

The Busy Professor

Easy Steps to Getting Your Academic Life Under Control

STEPS

1. Rule your e-mail
2. Make To-Do lists that really matter
3. Create a highly-structured syllabus
4. Don't break your writing appointments
5. Automate everything (grading, investing, bills, social media, exercise)
6. Put 20-seconds between you and your vice
7. Pre-write letters, committee tasks, and grading comments
8. Every talk or poster becomes a paper
9. Use Smart Phone Apps to Build Your CV (Lift, HassleBot, Evernote)
10. Get a non-work life if you want to be more productive at work

Doing What Matters First

Time Management for Busy Professors

TheBusyProfessor.com

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*Excellence in Higher Education Endowed
Chair of Science Education*

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- *The best thing about being a professor is the flexibility ... you can work any 80 hours a week you wish!*

Quote attributed most recently to Bob Hilborn

Without talking to the person next to you...

- You've been highly successful as a faculty member so far. Let's now dream a bit.... please list **THREE** job-related things you wish you were doing **MORE** of that would advance you professionally?

Figuring out what's most important

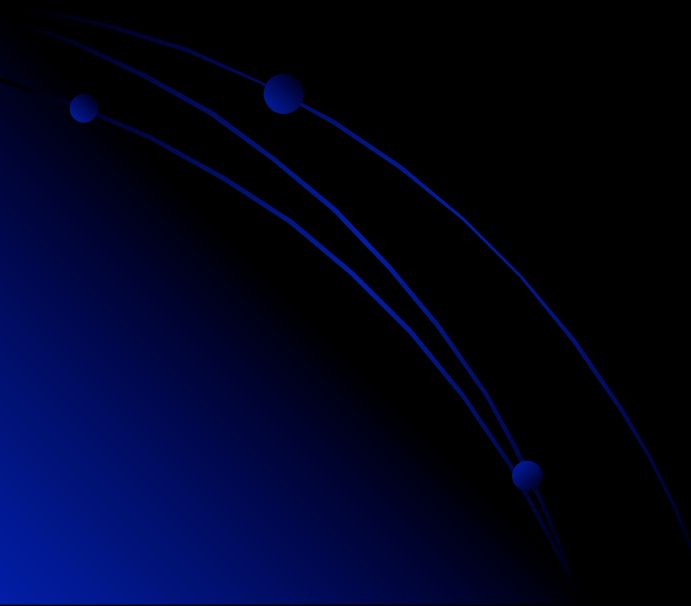
- List three job-related things you wish you were doing MORE of?
- If you could do just **ONE** of those three things on your list really well that would help you progress professionally, which one is it and why?

Figuring out what's most important

- What are three job-related things you wish you were doing MORE of?
- If you could do just ONE of those three things on your list really well that would help you be better professionally, which one is it and why?
- **In a small group, ask volunteers to share ONE of the items. *Try not to offer solutions, but to focus on highlighting areas of improvement.***

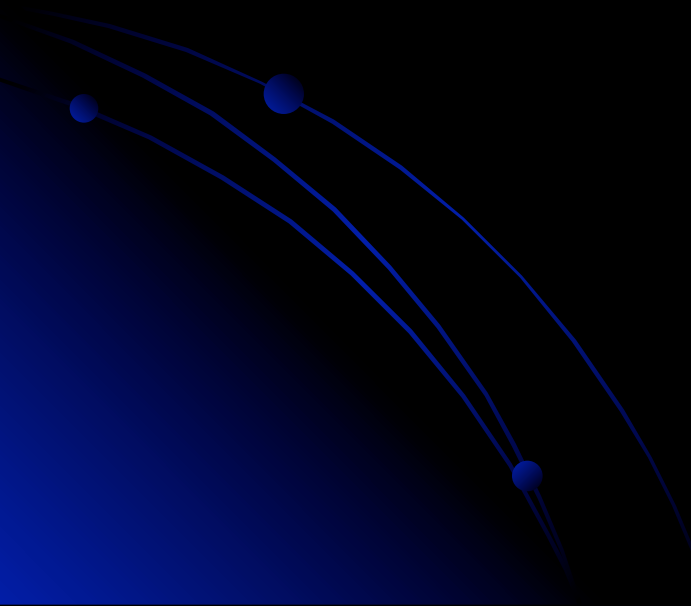
What is the consensus of the group?

