in a day most people resort to working longer hours, pushing out deadlines, and juggling more responsibilities. Although this can provide some immediate relief, these aren't sustainable solutions for the long term. Personal productivity is about completing actions that move you closer to accomplishing your goals in a manner that brings balance and ease to your life. It's not enough to just mark tasks off a list. The tasks you're completing need to be directly related to achieving meaningful objectives.

Productivity is about how much you accomplish rather than how busy you are. So it's important to learn how to work more efficiently so you have enough time to focus on your regular responsibilities *and* your future goals too.

Embarking on a goal-setting journey can be overwhelming, which is why it is helpful to plan your actions according to levels of priority. The following goal setting activity is designed to allow you to make the most of your time so that the goals you set get done.

## **Activity:** Little Index Cards

*You'll need these materials:*

- A pack of index cards
- Colored pens or pencils

- Using the matrix below, assign a pen color to each of the four different levels of priority shown.

|                                   |                        | <b>The Priority Matrix</b>            |                                      |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <b>How important is the task?</b> | <b>High Importance</b> | <b>Action:</b><br><br><b>Do First</b> | <b>Action:</b><br><br><b>Do Next</b> |
|                                   | <b>Low Importance</b>  | <b>Action:</b><br><br><b>Do Later</b> | <b>Action:</b><br><br><b>Do Last</b> |
|                                   |                        | <b>High Urgency</b>                   | <b>Low Urgency</b>                   |
|                                   |                        | <b>How urgent is the task?</b>        |                                      |

- On each index card, write down a task/goal you need to achieve this week. Use as many cards as you need to capture all of your goals.
- Beginning with the highest priority (High Importance & High Urgency) quadrant, choose five cards (goals) that you know you can accomplish by the end of the week. Place these five cards in the “Do First” quadrant.
- Distribute the remaining cards into the other three quadrants according to their perceived priority.
- Get started on accomplishing the five cards from your “Do First” quadrant.
  - Keep these five cards with you to remind you of what you need to accomplish. When you have completed each task file the index card away, or if you prefer, display it somewhere you can be reminded of your accomplishments.
- If you don’t complete your week’s five priorities, keep the tasks that haven’t been completed in the “Do First” quadrant. Set your next week’s goals and prioritize them, keeping a total of 5 in the “Do First” quadrant.
- If you complete all 5 tasks, begin working on the tasks in quadrant 2, and so on.
- Each week add new goals as appropriate.

The process of assigning your tasks to different priority levels allows you to stay focused, and it keeps you from becoming overwhelmed since you are clear as to where it is most important to spend your time.

### **Reflect on Your Results:**

- How does it feel to have your tasks and goals identified and prioritized?
- How will this process help you to be more productive?
- What supports can you put in place to better manage the distractions that prevent you from completing your most important goals?

It feels good to be in control of your goals, and to know that you can produce the results that are most important to you. Taking this priority approach to managing your goals will help you to increase your personal productivity and effectiveness.

Here are some further tips that can help you set and achieve your goals in the most efficient way possible.

#### *Make a firm decision*

Before setting any goal, make sure you take a firm stance in your mind that no matter what happens you will stick with it all the way through.

#### *Take a realistic look*

Are your goals realistic? Or could you be spreading yourself too thin? Avoid setting goals just for the sake of it. Whatever goals you have, make sure you have the willingness and determination to achieve them.

#### *Make an action plan*

Once you have set your goals, make a plan to stay on track. This includes actions, timelines, supports, potential challenges, and even opportunities to celebrate.

#### *Track your progress*

If you don't monitor your progress, you won't know if you're on track to achieve your goal within the time frame you set.

#### *Involve others*

It is good to involve others in the process of setting and achieving goals. Having a support system can be valuable for offering different perspectives, encouragement and accountability.

#### *Be okay with failure*

If you learn to accept failure and keep going, there's nothing that will stop you from achieving your goals. The path to achieving your goals won't always go smoothly. Failure is an important part of the process.

*Persevere*

Don't give up. It's okay to encounter obstacles, get stuck, and have to adjust your plan. Multiple paths often lead to the same destination.

*Celebrate*

Celebrate when you have reached a milestone in your journey. You've just shortened the path to your destination. It's okay to stop for a bit and enjoy your success.

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