

Time management (from Dennis Brown, NIAI Dec. 11, 2018)

Break down tasks on the basis of urgency (things with deadlines) and importance (promotion, grant success) - focus on tasks that are both of these.

Prioritize the most important things you can do to advance your career:

- publications
- grant writing (but this is secondary to publications)
- scientific presentations
- service – on committees
- teaching

Write down how you spend your day – what is taking up your time? Identify how the minutes are spent and try to correct time wasting.

Some suggestions and tips

1. Get started – e. g., with a manuscript, write the title page, material and methods, some results..... Put the file on your desktop as a reminder and a stimulus.
2. Work in sprints with rest or something different between them- the Pomodoro Technique uses a timer that rings after 25 min, with a 3 – 5 min break (Francesco Cirillo)
3. Email – don't check every 5 mins. But when you do, try to get them out of the way immediately if possible – so you don't have to remember to answer!!
4. Make meetings productive – set an agenda. Don't allow participants to waffle on side issues if you are the chair (or even if you're not).
5. Summarize meetings immediately afterwards in written form.
6. Procrastination – some things don't go away. Why are you putting off something? (fear, don't know how to start?).
7. Learn how to say NO nicely – don't do everything people ask you to do. Don't allow flattery and your ego to get in the way of common sense.
8. Be collegial but try to avoid idle chatter - especially in meetings that have agendas. Finish meetings on time.
9. Have a to do list and cross off tasks as they are completed

10. Prioritize tasks – today, tomorrow, week, month, year.....
11. If you miss a meeting, don't worry. Catch up later. If you are just one of a large committee, most people will not remember you weren't there in a day or two!
12. Urge that mandatory meetings be held at reasonable times (9-5) that are family friendly. Discuss this with your Dept Chair, colleagues etc. It is unreasonable to hold routine meetings before 8-9 am, and after 5-6 pm, and at the weekends.
13. Organize your brain into compartments (eg., writing manuscripts, grant writing, administration, personnel management, home life).
14. When you are performing one task, clear your mind and don't think about the others on your to do list.
15. If you are interrupted constantly, close your door for some time every day.
16. Delegate responsibility if possible– this is also good for the training/CV of the delegee! (e.g, lab organization, seminar scheduling, writing first draft of a manuscript, reviewing or co-reviewing manuscripts when possible and appropriate, even attending some meetings in your place).
17. If something clashes with an important family event, your family comes first. If your colleagues don't understand that, then they need help.