

Ways I Save Time

The following comments were gathered during a Time-Management Workshop which was conducted at The University of Texas at Austin. They have been categorized to assist you in locating the type of time management technique you feel would be most beneficial to you.

TEACHING

A. Preparing for class

1. Delegate as many routine jobs to TA and RA as possible. Provide extremely clear instructions and check on their progress periodically.
2. Save your class notes in a loose leaf notebook (along with any transparencies you may have used) to avoid having to re-invent the class each semester/year!
3. Post syllabi on wall for easy reference.
4. Have a separate basket (file folder) for each class. Put everything you will need for the next class meeting in that folder.
5. Use a word processor/computer for preparation of syllabi, class handouts, etc. Then you will only have to make minor revisions next time.
6. Make your lesson plans on 5x7 cards (one topic per card) which can be shuffled and reordered for individualizing class plans.
7. Do class-related work only on class days!

B. Teaching - general

1. Use phone to check on availability of projectors, to verify showing times for films, etc.
2. Use machine-graded exams. (Takes more time to make out good exams, but saves more time in grading -- especially for large classes.)
3. Make out exam questions as you prepare for your lecture. Put the questions on 3x5 cards (or on a word processor) categorized by topics.
4. Substitute students' "average" on the final exam for the grade on missed exams -- avoids need to make out and grade make-up exams.
5. Compile a test bank -- rotate questions and assignments so you don't have to develop all new questions and assignments each time you teach the course.

6. Use old departmental exams and suggestions from departmental exam committees for examples of questions to use.
7. Develop a file of quizzes from sections which you supervise. You may be able to draw items for your exams from some of these.
8. Use guest lecturers and have them select the readings.
9. Let graduate students do presentations in seminars.
10. Save time on teaching by making extensive lecture notes the first time you teach a course. This saves a lot of time when you teach the course again.
11. Keep extensive notes on what worked and what didn't during the semester so you can reevaluate the things you include the next time you teach the course.
12. Keep a bulletin board for every course so that announcements, extra handouts, etc. can be picked up at any time.

C. Grading

1. Design your test questions with an eye to quick grading (i.e., few marks or main points required per question).
2. Use cassette tapes to record comments on student written work. This is more personal and also much faster than writing extensive comments. (The students provide the tapes.)
3. Design your tests so your TA can grade them.

D. Meeting with students

1. Schedule student interviews at the end of the day, if possible. That way, they will be less likely to extend over a specified amount of time.
2. Deal with some student problems quickly in the minutes immediately following class.

3. Require students to write down the questions they want answers to and bring them when they come to talk to you. Keeps you and student on the subject!
4. Encourage students to call rather than stop by.
5. Get an answering machine to record student questions when you are busy working on something else.
6. Schedule short office hours. Keep (reasonably) strict office hours.
7. Schedule regular help sessions rather than office hours so you don't have to answer the same question over and over again.
8. Hold "Think 'n Drink" or "Watering Hole" sessions in the Union over coffee.
9. Post correct answers to quizzes, tests, etc. so you don't have to go over them in class or individually.
10. Anticipate questions from students and over the years have prepared handouts to answer them.
11. Emphazise to students that they can come to your office anytime (without an appointment) during of-
fice hours ; otherwise, be very strict about not talking to them unless an appointment has been made.

E. Writing letters of recommendation

1. Create a file for each student who has asked for recommendations. These letters will give you ideas for incoming requests.
2. Interview the students and/or have students fill out an information sheet before you will write a letter for them.
3. Keep letters of recommendation on your word processor.

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE

F. Supervising AIs and TAs

G. Committee work

1. Write brief notes to handle routine matters.
2. Say No!! to non-essential projects/ assignments.
3. Establish an agenda for your meetings and stick to it!! No meeting should run over one hour!!

4. Conduct committee work by mail votes whenever feasible (i.e., on non-controversial topics).

H. Dealing with mail/memos

1. Handle each piece of paper only once! (To check yourself, the first time you read a letter/memo, put a dot in the upper right-hand corner. Then, each subsequent time you handle that piece of paper put another dot in the upper right-hand corner. You may be surprised how often the same work keeps surfacing.)
2. Use forms/canned letters for responding to routine mail.
3. If you do not have a typewriter or word processor of your own, handwrite as much correspondence as you can so you don't have to wait on a secretary to type up your letter/memo.
4. Use times when you are tired and uninspired to write letters, answer memos, etc.
5. Try to keep on top of your mail/ correspondence so it doesn't pile up.

I. Dealing with phone calls

1. Learn to limit phone calls.
2. Keep an egg timer on your desk to keep track of how long you talk.
3. Use verbal cues to help the people with whom you are talking come to the point.
4. Use the phone to answer questions, requests, etc. It usually takes less time.
5. Make your phone calls all at one time. (Set aside specific times such as 8-9 a.m. and 1-2 p.m. for returning calls and/or receiving calls.)

J. Departmental administrative duties

1. Put minor duties/correspondence in one pile and deal with them at a scheduled time.
2. Write brief memos to take care of most inter-departmental correspondence.
3. Skim read EVERYTHING!!