- If you know what is most important, why aren't you doing it?
- Ok, if there is just not enough time
 - **What steals your time?**



The Omnivore's Dilemma

If you can buy just about anything you could ever want in a grocery store, what do you decide to eat for dinner tonight?



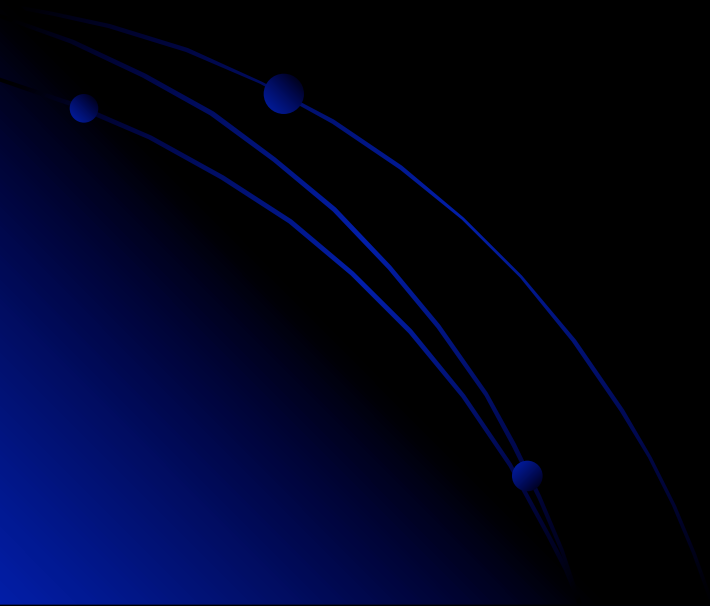
The Academic's Dilemma

If you can do just about anything you could ever want to do during your work day, what do you decide to do today?

The surprisingly simple answer is the same for both: routine & habit

The simple answer to the question of life, the Universe, and everything ...

**If you chase two rabbits at
the same time, you catch
none**



Successful time management is about keeping the main thing the main thing

- You can do anything you want; but you can't do everything
 - Technology sometimes fools us into thinking you can
 - You can have >200 friends using FaceBook
 - You can submit multiple grant proposals several times a day with NSF *FastLane*
 - You can deliver by email all of your students a homework assignment in a single click without going to the photocopier

Successful time management is about keeping the main thing the main thing

- You can do anything you want; but you can't do everything
- You have to identify what you really want
- *Life that frantically runs around touching all the bases doing a little of everything is a very unhappy life*



CASE STUDY

You've got to know before it happens...

- Imagine a student comes to your office door for help on a HW problem the day before a test...
- It's 4:15pm and you've got to hit submit on fastlane.nsf.gov by 5pm, what do you do?
- ***BOTTOM LINE: If you don't know before it happens, you'll try to do both and do a lousy job of each***

Money Management Strategies

This only works if you know what is most important

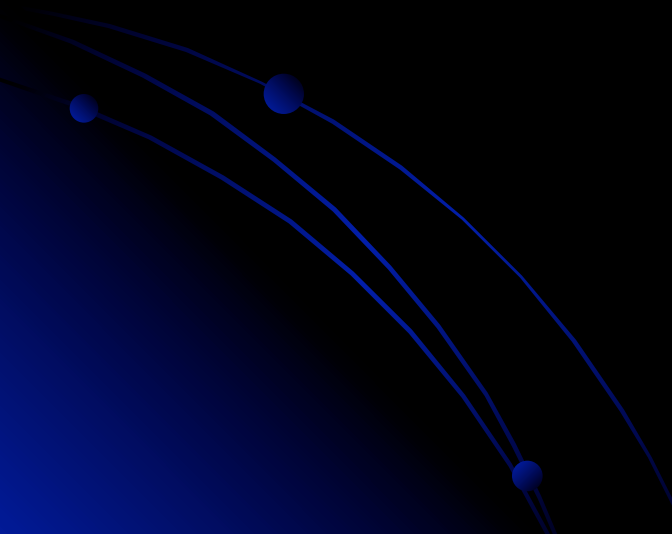
- Awareness of how you spend your money
- Awareness of what steals your money
- Barriers to people stealing your money



