Time management

Penny Beuning
Time management

- If you wait until the last minute, it only takes a minute.
  - SS

- Everything takes $\pi$ times as long as you think it will.
  - MW

- Work (especially teaching) is a gas; it expands to fill the space available.
What are your goals?

- Career: teaching, research, service
- Personal: family, financial, self
  - Others?

Clearest goals will get most of your time (even if you don’t realize it)

J. Morgenstern “Time Management from the Inside Out”
Priorities

• Avoid public humiliation
  • Seminars, teaching, presentations

• Research
  • Grants, manuscripts, students

• Visibility
  • Reviews, seminars, conferences

• Internal visibility
  • Student/university/dept committees

*note, adjust order to fit your circumstances
Priorities

• I say yes to…
  • Most scientific opportunities
  • Non-scientific opportunities that lead to increased visibility
  • Causes I care about

• I say no to…
  • Anything else I can reasonably say no to

• Learn to say no!
  • Can you suggest an alternative w/o throwing someone under the bus? Check with that person first!
Service

- Important, but…

- It will find you

- Decide how you want to make your mark and focus on those things

- National, and a little local, visible service is probably most useful to you
Teaching

• Important

• The first time through a class will probably be time consuming and difficult

• Start the term “tough” to minimize special requests

• Take good notes throughout the term (and year!) about what works and what to change

• Use classes to recruit research students (and to do research!)

• Limit prep time?
  • At least, don’t reinvent the wheel too much
Research

• Invest time in quality training for the first few students—set the culture early

• Project or idea baskets/boxes/notebooks

• One binder per student (project) for data, notes, ideas

• Don’t reinvent the wheel
Research: Staying organized

- **Time** is your limiting reagent
- Electronic calendar for group (and PI)
- Electronic task manager
- Lab listserv, wiki
- Quartzy, google docs
- “Clear your desk”

- Spreadsheets
  - Mind-mapping, to-do lists

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
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<td>subtask</td>
<td>deadline</td>
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### Spreadsheets for Projects and People

#### Projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Personnel</th>
<th>Progress</th>
<th>To do</th>
<th>Misc</th>
<th>Manuscript</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active site 1</td>
<td>Grad student (postdoc), undergrad</td>
<td>C1A, D2A, E3A, F4A decreased activity</td>
<td>Kinetics, binding</td>
<td>Then mutagenesis</td>
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<td>Active site 2</td>
<td>Grad student</td>
<td>Survival, mut assays completed</td>
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<td>In press</td>
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<td>Dynamics</td>
<td>Grad student</td>
<td></td>
<td>Need to re-make constructs</td>
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#### People

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grad Student 1</th>
<th>Co-workers</th>
<th>Progress</th>
<th>To do</th>
<th>Misc/Long-term</th>
<th>Manuscript</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active site 1</td>
<td>postdoc, undergrad</td>
<td>C1A, D2A, E3A, F4A decreased activity</td>
<td>Kinetics, binding, two more constructs</td>
<td>Then mutagenesis</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Active site 3</td>
<td>Undergrad, collaborator</td>
<td>Substrate specificity of G5A, H6A, I7A</td>
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<td>In press</td>
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<tr>
<td>DNA</td>
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<td>DNA structures designed</td>
<td>Need to re-make constructs</td>
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*Hypothetical examples*
# Current Manuscripts Spreadsheet

## Current Manuscripts

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Personnel</th>
<th>Outline</th>
<th>To do/Waiting on</th>
<th>Manuscript Status</th>
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<td>Single Cys</td>
<td>Backup journals X, Y, Z</td>
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<td>Protein-protein interactions</td>
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<td>Localization</td>
<td>Activity, Grad student is writing</td>
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<td>Distribution, kinetics</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>undergrad, undergrads</td>
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</table>
Life?

• What is most important to you?
• Can you keep it that way?

• Try not to sacrifice sleep, diet, and exercise

• Simplify your life
  • Clothing, travel (too many choices increase stress)
  • Delegate, outsource, automate
  • Travel organization/apps/checklist
You can’t prepare for everything…

Path of Life Garden

www.caregiving.com
“Don’t mistake activity for achievement.”
Are you effectively managing your time?

• Don’t mistake activity for achievement.
  • John Wooden

• Use time-logging/time-tracking software
  • A basic spreadsheet works fine
  • Figure out how long things actually take!

• Prepare for your week, Sunday night prep time, schedule your work

• Practice productive procrastination
Managing multiple demands

• Keep track—write down everything you have to do/are doing
  • But avoid the 15-page to-do list

• Decision-making process
  • Delete, delay, diminish, delegate
    • Does it have to be done? Now? In this way? By me?
  • Don’t let the perfect be the enemy of the good enough.

• When are you going to get everything done?

J. Morgenstern “Time Management from the Inside Out”
Distinguish between:

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<tr>
<td>Urgent</td>
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From “Making the Right Moves” HHMI and BWF
Where do these things fit? How do you prioritize them?

Poster for meeting in two weeks  
Edit manuscript  
Update web page  
Reschedule home produce delivery  
Book rental car for trip in Sept  
Email class that starts in Sept  
Watch *Game of Thrones*  
Finish making list of goals  
Edit research proposal for job application

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From “Making the Right Moves” HHMI and BWF
Find quality time

• “Stack” your meetings/commitments
• Turn off alerts, set times to answer email rather than in real time
• Manage the “tyranny of tiny tasks” (Timothy Wu)
  • (automate, outsource)
• Do you always need to answer your phone? (No!)
• Open-door policy? Always available?
• Take a writing/thinking retreat and/or a research group “retreat”
Make your time count

“cost”
impact
Make your time count

Where do these things fit?
How do you prioritize them?

Poster for meeting in two weeks
Edit manuscript
Update web page
Reschedule produce delivery
Book rental car for trip
Email class that starts in Sept
Watch *Game of Thrones*
Finish making list of goals
Edit research proposal for job application
Get help?

• Professional services
  • Coach, project manager
  • Organizer

• Mentors, colleagues
  • Everyone here today!

• Don’t be the person who goes to your advisor or chair with every trivial problem
Resources

• “Getting Things Done” David Allen

• “Time Management from the Inside Out” Julie Morgenstern

• “How to Write a Lot” Paul Silvia


• Get-It-Done Guy

  • Sticky index cards

penny@neu.edu