4. Establish a "HOLD" category. If something filters to the bottom in a couple of weeks or so, FORGET IT. If it resurfaces, deal with it.

PROFESSIONAL

K. Editorial reviewing

1. Use a tape recorder to record your comments as you read through the article then write your review on a word processor.

L. Research advising

1. Develop your own streamlined forms for degree checks and advising.
2. Ask graduate students to use pre-arranged times to discuss their research (i.e., specific office/lab hours for graduate students).
3. Have your graduate students fill out a weekly progress report so you won't have to hear their life history each time you meet with them.

M. Writing proposals

1. Delegate literature searching to RA. Give extremely clear directions and check periodically to make sure they are being followed.
2. Write down ideas for research as they come. Keep a small notebook with you at all times or use add-on pages in a "Day-Timer" calendar. Store these ideas in a specific folder.
3. Portions of writing for one grant proposal can often be used (with slight modification) in another proposal to another organization.
4. Draft material at typewriter or computer terminal. (Much faster than writing out by hand.)
5. Clearly outline the task and the steps to follow to complete it.
6. Work at home when writing and do not answer the phone.

N. Writing journal articles/books

1. If you are not "in the mood" for writing, put that task aside and do something else for a while. Frequently an idea will come to you while you are working on a related task.

2. Think about research problems or writing snags while exercising. Sometimes the increased blood flow to the brain will assist your innovativeness.
3. Work at home when writing and do not answer the phone.
4. Keep a current list of journals and their manuscript requirements to consult when writing an article.

O. Collecting research data

1. Delegate as much as you can to your RA. Give extremely clear directions and check periodically to make sure they are being followed.
2. Skim journals initially and then have secretary or TA/RA xerox certain articles for specific files.

P. Reading in the field

1. Get the students in your graduate courses to develop annotated bibliographies for part of their grade.
2. Subscribe to things like Higher Education Abstracts.
3. Skim read EVERYTHING!
4. Read selectively! Force yourself to stick to only the professional journals in your field.

Q. Reviewing other's work

1. Put comments on a tape and either have them transcribed or just give the tape to your colleague.

R. Informal consultation with colleagues

1. Arrange meetings with colleagues during the lunch hour when possible.

OTHER

S. Scheduling uninterrupted time

1. Disconnect your phone. Have departmental secretary collect "pink slips" and then, at one time, phone all of the people who had been trying to reach you.
2. Learn to say "NO" and not feel guilty.
3. Find a place other than your office to work.

4. Eat lunch in your office on non-class days. Normally you will have few interruptions at this time of the day.

T. Miscellaneous

1. Work with secretary in setting up overall files. Try to make your files as specific as possible so you can find things quickly.
2. Come to work on weekends to avoid or at least cut down on backlog for Monday morning. (Try not to make this a habit -- just do it periodically. Your family and friends would like to see you too.)
3. Face away from your door and appear very busy.
4. Walk rapidly between your office and classroom building(s). This gives the impression that you are late and it provides good exercise!
5. Clean your office at least once a week!! Put everything in files.
6. Use a pocket calendar ("Day-Timer") to keep track of appointments, scheduled uninterrupted time, things to do, etc. Have it in sight at all times when you are in your office and with you when you go anywhere.
7. Have a chalkboard in your office where you list major projects and their deadlines.
8. Run on a fairly tight schedule.
9. Group similar tasks and do them together.
10. Verbally and non-verbally indicate to colleagues/students that you are quite busy. (Don't be rude, but let them know that you really have other things you need to be doing.)
11. Make out "to do" CARDS rather than a list. Review daily. (This way they can be easily prioritized.)
12. Review commitments periodically and actively try to bring some you don't enjoy to an end.
13. Schedule events weeks in advance. Be sure to block out uninterrupted times and personal times on your calendar.
14. Try to keep your desk as uncluttered as possible so you don't lose time trying to find things.

15. Do any copying you need to do late in the afternoon -- it can usually be done more quickly at that time.

U. Working with secretaries

1. Do all you can to save secretarial time until it cuts into your productivity (e.g., prioritize for them, but they look up the zip codes).
2. Talk to the secretaries. Explain goals, priorities, and share plans in brief. Then ask his/her suggestions and help.
3. In general, do work that requires secretarial follow-up (typing, copying) before tasks that don't (phone calls, meetings, etc.).
4. Encourage secretaries to ask on anything they're not sure of. Guessing costs effectiveness through inaccuracy, plus time in re-doing.
5. Encourage secretaries to suggest streamlining or eliminating. Often they see things we don't.
6. Check with secretary in advance of deadlines to assure it will be met. Avoid last minute crises.
7. Tell the secretary when an important or big job is coming up. ("On Nov. 4 I will need 4 hours of your time for a report. Please schedule this into your work load for that day.")
8. In delegating and communicating with others, assure:
 - A. Clarity
 - B. Specificity -- quantity, quality, time line, and method
 - C. Resources -- time, material, authority
 - D. Accountability -- be supportive yet firm about results