Time Management Strategies

This only works if you know what is most important

- Awareness of how you spend your time
- Awareness of what steals your time
- Barriers to people stealing your time



Time Management Strategies

This only works if you know what is most important

- Awareness of how you spend your time



Time Management Strategies

This only works if you know what is most important

- Awareness of how you spend your time



Voting Question

Which of these most disgustingly steals your time?

A. Student requests, advisement & mentoring

B. Commuting

C. Administrative service AND email

D. Internet distractions (Chrome, eBay, Amazon, CNN.com)

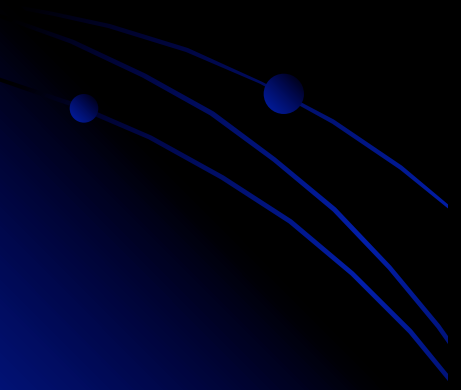
E. Meetings



Time Management Strategies

This only works if you know what is most important

- Awareness of how you spend your time
- Computers can multi-task, humans can't



Given a stack of dishes in the sink

Which should you do?

(1) wash one and then

- rinse it, then

- wash another, then

- rinse it, then

- wash another ...

(2) scrub all the dishes first, then rinse them.

OR



At the observatory

Which should you do?

(1) collect data on an object for 10 minutes and then

- spend the next 10 minutes doing the analysis, and then
- collect more data, then
- analyze it...

(2) spend the night taking as much data as you can (*doing some rough preliminary analysis while waiting*), then doing the analysis for all the data the next day.

OR



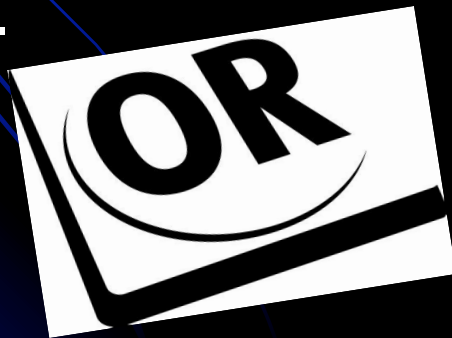
Given a stack of papers to grade

Which should you do?

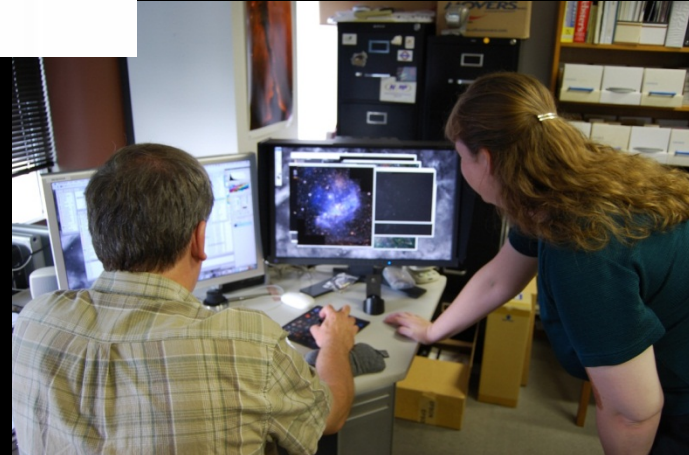
(1) grade one paper and then

- respond to two emails,
- then grade another paper,
- two more emails, then

(2) turn off your email, grade your stack of papers with focus for an hour, then turn to your email and focus on it for an hour.



