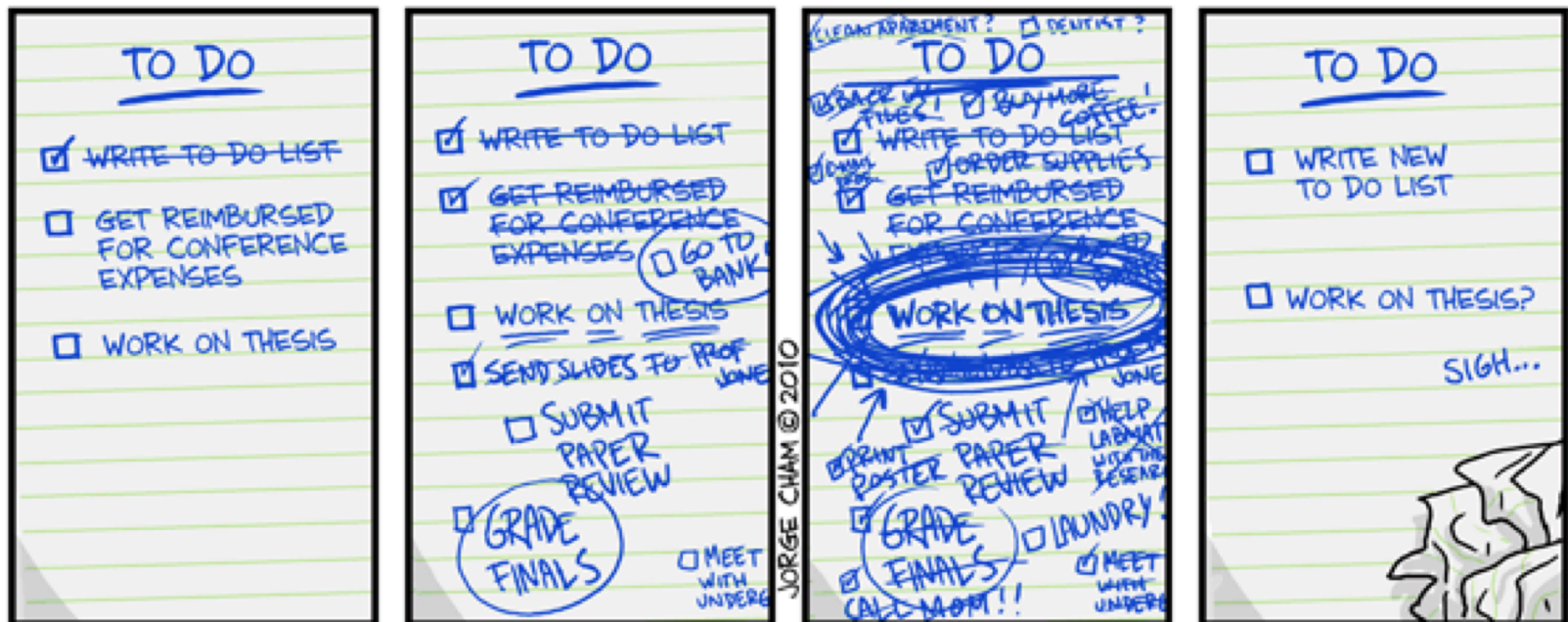


Time Management

YOUR "TO DO" LIST



Time management

- There is no “free time”, you don’t get it back
- Time is perhaps your most precious resource
 - Everyone and everything is fighting for it
 - Classes, advisor, career aspirations, family, goldfish, etc
- Time-log assignment to help you understand where it goes and how to manage it

Get organized

- Use lists
 - Create a to-do list that works
 - Write things on it as they come
 - Will sleep better, free your mind to do better things
 - Assign deadlines
- Assign time in your calendar
 - Or other things will sneak in (e.g., 2hr for reading)
- Set your priorities, not all items are the same
 - Limit the list
 - Keep a short and a long-term list
 - Label entries (ABC, 123)

