Agenda

- **Projects**
  - The project list
  - Project planning

- **Finding time for project work**

- **Tactical planning, weekly and daily**
Projects

*Project = A deliverable (outcome) that requires multiple tasks and multiple days

- Write papers, grants, posters, abstracts, chapters
- Prepare lectures & talks
- Create syllabi, course objectives, curriculum plan
- Plan conferences, meetings
- Prepare for a recertification exam
- Learn a new research method
- Hire a research assistant
- Buy new lab equipment
- Decide whether to accept offer to chair a committee

Why focus on Projects?
- Include the most important, impactful work you do
- Often complex, with lots of moving parts
- It’s hard to find time to do the work required
- Creative projects (e.g., writing) are usually the most challenging
1. make a list

clinical trial results paper
conference speakers
abstract
K08
talk for departmental seminar
2. make the list better

- clinical trial results paper - revise and resubmit
- conference speaker invitations for July meeting
- abstract for May meeting - DEADLINE April 1
- K08 application for June 15 submission
- Update Hemingway talk for March 13 departmental seminar
3. remove things you might want to do later

Projects

Projects you intend to do

Project Ideas for later

Projects you might do someday

Storage options:
- Reminder
- Calendar
- List/file/folder
4. Create a simple plan for each project

- description of the desired outcome
- if started, the current status?
- remaining steps?
- timeframe: due / aiming for?
- obstacles?
- next task
Plan example:

- **Project:** Clinical trial results paper revise and resubmit
- **Outcome:**
  - Prepare a response & revisions that address the editor’s recommendations, and any other reviewer comments our group thinks will improve the paper.
- **Status:** I have done penultimate response to reviewers, and marked up copy of the manuscript
- **Remaining steps:**
  - Finish revisions with co-authors for input,
  - Finish updating references,
  - Upload to journal portal
- **Timeframe:** aiming for the end of February, but there is no journal deadline
- **Obstacles?** I had trouble with the journal submission portal last time: review the instructions

- **Next task:** email the draft response letter and the revised manuscript to co-authors, and request a one week turn around
The relationship between project & task lists:

**Project List**

**PERSONAL**
- Arrange dinner with Joan & Paul

**WORK**
- Hire research assistant

**Task List**

(related to projects)
- Email Joan with dates we are available
- Draft job description

("single tasks")
- Call for dental appointment
- Order book on Amazon
To learn more about project work

To learn more about task lists

Michael Linenberger. The One Minute To-do List  (https://www.michaellinenberger.com/free1MTD.htm )
You can request a free pdf download of this book at the link above. The method is an effective way to create and manage your to-do (task) list, and can be used either as a stand alone, or as a complement to the GTD next action list method.
FINDING TIME FOR PROJECT WORK, WITH A SPECIAL NOD TO WRITING
Scenario 1: With a deadline

Scenario 2: Without a deadline
Myth 1

“I need a large block of uninterrupted time before I can write...”
Myth 2

“ I can only write if I feel motivated…”
Reality Check

“... if you want to successfully integrate more [writing] into your professional life, you cannot just wait until you find yourself with lots of free time and in the mood to concentrate. You have to actively fight to incorporate this into your schedule.”

Cal Newport,
Deep Work (2016)
Key Strategy:
Be prepared to work on projects no matter how much time you have

Be prepared to use each of these 3 timeframes:

- 30-60 minutes (MODERATE)
- A few minutes (BRIEF)
- “Big blocks” (LONG)
Time blocking

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- Have a goal for the block & a simple action to get started.
- **Focused Work**
- Plan a starting task for the next session, then stop
interruptions
Write down what you are going to do

25 + 5
25 + 5
25 + 5
25 + 15
Repeat as needed

Manage interruptions

Francesco Cirillo
http://www.pomodorotechnique.com/
the Pomodoro technique

* Check your play store for a Pomodoro phone app
**Frontloading**

- Mon: High priority work
- Tues, Wed, Thurs: Fails

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**Case: a report due in one week**

### Original plan

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### Revised, front-loaded plan

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- Mon: Meeting call to plan S
- Tues: Work on Project
- Wed: Work on Project
- Thu: Work on Project
- Fri: Work on Project, Creative project for brainstorming
- Sat: Submit project
- Sun: Submit project
- Mon: Meet all team
Summary of how to be prepared for using any length of time for project work:

1- Set an intention to work on the project at the beginning of the week and each day.