If one generally answers these all the same, what is the underlying operating principle?



Time Management Strategies

This only works if you know what is most important

- Awareness of how you spend your time
- Computers can multi-task, humans can't

**BEST ADVICE:
Only Do ONE Thing at a Time !!!!**

Time Management Strategies

This only works if you know what is most important

- Awareness of how you spend your time
- Computers can multi-task, humans can't
- **TRY IT**: Batch your work – do all of your email at one sitting, then turn it off
 - Make a separate email address for your teaching, tell students that is how to contact you, and that you only check it every other day.
 - *Students are enthusiastically happy if they know you if and when you will respond.*

Time Management Strategies

This only works if you know what is most important

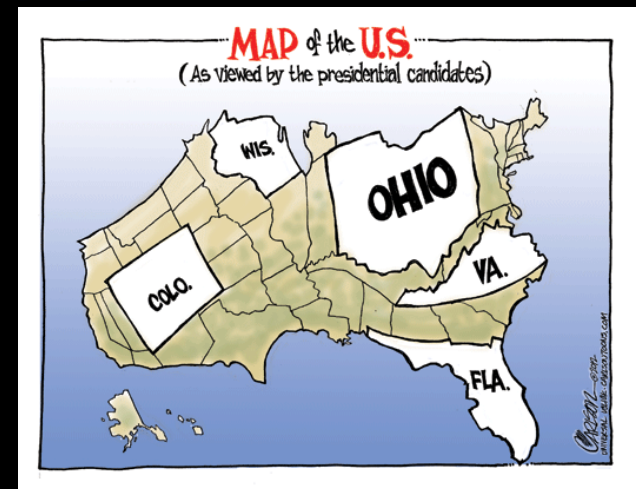
- Awareness of how you spend your time
- Computers can multi-task, humans can't
- Batch your work – do all of your email at one sitting, then turn it off
- **TRY IT**: Dedicate yourself to OHIO

O: Only

H: Handle

I: It

O: Once



Time Management Strategies


This only works if you know what is most important

- Awareness of how you spend your time
- Computers can multi-task, humans can't
- Batch your work – do all of your email at one sitting, then turn it off
- Dedicate yourself to OHIO
- When I sit down to do my 100+ emails in my inbox at the end of the day, I
 - Delete it
 - Respond in less than 2 minutes
 - Archive it
 - Put in a “to deal with on Friday” directory/folder

