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

TheBusyProfessor.wordpress.com
Doing What Matters First

Time Management for Busy Professors

Tim Slater
University of Wyoming
Excellence in Higher Education Endowed Chair of Science Education

Senior Scientist, CAPER Center for Astronomy & Physics Education Research caperteam.com timslaterwyo@gmail.com
The best thing about being a professor is the flexibility … you can work any 80 hours a week you wish!
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?
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?

#Aaptefw "Which ONE thing do you wish you could do more of at your university?"
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 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?
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…
- It’s 415pm 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

“What steals your time when you are trying to get work done?”
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

“What steals your time when you are trying to get work done?”
Time Management Strategies

This only works if you know what is most important

- Awareness of how you spend your time

“What steals your time when you are trying to get work done?”

#aaptefw
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

“What steals your time when you are trying to get work done?”
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.
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.
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

   OR

(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 !!!!

“What steals your time when you are trying to get work done?”
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

“What steals your time when you are trying to get work done?”
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
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*

#aaptefw

“What steals your time when you are trying to get work done?”
Results of Slater’s email challenge

CONFESSION

Yes, I fall off the wagon sometimes

www.hassleme.co.uk
CONFESSION

Yes, I fall off the wagon sometimes

www.hassleme.co.uk

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 1 days, reminding me to:

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

www.hassleme.co.uk
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 the first ten minutes at your desk quietly PLANNING instead of reading email or anything else!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TO DO ITEM</th>
<th>Must Do Today</th>
<th>Do Today or Tomorrow</th>
<th>For Another Day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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*
- **16th of the Month:**
  - 6:00: Time Management Session at NFW
  - 9:00: ASTRO 101 Weekly GTA Meeting
  - 11:00: Weekly Research Meeting
- **19th of the Month:**
  - 10:00: Office Hours
  - 1:00: Physics Colloquium
- **20th of the Month:**
  - Keynote Talk at Colorado AAPT Meeting in Denver
- **21st of the Month:**
  - 5:00: Flight BWI to Denver
**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 shortcut 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**

- **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

- 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.

#aaptefw

“We Which time management strategy do you think will work best for you?”
My greatest fear is that I’ll look back on my life and not know what I’ve done with it –

unknown

timslaterwyo@gmail.com thebusyprofessor.wordpress.com

#aaptefw “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
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

TheBusyProfessor.wordpress.com