What's an A item

- Write down your goals – no fuzzy goals
- What's an “A” item
 - If it helps you toward a main goal
 - It has a deadline or is an order you can't ignore
 - It will make you more knowledgeable
 - It's important to someone you care about
 - It will matter a year from now
 - It will really matter if you *don't* do it
 - It require coordination with others
- Remember the 80/20 rule

Goals take time to achieve

- Good work takes lots of time, lots of hard work
- Often at the expense of many other things
- Need to leave extra time
 - Failures and dead ends
 - “Backgrounding”
 - Deep thinking - requires quality time

Protect your work time

- Write them down on your calendar as appointments
- Eliminate distractions
 - No errands
 - No television
 - No meetings, talks
 - Turn off email, unplug phone
 - In shared office situations, may require leaving office

Find hidden time

- Make the most of downtime, in-between time
 - People make you wait, don't let them waste your time
- Use your commute time or eliminate it
- Create chunks of time; uninterrupted; come early, leave late, stay home
- Be a contrarian, leave off-peak - lunch off hours, buy holidays gift off season, ...
- The five-o'clock club - start the day at 5am; quiet, uninterrupted ...
- Learn to think lazy; can you automate it

Increase your efficiency

- Being neat can save your time
 - You spend time (or should) in your office, make the office work for you
 - Don't use the top of your desk for storage
 - Create a "To Be Filed" and a "TODO" folder
 - Schedule time to catch up, go over your folders
- Rely on checklists
 - For travelers, repetitive activities
 - Take a checkride, as pilots do, to make sure you don't drift into bad habits

Avoid procrastination

- Setup deadlines
 - And plan backwards
- Do it now
 - Force a deadline (on buying, coding it, writing it ...)
- Finish it now
 - Take it all the way; coming back to things is costly
- Make the unpleasant call first
 - Except ... if it would change your mood, it's an item of an agenda for a meeting, it's an item in a negotiation
- Eliminate overdrafts
 - Don't file taxes on last day or shop for dinner at 6pm

Pace yourself

- Create routines: discover your own rhythms
 - Writers put a number of required words per day
 - You also have your own clock - best time to read/write/code/debug/...
 - Need to learn it and make it a routine
- Adapt to the rhythms around you
 - When are your key conference due dates
 - When is your advisor more responsive to email or available in the office for a short chat
 - When is it noisy outside your office

Pace yourself – master your moods

- Develop your willpower through exercise
- Find humor in your situation
- Find a trusted friend to talk
- Do low-priority items in your list
- Do something that you are good at
- Do mental calisthenics; writing block? write anything!
- Dress the part (you can't be on PJs all day)
- Experiment with your diet
- Get some sunlight

Pace yourself

- Know how long you can wait to do it
 - Some people become very effective by procrastinating, waiting until the last minute
 - But careful
- Beware of Parkinson law
 - Work expands to fill the time available for its completeness
- Learn how to shift into the surge mode
 - Intense, long stretches of work are better than start/stop a hundredth time - more effective, better quality output

Avoid time-wasting activities

- If it's not worth doing it; don't do it
 - Like publishing papers in a conf. with low impact
- Don't quit too soon, some things just take time
- Know when to cut your losses
 - The mark of a good researchers, know what ideas to throw away
- Know when to leave well-enough alone
- Don't finish every book you start
- End meetings early
- Develop survival skills if you are absent minded

Invest time to save time

- Expert: Someone who knows more than others in some area
 - Nightingale's Theorem: "If you spend an extra hour per day in your chosen field, you will become an expert within 5 years."
- Automate or eliminate repetitive tasks
- "Measure twice, cut once"
- Not detail-oriented? Find someone who is!
- Don't wait until it is broken to fix/improve it
- Always, always carry a notepad

Achieving balance

- Focus on the day
- Make an appointment with yourself
 - Do add-on's
 - Take scenic route
- Take care of your body
- Learn to let others help you
- Play solitaire (save time to be alone)
- *Don't loose sight of your main goals*
- *Same for research – what's the big picture?*