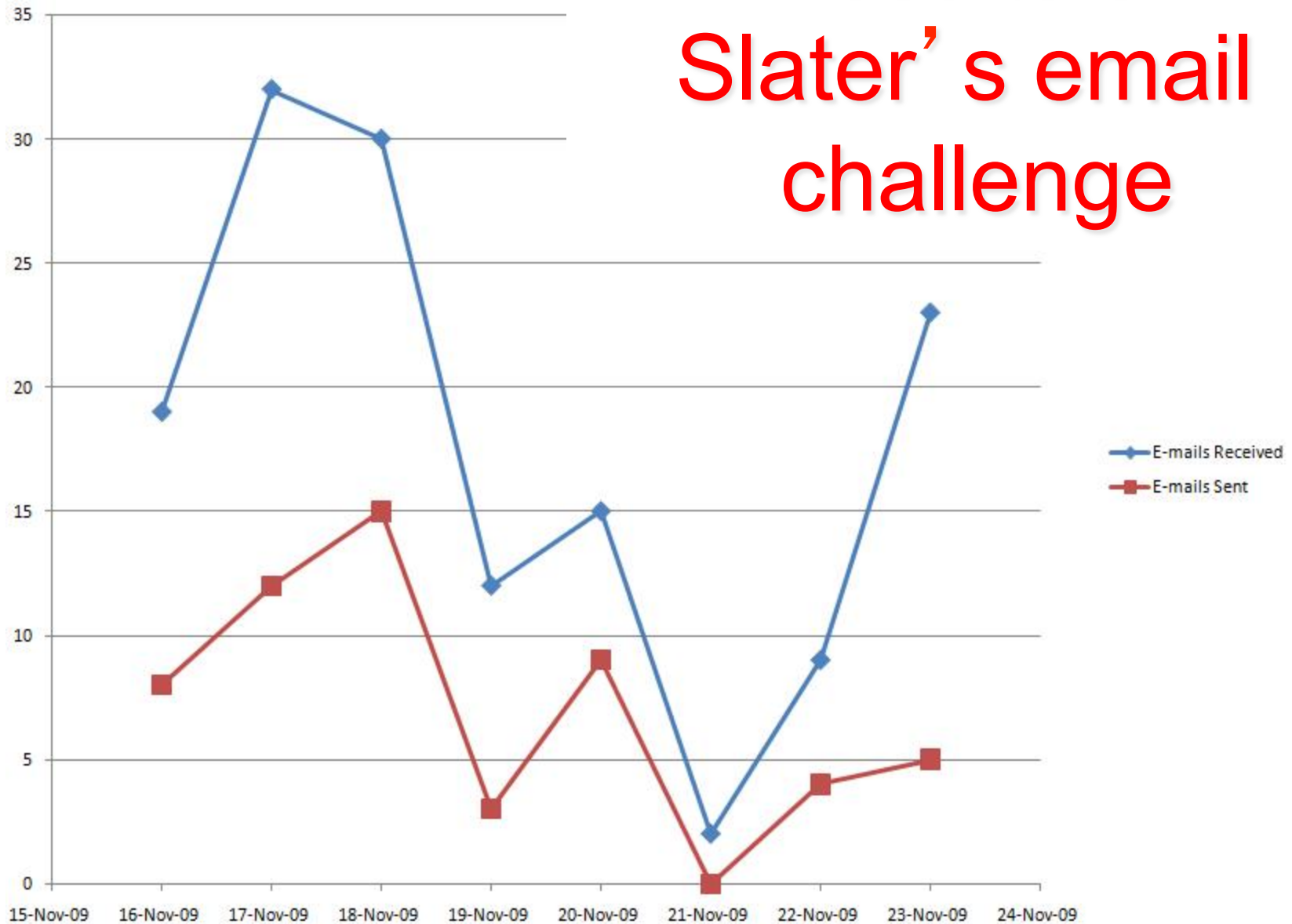
TRY IT

Time Management Strategies

This only works if you know what is most important

- Awareness of how you spend your time
 - Computers can multi-task, humans can't
- 
- *Level 0*: Email is on constantly and you notice every “receive”
 - *Level 1*: Turn off your email for at least one hour per day
 - *Level 2*: Don't access your email before noon
 - *Level 3*: Set your email to SEND/RECEIVE only once a day --- **TRY IT**

Results of Slater's email challenge



<http://cornerinteractions.blogspot.com/2009/11/you-can-close-outlook.html>

Are You an URGENCY ADDICT?

- “Let me just glance at my email real quick before I”

“Maybe there is something that just came in that I can respond to so that I can feel like I’ve accomplished something

...instead of what I was supposed to be doing”

Are You an URGENT?

- “Let me know if you have time to check your email”
It’s completely unfair to the person who took time to send you email to just “dash-off” a quick response...**REALLY**

RULE: If you don’t have time to have manners (Dear Pat.. Thanks for your email, by the way, you did a nice job on that presentation last week, I appreciated the time you took to find that data) – then you don’t have time to check your email

TRY IT: **NRN** (No reply necessary, I just wanted you to be in the loop on this information)

CONFESSION

*Yes, I fall off
the wagon
sometimes*

www.hassleme.co.uk

← → ↻ www.hassleme.co.uk ☆ C

HassleMe

*Because sometimes in life,
you just need to be nagged...*

Not eating enough fruit? Forgot to feed the fish again?
Need a little help keeping your New Year's resolutions?
Tell us what to hassle you about, and we'll nag you via email at
semi-unpredictable intervals.
HassleMe is unique because you **never quite know** when
your reminder will come along.

Set up a hassle now!