2- Decide what you will do when time is available; have both short tasks and longer ones to choose from.

3- It possible, schedule some time in advance…

4- Front-load when you can
To learn more about developing an academic writing practice


Silvia is an academic psychologist, and this book is perhaps the most popular in this genre. This second edition reflects the authors new status as a dad with young children (making his advice about finding time to write more realistic). The book has has been updated to apply to a wider variety of disciplines, and has a new chapter devoted to grant and fellowship writing.


Joli Jensen is a communications studies professor with extensive experience teaching writing to graduate students and faculty members. She sends the same message as Silvia - write nearly every day - but covers some additional reasons for resistance and has different views on some issues. She provides welcome detail on writing accountability group options, and how to deal with stalled projects.


- Detailed strategies for planning time to write, with emphasis on time blocking.
- See also, Study Hacks blog: Cal posts about “deep work” and other productivity topics: http://calnewport.com/blog/


- Practical approaches to procrastination originally designed for graduate students have trouble writing their dissertations.
TACTICAL PLANNING ROUTINES FOR THE WEEK AND THE DAY
Weekly plan
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Calls with family
Bike ride
Laundry
Cleaning
Friends birthday party
Groceries
Eat out with friends
Day OFF
To learn more about managing the personal and professional

I Know How She Does It: How Successful Women Make the Most of Their Time
Update and review your current “inventory of work”

• Calendar:
  – 3+ weeks forward
    • What to prepare for & and scheduling glitches.
  – 1 week back!
    • Look for tasks you forgot to record.

• Lists (e.g., task & project lists)
  – Update
    • Prune, and add new items.
  – ID projects / tasks that you want to do this week.
Pick the projects you will focus on

You can only realistically work on a “few”

What does your “gut” tell you?

Refine your initial choices, taking into account factors such as:
• Is there a looming real deadline?
• How close are you to finishing?
• Impact / importance?
• Degree of stress you have about putting it off?
Plan tasks & time blocks for each focus project

- 30-60 minutes
- ~1-20 min
- >2 hours

MODERATE TB: schedule or work in

BRIEF=
Tasks

LONG TB: schedule
Daily plan
Daily Task Plan

MITs

- Deadline today
  - *
  - *
  - Aim to do
    1.
    2.
    3.

Tasks to do after MIT’s done, in rough priority order

1
2
3
4
5
6

Daily Time Allocation Plan

8a arrive at work

9a Clinic

- -------------------------------------
- 12 p lunch
- -------------------------------------
- Email triage
- Tasks
- -------------------------------------
- 2p Writing TB
  - review article introduction edits
- -------------------------------------
- EMR
- Patient calls
- -------------------------------------
- 4p meeting
- -------------------------------------
- Email
  - -------------------------------------
- 6p STOP for the day

Be prepared to triage, re-order, or swap categories based on how the day goes.
Keep a “Done” list

• A record of everything you do
I wrote these articles between 2004 and 2009, in a series for the *Academic Physician & Scientist*. Although the examples are aimed at academic physicians and scientists, the ideas and recommendations are for any one in academics.

On the website, select the *Articles* tab to access.

- **Code O: Recovering from overwhelm**
- **The basics of organizing your work and time**
- **Priorities: How to decide what to do, and when**
- **Execution: Getting your work done**
- **Getting e-mail under control**
- **Becoming a productive academic writer**
- **A plan for professional reading**
- **Time blocking**
- **Interruptions**
- **Delegation**
Contact me anytime with questions or comments, and, get articles on my website

www.thrivingamidstchaos.com