Hassle me **roughly** every days, reminding me to:

Send the emails to:

- We'll send you a confirmation email when you sign up.
- If you add more than one email address (separated by commas or semicolons) we'll pick one person at random for each hassle — good for offices!

Can we make the text of this hassle [publicly visible](#)?

Yes No

CONFESSION

*Yes, I fall off
the wagon
sometimes*

TRY IT

www.hassleme.co.uk

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL www.hassleme.co.uk. The page has a dark purple header with the HassleMe logo and the tagline "Because sometimes in life, you just need to be nagged...". Below the header is a yellow box containing text about the service. A second box contains a form to set up a hassle, with a highlighted blue box for the reminder message and a "Set up this hassle now >>" button at the bottom.

www.hassleme.co.uk

HassleMe

*Because sometimes in life,
you just need to be nagged...*

Not eating enough fruit? Forgot to feed the fish again?
Need a little help keeping your New Year's resolutions?
Tell us what to hassle you about, and we'll nag you via email at **semi-unpredictable intervals**.
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Set up a hassle now!

Hassle me **roughly** every days, reminding me to:

**What are you doing right now?
What are you NOT doing? *How do you feel about it?***

Yes No

[Set up this hassle now >>](#)

YOU NEED A SYSTEM TO CALL THINGS TO YOUR ATTENTION SO YOU CAN FORGET THEM

- *Your email inbox is an ineffective to do list*
 - How many of you have 1,000 emails in your inbox?



You MUST know where you are going!!!

- **TRY IT:** Spend 10 minutes at the end of your day writing down the ONE thing that you would like to do tomorrow that would make you feel productive.

Whats the ONE thing I could do today that would make me feel productive ?

	Today or Tomorrow	For Another Day
1		
	✓	
	✓	
2		
		✓

YOU NEED A SYSTEM TO CALL THINGS TO YOUR ATTENTION SO YOU CAN FORGET THEM

- *Your email inbox is an ineffective to do list*
 - How many of you have 1,000 emails in your inbox?
- *My calendar is my to-do list*

Successful time management is about keeping track and batching similar tasks

	15 Sunday	16 Monday	17 Tuesday	18 Wednesday	19 Thursday	20 Friday	21 Saturday
4:00							
5:00							
6:00	DONE						TO DO LIST
7:00						Keynote Talk at Colorado AAPT Meeting in Denver	
8:00							
9:00	Time Management Session at NFW						
10:00							
11:00			Weekly Research Meeting		Office Hours		
12 pm		ASTRO 101		Astro 101			
1:00		Weekly GTA Meeting					
2:00							
3:00							
4:00						Physics Colloquium	
5:00	Flight BWI to Denver						
6:00							
7:00							
8:00							
9:00							
10:00							
11:00							

	15 Sunday	16 Monday	17 Tuesday	18 Wednesday	19 Thursday	20 Friday	21 Saturday
4:00							
5:00							
6:00	DONE						TO DO LIST
7:00						Keynote Talk at Colorado AAPT Meeting in Denver	submit travel receipts
8:00							set up Facebook page
9:00	Time Management Session at NFW						draft final exam
10:00							get NSF budget appr
11:00			Weekly Research Meeting		Office Hours		review applic. files
12 pm		ASTRO 101		Astro 101			arrange travel to DC
1:00		Weekly GTA Meeting					
2:00				LPI teleconference			
3:00		catch up on email from DC trip	grade students assignments				
4:00						Physics Colloquium	Click to add appointn
5:00	Flight BWI to Denver						
6:00							jeep oil change
7:00							purchase daughter birthday gift
8:00							
9:00							
10:00							
11:00							

Day Week Month Show work week Show full week



Search Calendar [Magnifying Glass]

	15 Sunday	16 Monday	17 Tuesday	18 Wednesday	19 Thursday	20 Friday	21 Saturday	
4:00								
5:00								
6:00	DONE						TO DO LIST	
7:00						Keynote Talk at Colorado AAPT Meeting in Denver		
8:00								
9:00	Time Management Session at NFW	advised students on classes	jeep oil change					draft final exam
10:00								get NSF budget appr
11:00	purchase daughter birthday gift		Weekly Research Meeting		Office Hours			review applic. files
12 pm		ASTRO 101		Astro 101				arrange travel to DC
1:00		Weekly GTA Meeting	submit travel receipts					review AJP manuscrip
2:00			set up Facebook pag	LPI teleconference				draft NSF summary
3:00		catch up on email from DC trip	grade students assignments	Kevin calls me				
4:00							Physics Colloquium	
5:00	Flight BWI to Denver						call plumber	
6:00							AAS Strat Plan	
7:00								
8:00								
9:00								
10:00								
11:00								

Tasks: 0 Active tasks, 0 Completed tasks

What all is in my calendar?

- ☑ When I have recurring class, meetings, & tasks including exercise, birthday cards & lawn mowing
- ☑ Time dependent to-do items
- ☑ To-Do items with no deadline listed in Saturday column
- ☑ Done-items moved from Saturday column to either WHEN I did it (*for my reflective time accounting*) or to the Sunday column
- ☑ I color code weekend items that aren't moveable to-do items

TRY IT: Every Monday Strategy

If you want to implement a new teaching strategy....

- Every Monday, I will assign a JiTT
- Every Friday afternoon, I will deal with my backed up email.
- Every class day I will do ONE *PI*-Clicker Q
- Every Tuesday afternoon, I'll work somewhere outside my building
- One day each month, reconsider your list of NEXT 10 titles I'm going to write

Do you want to write more?

COMMON TRAIT

- People who write the most refereed articles, most grant applications, the most

TRY IT: WRITE SOME EVERYDAY

*Everyone's goals are different,
but I write 1,000 words every day
BEFORE I'm allowed to look at
my email*



TRY IT: The 20-second barrier

- Want to watch less TV?
 - take the batteries out of the remote control
- Want to check your email less often?
 - Remove the saved password OR the desktop short cut to Outlook so you have to click a few times to open your email
- Want fewer cell phone interruptions?
 - Power down your phone for 1-hour per day
(if it is urgent, someone will find you!)



Be *Smart* about Your Smart-Phone

FREE APPS

TRY IT

□ **Lift** – accountability, you log every time you do one of your goals and it reminds you if you haven't
(e.g., compliment a co-worker)

□ **Evernote** – a catch-all box to catch all your napkin scribbled notes, research data brain dumps, grant proposal ideas

(e.g., a time-management technique I don't want to forget!)

□ **Nudgemail** – email yourself reminders

(e.g., send Chris' letter of recommendation on Tuesday)

Be sure to climb the right ladder



Pat is an assistant professor teaching 2 courses, one for majors (9 students) and one for non-majors (80 students)

Pat has 4 papers that are ever so close to getting out the door, a proposal due in a week which hasn't yet been started, a stack of ungraded mid-terms, and is three assignments behind in grading.

Each morning, there is often a student to two in Pat's office getting help. Each afternoon you walk by Pat's office, Pat is madly banging out emails; the ones you get are often in incomplete sentences. Pat is often late to meetings and class, bursting in apologetically, but out of breath.

Pat always responds to "how are you?" with "crazy busy." Everything seems like an interruption to Pat, so you don't speak much anymore. If you were Pat's chair, how would you advise Pat?

Some life-ready strategies

TRY IT

- Prioritize your to-do list
- Batch your email
- Send email/texts less often
- Schedule your tasks
- Every Monday strategy
- 20-second barrier
- Use smart phone apps
- Write everyday

Task

- Write **down three specific things** you are going to do in the next two weeks to enhance the way you manage your time so you can focus on what is important instead of what is in front of you

My greatest fear is that
I'll look back on my life
and not know what
I've done with it –

unknown

timplaterwyo@gmail.com

thebusyprofessor.com

#aaptlfw

“Which time management strategy do you think will work best for you?”

The Busy Professor

Easy Steps to Getting Your Academic Life Under Control

STEPS

1. Rule your e-mail
2. Make To-Do lists that really matter
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